THE SCRIPTURE KNOWN AS THE *Buddhāvatamsaka* (Huayan jing 華嚴經, Jpn. Kegon-kyō) has long played a major role in East Asian Buddhism. Two complete translations of the sūtra are extant in Chinese, one produced by the Indian translator Buddhābhadra 佛陀跋陀羅 in the early fifth century CE (*Da-fangguang fo huayan jing 大方廣佛華嚴經* "Mahāvaipulya-buddhāvatamsaka-sūtra") and another by the same title produced by the Khotanese translator Śiksānanda 實叉難陀 at the end of the seventh century CE. These two translations inspired numerous commentaries composed in East Asia, and they were widely cited in other texts. And in the well-known systems of doctrinal taxonomy (panjiao 判教) that were widely employed in East Asia as a means of organizing the chaotic richness of the Buddhist scriptures, the *Huayan jing* holds pride of place as the first discourse preached by the Buddha after his awakening. No Indic-language version of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* as a whole has been preserved, though two separate texts now included within this voluminous scripture – the *Daśabhūmika* and the *Gaṇḍavyūha* – are still extant in Sanskrit. A Tibetan translation of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* was also produced around 800 CE (*Sangs-rgyas phal-po-che zhes-bya-ba shin-tu rgyas-pa chen-po'i mdo*), but it never approached the level of popularity of the *Huayan jing* in China. It is only natural, therefore, that most of the papers in this volume should be devoted to the legacy of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* in East Asia.

The *Buddhāvatamsaka*, however, also belongs to the literary heritage of India, and it is from this angle that I would like to approach the text here. An insuperable obstacle to such an investigation might seem to be posed, at first glance, by the fact that most of the text has not been preserved in any Indic language. There is, how-

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1. On the rationale for using this title, rather than the more common *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, see Sakurabe 1969 and the paper by ŌTAKE Susumu in this volume.
2. T. 278.
3. T. 279.
4. Peking/Ōtani 761.
ever, a group of Chinese translations that have preserved the content of this text at an early stage of its development. Indeed, there is reason to think that these translations can reveal the shape of what might be called the “Proto-Buddhāvatamsa”ka.” In this paper, therefore, I will focus on what the content of these early translations can tell us about the antecedents of Huayan thought in India and about the early literary history of the Buddhāvatamsa”ka itself.

For this purpose our most important sources are not the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the large (the so-called “complete”) Buddhāvatamsa”ka, nor even the two parts of the text that have survived in Sanskrit. Instead, for the study of the antecedents of the Buddhāvatamsa”ka in India it is a group of early Chinese translations — often (and, as we shall see, erroneously) described as excerpts from the larger text — which provide our earliest window into the content of what would eventually develop into the text known as the Buddhāvatamsa”ka. Surprisingly, these texts have received little serious scholarly attention to date, despite the fact that they are not only vital to our understanding of the early development of the Buddhāvatamsa”ka in India but were actively appropriated by the composers of indigenous scriptures (both Buddhist and Daoist) in China.⁵

The oldest of these texts is the Dousha jing 兜沙經 (T 280), produced by Lokakṣema 支婁迦讖 in the latter part of the second century CE; the next is the Pusa benye jing 菩薩本業經 (T 281), translated by Zhi Qian 支謙 in the early to mid-third century. There is considerable overlap between these two texts, for the first third of Zhi Qian’s translation contains material that corresponds in its general content (though not in its precise wording) to Lokakṣema’s Dousha jing.

The Dousha jing as we have it, however, is not the complete text of Lokakṣema’s original translation. As has long been noted, the stūtra breaks off abruptly, giving the impression that it is only part of a larger work. In an earlier paper I have provided a detailed study of the Dousha jing and related texts, offering evidence that the remaining portion of the text has been preserved in the scriptures now entitled Zhih pusa qiu fo benye jing 諸菩薩求佛本業經 (T 282) and Pusa shizhu xingdao pin 菩薩十住行道品 (T 283), respectively. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, Lokakṣema’s translation appears to have been separated into three pieces at an early stage of its circulation in China. The opening section has been preserved under the title Dousha jing (T 280), while the other two sections circulated separately and were eventually given titles of their own and assigned to other translators in medieval Chinese catalogues.

Since I have provided a detailed discussion of the rationale for this reconstruction in the paper mentioned above, I will not deal extensively with this issue here. In summary form, however, the evidence for this scenario is as follows:

⁵ For an overview of various scholarly positions on the relationship of these early translations to the larger Buddhāvatamsa”ka see Kimura 1984.

⁶ For details on borrowings from these early translations see Appendix 2.

⁷ Nattier 2005.
(1) T 280 begins in normal fashion, but ends suddenly without anything resembling a conclusion; T 282 both begins and ends abruptly, while T 283 has no proper beginning and has at least a semblance of an ending. Each of these three texts, in sum, gives the impression not of being a complete sūtra, but a fragment.

(2) When these texts are arranged in the sequence T 280 + T 282 + T 283 this anomaly disappears; in fact, when read as a continuous text these three works (which we may refer to as the “Dousha jing group”) offer a parallel to all of the material contained in Zhi Qian’s Pusa benye jing (T 281). The Dousha jing group, in other words, comprises another complete Chinese translation (based on a different Indic-language recension) of the scripture translated by Zhi Qian.

(3) The attributions of T 282 and T 283 to translators other than Lokakṣema are late and unreliable, and they need not detain us from considering the possibility that both of these texts were originally part of Lokakṣema’s translation of the Dousha jing.

(4) The language used in all three parts of the Dousha jing group is quite typical of Lokakṣema’s vocabulary and style. Indeed, some terms used in T 282 and T 283 are so rare – appearing exclusively, or nearly so, in works translated by Lokakṣema – that they serve as virtual fingerprints of Lokakṣema’s activity.

(5) Finally, there is clear continuity within the Dousha jing group, both in the flow of the narrative (which, as noted above, parallels that found in T 281) and in the names of the main characters. A relatively little-known bodhisattva introduced in T 280, Jñānaśrī (Re‘nashili 誠那師利), reappears to ask a question of Mañjuśrī at the beginning of T 282. The bodhisattva Dharmamati (Tanmeimoti 曼昧摩提), introduced at the end of T 282, becomes in turn the main character in T 283, where he enters into samādhi and returns to describe what he has experienced there.

In sum, there is every reason to treat the three members of the Dousha jing group as three parts of an originally continuous text translated by Lokakṣema. The fact that this version exhibits several small but significant differences in content from the scripture subsequently translated by Zhi Qian as the Pusa benye jing makes it all the more valuable, since it offers testimony that, at the time these scriptures were transmitted to China, the sūtra was already circulating in India in more than one recension.8

Comparing these two scriptures – the Pusa benye jing and the Dousha jing group – with the material found in the Chinese translations of the larger Buddhāvatamsaka, we find an interesting pattern of correspondence. The shorter texts do not correspond to a single section of the larger Buddhāvatamsaka; on the contrary, their content appears in widely separated sections of the larger sūtra. Significantly, these various “pieces” occur in precisely the same sequence in the Pusa benye jing and in the Dousha jing group as they do in the larger Buddhāvatamsaka translations. Using

8 Though Zhi Qian is renowned for having revised earlier Chinese translations of Indian Buddhist texts, there is no evidence that his Pusa benye jing was based on Lokakṣema’s earlier translation; indeed, the two texts appear to be quite independent. For further details see Nattier 2005.
the section divisions employed in my earlier study and treating the *Pusa benye jing* and the *Dousha jing* group together as representing two different recensions of the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka*, these correspondences are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Smaller <em>Buddhāvatamsaka</em></th>
<th>Buddhhabhadra’s <em>Huayan jing</em></th>
<th>Śikṣānanda’s <em>Huayan jing</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>§§1–3</td>
<td>first part of chapter 3</td>
<td>first part of chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§4</td>
<td>opening lines of chapter 5</td>
<td>opening lines of chapter 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§§5–6</td>
<td>chapter 7</td>
<td>chapter 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§7</td>
<td>beginning of chapters 9 &amp; 10</td>
<td>beginning of chapters 13 &amp; 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§§8–9</td>
<td>beginning of chapter 11</td>
<td>beginning of chapter 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>§10</td>
<td>no precise equivalent</td>
<td>no precise equivalent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The content of the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka*, in other words, does not correspond to just one section of the larger *sūtra*, but parallels material that is widely scattered in these larger (and later) texts.

This comparison exhibits a pattern that is reminiscent of the relationship between the “Smaller Perfection of Wisdom” (the *Āstasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, or *Xiaopin小品*) and the “Larger Perfection of Wisdom” (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, or *Dapin大品*). In the latter case an early (smaller) *sūtra* has been expanded through countless interpolations interspersed here and there throughout the text, with hardly any material from the earlier work being lost in the process. It seems likely that we are observing another example of the same process at work in the formation of the larger *Buddhāvatamsaka*.

In sum, there is every reason to think that the larger *Buddhāvatamsaka* grew out of a text whose content resembled that of the *Pusa benye jing* and the (reassembled) *Dousha jing*. What we have in these two Chinese translations, in other words, are two exemplars, based on two different Indian recensions, of an Indian ancestor of the larger *Buddhāvatamsaka*.

It is important to add, however, that the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka* as we have it is not necessarily the “original.” There may well have been antecedents of the smaller text as well, and there is no way to locate its ultimate point of origin. Among extant texts, however, no scripture has yet been identified that can take us to an ear-

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9 For a chart of the page and line numbers corresponding to these section numbers see Appendix 1.

10 Elsewhere I have described this as the “club-sandwich” mode of textual expansion. See Nattier 2003a, p. 62, n. 19 for a discussion of this process, which is also found in the *Ugroparipṛcchā-sūtra*. 
lier point. Thus it seems reasonable to take the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka, as preserved in the translations by Lokakṣema and Zhi Qian, as the logical point of departure for a discussion of the early history of the Buddhāvatamsaka in India.

The Smaller Buddhāvatamsaka: An Overview

The sūtra opens — as does the larger Buddhāvatamsaka itself11 — at the site of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s awakening in Māgadha (§1a). In recognition of his accomplishment a large group of bodhisattvas with only one more life to live before the attainment of Buddhahood (yisheng buchu 一生補處, *ekajātipratibaddha) come to the site. The text does not say where these bodhisattvas have come from, nor does it provide any of their names, but it is effusive in its praise of their paranormal powers, their comprehension of the Dharma,12 and their ability to teach others (§1b).

The bodhisattvas think to themselves “The Buddha is mindful of us!” (fo nian wudeng 佛念吾等 in T 281; in T 280, fo ai wocaoengbei 佛愛我曹等輩 “The Buddha loves us!”), and they then reflect that they want the Buddha to show them all the buddha-fields (§1c), as well as the various qualities and activities of a bodhisattva (§1d). The list of these items varies from one recension to the other, but both versions mention several sets of ten, including ten stages (T 280 shi fa zhu 十法住, T 281 shi di 十地), ten practices (T 280 shi fa suoxing 十法所行, T 281 shi xing 十行) ten samādhis (T 280 shi sanmei 十三昧, T 281 shi ding 十定). In addition the bodhisattvas wish to be shown the qualities of a Buddha, which include the four things a Buddha does not need to guard, the four fearlessnesses, and so on (§1e).

The Buddha, knowing what the bodhisattvas are thinking, responds by illuminating the universe.13 For each of the ten directions the text provides the names of the Buddha and the bodhisattva residing there, as well as the name of the buddha-field itself (§2a–j). These ten bodhisattvas then arrive to join the others at the site of the Buddha’s awakening, each accompanied by an unimaginably large number of other bodhisattvas.14 Each of these bodhisattvas salutes the Buddha Śākyamuni and sits down on a lotus seat (according to T 281) or on a lion seat that spontaneously appears (according to T 280).15

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11 This scene actually occurs several times in the larger Buddhāvatamsaka; see below, p. 144.
12 More specifically, their comprehension of the “inner and outer dharmas” and the dharmas of the past, future, and present (“three roads” in T 281; for a discussion of the use of 途 “road” as a translation of adhvay in the sense of “time” in Zhi Qian’s version see Shi 2000, pp. 43–45.
13 That this is the Buddha’s doing is made explicit only in T 280 at the end of §1e.
14 The arrival of the bodhisattvas is mentioned at the end of each section (§2a–j) in T 280, but only at the end of §2j (in reference, however, to all ten directions) in T 281.
15 The spontaneous appearance of lion seats occurs in other early Chinese Buddhist translations as well; see for example Zhi Qian’s translation of the Vimalakīrtinirdesā (T 474: 14.519b28) and Dharmarakṣa’s translations of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra (T 263: 9.63b29) and the Pañca-vimśatisāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā (T 222: 8.147b9–10).
Mañjuśrī, who appeared near the beginning of the sūtra as the bodhisattva of the eastern direction, then begins to speak (both versions specify that he does so by the Buddha’s power, 
*buddhāmubhāvena*). He first exclaims how marvelous this is (§3a), then goes on to remark on the fact that in these buddha-fields beings have different appearances, speak different languages, and so on (§3b). As an example he offers a long list of epithets of the Buddha, stating that different names are used in different places (§3c).

The Buddha then emits a ray of light from the bottom of his foot, illuminating all the features of his own buddha-field: its oceans, mountains, and its four continents (§4a), as well as its various heaven-realms (§4b). After noting that each buddha-field has such components (§4c, T 280 only), he then divides his body so as to manifest his form in each of the ten *koti*s of buddha-fields, so that all the gods and humans of those realms are able to see him as if he were close by (§4d).

At this point T 280 (alone among the various versions of the smaller and larger *Buddhāvatāmasaka*) recapitulates the list of names of the bodhisattvas and Buddhas of the ten directions, in all probability in lieu of an ending, since the remainder of the text had somehow come to be separated from it. The second part of the text, however (now catalogued in the Taiseki edition of the canon as T 282), continues to match the content of T 281, opening this section with a question by the bodhisattva Jñānaśrī, who had been introduced previously in both T 280 (as Re’nahili 蕩那師利) and T 281 (as Zhishou 智首) as the bodhisattva of the nadir. When Jñānaśrī asks Mañjuśrī about the conduct of the bodhisattva (§5), Mañjuśrī praises him for his question, saying that he will explain the actions of body, speech and mind that enable a bodhisattva to attain good qualities, the implication being that this will enable them, in turn, to eventually attain a buddha-field (§6a). He then gives Jñānaśrī an extended list of prescriptions for how a bodhisattva should practice, describing the good wishes they should direct toward living beings while engaging in a wide range of activities. Of these wishes eleven are to be performed by the householder-bodhisattva (§6b), while the vast majority (well over a hundred in each of the two

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16 It is perhaps appropriate, given the emphasis on diversity in this passage, that the list of names given in T 280 does not agree at all with the one found in T 281. For a discussion of the epithets found in Zhi Qian’s list, see Shi 2000: 43 and Nattier 2003b: 234–235.

17 This is somewhat unusual; more commonly Buddhas emit light from the head (as is indeed the case in the “upgraded” echo of this opening scene that occurs at the beginning of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*). The motif of emitting light from the bottom of the foot does occur elsewhere, however; see for example Lokakṣema’s translation of the *Ajītaka-sūtra* (T 626: 15.393c10). In the *Poścaviṃśatisāhasrikā* *prajñāpāramitā* the same event occurs, but it is followed by the emission of light from other parts of the body (including the head) as well; see the Chinese translations by Dharmarakṣa (8.147b14–15), Mokṣala (8.1b10), and Kumārajīva (8.217b12), as well as the Sanskrit (Dutt ed., p. 6, lines 2–10). (I would like to thank Stefano Zacchetti for calling my attention to the occurrence of this motif in the *Paścaviṃśati*.)

18 It is interesting that there is no mention of the hells (or for that matter, of the lower realms) in this display.
recensions) are to be carried out after the bodhisattva has left home to become a monk (§6c).

The text then states that in this Sahā world-system, hundreds of koṭis of Śakra-lords (Śakra-devānām indra)\(^{19}\) will create seven-jeweled lion seats for the Buddha. Knowing their thoughts, the Buddha again divides his body in order to manifest himself in each place. The Śakras, in turn, rejoice at the sight (§7a).

At this point another group of bodhisattvas arrives from the buddha-fields of the ten directions (§7b). One of these, Dharmamati (T 282 Tanimeimōi 瑪妙摩提, T 281 Faye 法意), will be the primary speaker in the following section.

When these newly arrived bodhisattvas have assembled Dharmamati goes into a state of samādhi (§8a), during which the Buddhas of the ten directions pay him on the head and congratulate him (§9a).\(^{20}\) Saying that they will teach him about the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, they ask him to pass this information on to others (§9a).

Emerging from samādhi, Dharmamati recounts the names of the ten bodhisattva stages (§9b), then provides details concerning the practices appropriate to each (§9b–l). Having done so, he has carried out his assignment, and the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka ends (§10).

The Smaller Buddhāvatamsaka: Major Themes

Now that it is clear that the Dousha jing group and the Pusa benye jing are not excerpts from some version of the larger Buddhāvatamsaka, but are translations of an Indian scripture that circulated on its own, we are in a position to ask new questions about its content. How, we may ask, did its authors view the role of the bodhisattva, and how did they envision the universe in which they lived? What kinds of practices were important to them, and how did they understand the meaning of the “Mahā-yāna”? In the following discussion I will attempt to sketch the outlines of several themes that now appear, when we read the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka on its own, to have been among the major concerns of its authors.

Buddhas of the Ten Directions

The smaller Buddhāvatamsaka envisions a vast and symmetrical universe, with buddha-fields located throughout the ten directions. It provides the names of these fields (in transcription in T 280, in translation in T 281), as well as the name of the

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19 There should, of course, be only one such figure per world-system (though he can have countless minor gods as his attendants).

20 Considerable additional detail is provided in T 280 (§8b–c).
presiding Buddha in each. The text also gives the name of one bodhisattva from each world-system, an issue to which we will return below.

In tabular form (with the transcriptions from T 280 given first, followed by the translations from T 281) they are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Buddha</th>
<th>Bodhisattva</th>
<th>Buddha-field</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E: 阿逝堕 /入精進</td>
<td>文殊師利 /敬首</td>
<td>訥連桓 21 / 香林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: 阿泥羅堕羅 /不捨樂</td>
<td>佛陀師利 /覺首</td>
<td>樓普喩 / 樂林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W: 阿斯壟陀 /習精進</td>
<td>羅睺師利 /寶首</td>
<td>波頭喩 /華林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N: 阿闌堕 /行精進</td>
<td>檀那師利 /慧首</td>
<td>占益喩 /道林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE: 阿輪那壟國陀 /悲精進</td>
<td>群那師利 /德首</td>
<td>優彼喩 /青蓮</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE: 阿施陀壟陀 /盡精進</td>
<td>伽那羅師利 /目首</td>
<td>健闍喩 /金林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW: 鬱沈貳大 /上精進</td>
<td>惟闍師利 /明首</td>
<td>羅漢喩 /寶林</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW: 阿波羅堕 /一乘度</td>
<td>蠶摩師利 /法首</td>
<td>活逸喩 /金剛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadir: 楓摩壟羅 /捨精進</td>
<td>惹那師利 /智慧</td>
<td>潘利喩 /水精</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zenith: 邃色 /至精進</td>
<td>那祇陀師利 /賢首</td>
<td>優提捨喩 /欲林</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The underlying Indian referents of many of these names are not immediately apparent, but with the help of the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the larger Budhāvatamsaka (as well as the readings found in certain Buddhist and Daoist texts composed in China that borrowed this list from Zhi Qian’s Pusa benye jing; see Appendix 2), they can be reconstructed with some degree of confidence as follows: 22

| E: Acalaveda | Mañjuśrī | Hiranyagarbha |
| S: Anelaveda | Buddhaśrī | Ruciyartha |
| W: Asitaveda | Ratnasrī | Padmapartha |
| N: Ācāraveda | Dhanaśrī | Ccapasthita |
| NE: Aruṇaveda | Guṇaśrī | Utpalavartha |
| SE: Atyantaveda | Netraśrī | Kañciṣṭhā%

21 So in the Taishō edition (with no indication of any variant readings), but the relative unanimity of huan 𣯂 in the other names suggests that this may have been the original character here as well. There is, in any event, no difference in the Early Middle Chinese pronunciation of the two characters as reconstructed by Pulleyblank (1991: 130).

22 A discussion of the many thorny problems involved in these reconstructions is beyond the scope of the present paper; I hope to deal with these issues in detail in another venue. It is virtually certain that both Lokakṣema and Zhi Qian translated from Prakrit, not Sanskrit, originals, but for ease of recognition and consistency of reference I have given these reconstructions in Sanskrit here.
SW: Uttamaveda  Vidyāśrī  Ratnavarṇa
NW: Aparaveda  Dharmaśrī  Vajravarṇa
Nadir: Brahmaveda  Jñānaśrī  Sphātiḥkavarna
Zenith: Viviktaveda  Bhadraśrī  Sadṛśavarṇa

Two things are immediately evident about this list. First is the sweeping symmetry of this vision of the universe: all of the Buddhas have names ending in -veda, while all of the bodhisattva-names end in -śrī. The names of the buddha-fields are likewise parallel, with each ending in -varṇa. What is found in each of the ten directions, in other words, is paralleled in the other nine.

Second is the relative obscurity – viewed from the perspective of the Mahāyāna scriptures that were to become most popular in East Asia – of virtually all of these names. In the western direction we do not find Amitābha (or Amitāyus), but a Buddha called Asitaveda, while in the east it is not Akṣobhya but Acalaveda who appears. Nor are the bodhisattvas mentioned here the ones we might expect. In the East one might expect to meet the bodhisattva Gandhahastin, for example, who appears in the Akṣobhyavāyuha as the resident Buddha’s designated successor; in the West one might expect to find Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, who appear in the larger Sukhavatīvyūha in the same role. Instead, the bodhisattva of the western direction is named Ratnaśrī, while in the east we find a well-known figure who also serves as a major interlocutor in the text, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Even the bodhi-

23 Zhi Qian appears to have read (or heard) some form of vīrya rather than veda; I have chosen the latter on the basis of the readings that are found in some of Lokakṣema’s transcriptions of these names, as well as their renditions in the corresponding passages in the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the larger Buddhāvatamsaka. In a form of parallelism that is typical of his work, he has rendered each of these names in three-character form. As a result, the presumed ending of vīrya (Ch. jingjin 精進) has been suppressed in two cases where the first part of the name required three characters in itself.

24 Zhi Qian’s translation of -śrī “glory” as show 頭 “head, foremost” reflects a confusion between a Prakrit form of śrī and śiras “head”; see Karashima 1992: 27 and 266.

25 Zhi Qian, whose buddha-field names end in -lin 林 “grove”, presumably read (or heard) vana “woods” rather than varṇa “color”, or perhaps better in this context “appearance”. (As in the case of the names of the Buddhas, he has occasionally suppressed this final component in order to render each name in parallel fashion, in this case using two characters.) It is possible, in fact, that this was the original reading, though the later Chinese and Tibetan versions all reflect an underlying varṇa. Lokakṣema’s transcriptions cannot definitively resolve the question here.

26 Not all Buddhist scriptures that postulate the presence of Buddhas in all directions portray them in such symmetrical fashion. For a discussion of texts that do not display this symmetry (either in the form of the names or in the number of Buddhas placed in each direction) see Mitomo 1988.

27 On this issue see Nattier 2003c: 191.

28 It is noteworthy that in at least one other source (the Vimalakīrtinirdēṣa) we are told that Mañjuśrī had previously inhabited a buddha-field in the eastern direction, but there the buddha-field in question is that of the Buddha Akṣobhya.
sattva Samantabhadra and the Buddha Vairocana, who would subsequently play major roles in Huayan thought, are not included in this list.  

Whether the authors of this scripture were unfamiliar with all of these figures or whether they knew of them but chose not to mention them, we cannot say. What we can say, though, is that the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka was the product of a community that not only knew of, but revere, Mañjuśrī.

**Bodhisattva Practice in Everyday Life**

A noteworthy feature of the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka — and one of the elements that is still a living part of East Asian Buddhist practice today — is its detailed prescription for the thoughts that a bodhisattva should bring forth while carrying out ordinary daily activities. All of these thoughts are directed toward the welfare of others, and though well over one hundred such thoughts are described in each of the versions of this smaller sūtra, the format of all of them is the same: “When the bodhisattva is [carrying out a certain activity], he should wish that all living beings [will attain a certain benefit].” These activities range from the impure (enjoying himself in the harem, going to the toilet) to the sublime (being filial to his parents, putting on the monastic robe for the first time), underscoring the fact that, for the authors of this text, the bodhisattva path could be cultivated in the context of virtually every activity.

These wishes have often been described in secondary literature as “vows” — that is, as promises made by the bodhisattva to accomplish certain things — and when reading only the Chinese translations of the text it is easy to see why this should be the case. Zhi Qian’s rendition of these passages (subsequently adopted by both Buddhābhadrā and Śikṣānanda) employs the character yuan 頒, which would later become a technical term in Chinese Buddhism for the vows of a bodhisattva. For example, the sixth wish (to be performed while the bodhisattva is still living at home) reads as follows:

> When putting on a jeweled necklace, [the bodhisattva] should wish that all living beings will be released from their heavy burden and from the various ornate and desirable things.

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29 The name of Vairocana may appear in transcription in Lokakṣema’s version as one of the epithets of Śākyamuni (Huilouyan 華留延; see T 280: 10.446a9 and cf. Coblin 1983: 249, #183). There is no term that can be correlated with it in Zhi Qian’s version, however, and it is difficult to be certain that this restoration is correct. At any rate, the name never appears again in the sūtra.

30 Shi Chikai: personal communication, 2000 (based on her experiences as a Buddhist nun in Taiwan).

31 There are, however, no references to thoughts that the bodhisattva should have while actually violating the precepts against killing, stealing, lying, and so on. (In light of this absence it is probably significant that the text does not hesitate to recommend thoughts to be cultivated while indulging in sexual activity.)
This might seem, at first glance, to say that the bodhisattva is vowing to cause others to attain release—and, at the same time, to get rid of their jewelry! In other translations by Zhi Qian, however, the term yuan 願 is often used in its more basic meaning of “wish” or even “desire.” We should not jump to the conclusion, therefore, that this passage is referring to bodhisattva vows in the technical sense.

If we turn to Lokakashema’s translation for comparison, the corresponding passage reads as follows:

When putting on the seven jewels, [the bodhisattva] should think to himself: “May all people below heaven in the ten directions be released from their heavy burden and attain rest.”

This rendition might seem, at first glance, to mean “[I] will cause all people under heaven in the ten directions to be released.” There is no first-person pronoun, however, and Lokakashema does not shrink from using such pronouns elsewhere in his work. In fact, what we seem to have here is a construction of a quite different kind: the use of the word shi 使 to express the speaker’s wish or hope that a certain situation may come about, as recently documented by Karashima Seishi.

The Tibetan confirms this interpretation, for here the grammar makes it clear that the bodhisattva is merely wishing, and not vowing, that these good results will come about. The Tibetan reads as follows:

When adorning himself with jewels, the bodhisattva should think: “May all beings put down their burden by crossing over from the fearful cycle of becoming.”

rgyan-gyis brgyan-pa’i tshe byang-chub sems-dpa’ sems-can thams-cad srid-par byung-ba’ jigs-pa’i pha-rol-tu phyin-pas khur bor-bar gyur-cig ces sems bskyed-de

32 T 281: 10.447c1–2.
33 See in particular the Siyuon jing 四願經 (T 735), in which the four items in question are clearly wishes, not vows. The same usage can be seen in T 511 (Pingsha wang wayuan jing 萧沙王五願經, The Sutra on the Five Wishes of Binbisāra), a text which may also be the work of Zhi Qian (cf. Nattier 2003b: 241).
34 T 282: 10.451b29–c2.
35 Karashima 1999: 143, n.43. Karashima’s discussion is particularly relevant here in that it takes as its point of departure the version of the larger Sukhāvatīvyūha (Amituo samyesamfo salufo-tan guodu ren dao jing 阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛樓過渡人道經, T 362) now considered to have been produced by Lokakashema. Other examples of this usage can also be found in Lokakashema’s texts; see for example his version of the Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā (Daoxing banruo jing 道行般若經 T 224), where the bodhisattva Sadāpraturita, offered a boon by the god Śakra, says “May my body be returned to its former condition” (shi wo shentu ping ju ru gu 使我身體平復如故 [8.472c20]); cf. Skt. tena devendra satyena satyavacanena mama yathā paurāṇo ‘yam atmahābhāvo bhavatu (Vaidya ed., p. 248, lines 12–13). I would like to thank Karashima Seishi for bringing the passage in the Aṣṭa to my attention.
36 Ōtani vol. 25, 94.2.6–7. In this instance the Ōtani (Peking) version reads gyur-gecig, but in most cases the correct form in -cig is used.
In sum, we may conclude that the underlying Indian text phrased these thoughts in optative form – that is, as wishes for the welfare of all beings – and not as vows (which are often expressed in the simple future tense and/or accompanied by a “sanction clause” specifying the penalty to be imposed if the bodhisattva fails to carry out his promise). 37 Given the ambiguity of these Chinese translations, however, it is not surprising that later generations of readers would sometimes have interpreted them as “vows.” Such a reading is explicit, I believe, in two apocryphal texts that borrowed material from these passages: the Buddhist *Pusa yingluo benye jing* 菩薩璎珞本業經 and the Daoist Lingbao 靈寶 scriptures. 38

In a sūtra that is noteworthy for its emphasis on symmetry, the section recounting the bodhisattva’s good wishes toward others is quite asymmetrical. As mentioned above, only a few reflections (eleven in each of the two translations) for the lay bodhisattva are offered, while the overwhelming majority (well over a hundred) are offered for his monastic counterpart. The bulk of the discussion here, in other words, is devoted to practices to be performed by the bodhisattva after he has been ordained as a monk. 39

An additional asymmetry in this section can be identified as well. In the brief section dealing with reflections to be practiced by the layman the benefits to others named in the bodhisattva’s reflections are generally the opposite of the activity in which he himself is engaged. When interacting with his family, for example, he should wish that others will be released from the bonds of affection; when visiting his wife’s bedroom, enjoying the performances of singing girls, or diverting himself with the women of his harem (cainü 掳女), he should wish that others will be freed from sensual desire. And when putting on his jewelry – as seen in the example given above – the bodhisattva should wish not that others will enjoy the same luxury that he does, but that they will “put down the heavy burden” (an expression usually used to refer to final liberation, involving release from the five skandhas) and, in Zhi Qian’s version, be freed from such pleasant (if frivolous) things!

The benefits envisioned by the monastic bodhisattva, by contrast, are positively correlated by analogy to his own activities. When he goes out the door, for example, the monk should wish that all living beings will succeed in getting out of the triple world; when he turns toward the road, he should wish that all beings will turn toward the unsurpassed Dharma. When he sees a thorny tree, he should wish that all beings will succeed in eliminating the three poisons of passion, aversion, and delu-

37 For examples of this standard format for vows, see Kagawa 1989; a discussion in English (with some additional examples) can be found in Nattier 2003a: 147–151.
38 On these and other indigenous Chinese compositions that borrowed material from the translations of the smaller *Buddhāvatāmsaka* by Lokakṣema or Zhi Qian see Appendix 2 below.
39 In its assumption that the bodhisattva path may begin while one is still a householder, but proceeds necessarily toward ordination as a monk, the smaller *Buddhāvatāmsaka* resembles many other Mahāyāna sūtras, notably the *Ugrapariprcchā*; see Nattier 2003a, especially pp. 121–127.
sion;\(^{40}\) when he sees a tree that is flowering, he should wish that all beings will become equipped with the thirty-two major and the (eighty) minor marks.\(^{41}\) In sum, implicit throughout this discussion is the idea that the life of the layman is pervaded by activities that are contrary to the Dharma, while the life of the monk is easily harmonized with its practice.

The sheer number of these wishes provides us with a wealth of detail concerning how the authors of the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka envisioned the lay bodhisattva and his monastic counterpart. The lay bodhisattva is clearly male, for a number of the activities described involve his relations with women; there is not a word, by contrast, about a female bodhisattva interacting with her husband, dealing with her servants, or arranging a meeting with a male paramour.\(^{42}\) Moreover, the lay bodhisattva described here is clearly a man of some substance; not only does he have a wife and children, a house, and fine jewelry, but he has access to other (surely not inexpensive) pleasures as well. There is no discussion, by contrast, of thoughts to be brought forth in situations that a bodhisattva of lower status might experience — while toiling in the fields, for example, or being conscripted into the army, or being beaten by his master. The bodhisattva envisioned in this sūtra, in sum, is a figure familiar from many other Mahāyāna texts: a male belonging to a wealthy and privileged class.

In its discussion of practices for the renunciant bodhisattva the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka provides numerous details that reveal the authors’ understanding of the monastic life. There are reflections to be performed when the bodhisattva abandons the household life, enters the monastery (T 281 fo zongmiao 佛宗廟, T 282 fo si 佛寺),\(^{43}\) cuts off his hair and beard, observes the monastic rules, and is assigned an upādhyāya (heshang 和尚) and an ācārya (shi 師).\(^{44}\) He is also described as taking refuge in the three jewels and sitting in meditation, focusing on his breathing (in Zhi Qian’s version, “counting his breaths” shuxi 數息) and controlling his thoughts (T 281 shouyi 守意, T 282 huinianguan 倖念觀). There are reflections to perform when putting on each of the three monastic robes and when going on his begging rounds, with different reflections to be employed depending on whether he receives delicious food, unappealing food, or no food at all. In sum, the life of the monastic bodhisattva is portrayed in quite traditional terms.

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\(^{40}\) This analogy may be less than transparent to modern readers, but the three poisons are commonly described as “thorns” or “arrows” (Skt. sara, Pāli salla) in early Buddhist literature. PTSD 699a.

\(^{41}\) These examples are drawn from the Pusa benye jing; virtually all of the items found there have a general counterpart in the Dousha jing (i.e., in T 283), but the specifics are sometimes different.

\(^{42}\) This is typical of Mahāyāna scriptures translated into Chinese during this period; see Harrison 1987 and Nattier 2003a, especially pp. 96–100.

\(^{43}\) It has been suggested that the term miao 廟 used by Zhi Qian in this passage refers to a stūpa, not to a monastery, but this can easily be refuted; see Sasaki 1995: 51 and 1997: 104–105 and Nattier 2003a: 89–93.

\(^{44}\) T 281 reads daoxiaoshi 大小師 (10.447c24), an expression that does not appear elsewhere in Buddhist translation literature of this period.
More mundane activities are described as well. There are thoughts to be cultivated when the bodhisattva goes uphill or downhill, goes along a straight or a winding road, opens or closes a gate, sees a mountain, or stops to cool off under a tree. There are also reflections coordinated with various acts of personal hygiene, including washing his face, brushing his teeth, and urinating or defecating. For virtually every moment of the day, in sum, the text prescribes a specific good wish that the monastic bodhisattva should generate toward others.

In addition to its portrayal of lay and monastic bodhisattvas, this portion of the sūtra also provides valuable information on its authors’ understanding of the nature of the Mahāyāna. By wishing that all beings will attain the thirty-two marks—a reflection that occurs more than once in each version of the text—the bodhisattva is, of course, wishing that they will attain Buddhahood rather than Arhatship. Likewise he is told to wish for all beings to attain the four fearlessnesses, the ten powers, and the Buddha’s eighteen special qualities (all items which belong only to Buddhas). He also wishes that all beings will put on the armor (i.e., the armor of the bodhisattva’s vow to attain Buddhahood), be intent on the Great Way (dadao 大道, i.e., the Mahāyāna), and quickly attain Buddhahood. It is beyond question, therefore, that the authors of the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka were enthusiastic advocates of the bodhisattva path and that they sought to recommend it to all.

While an equivalent of the term “Mahāyāna” occurs several times in these sūtras (six times in the Dousha jing group and three in the Pusa benye jing), no term that could be construed as a translation of “Hīnayāna” occurs at all. Nor do we see any explicit critique of those who are not practicing the bodhisattva path. Indeed, the idea that the role of a Buddha is to help others become Arhats seems still to be present (e.g., in T 281 at 10.448c4, where the bodhisattva is told to wish that all beings become Buddhas and then develop a saṃgha of śrāvakas, 當眾生功滿得佛成弟子眾).

The smaller Buddhāvatamsaka thus speaks in general terms of “all beings” entering the Mahāyāna, but it does not criticize those who do not. Indeed, it is not clear whether its authors even considered it possible for all beings to become bodhisattvas in this life; the text never suggests, for example, that women might embark on the bodhisattva path. Thus while the perspective articulated in this text could be de-

45 These should not, of course, be considered straightforward descriptions of living members of the Buddhist community of the authors’ time. For a discussion of a methodological problem involved in extracting historical information from an avowedly prescriptive source see Nattier 2003a: 63–69.

46 To the best of my knowledge the sole term used to translate hīnayāna in this period is xiaodao 小道 (“small way”); other expressions, such as xiaosheng 小乘 “small vehicle” and liesheng 劣乘 “low vehicle”, appear only later.

47 The sole reference to “gentlemen and ladies” (zuxingzi zuxingnü 族姓子族姓女, Skt. kulaputra and kuladuhiri) in the Pusa benye jing (10.447b19) is unsupported by any other statement in the text, and it has no counterpart in the Dousha jing group.
scribed as being en route toward a stance of "bodhisattva universalism," it has not yet fully entered that camp.  

**Stages of the Bodhisattva Path**

One of the best-known features of the *Buddhāvatāmsaka* is its list of the ten stages of the bodhisattva path. The larger *Buddhāvatāmsaka* in fact contains not one but two such lists: one found in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (preserved in Sanskrit as well as in Chinese and Tibetan) and another in a part of the larger *ṣūtra* that has a parallel in the smaller version. The names of the stages in the latter list also appear in the *Ganḍavyūha*, though without a detailed discussion of their associated practices. Because a version of the *Ganḍavyūha* has survived in Sanskrit, however, we have access to one Indic-language version of these names.

The smaller *Buddhāvatāmsaka* contains just one list of stages, though they are described here in considerable detail. As in the preceding section of the *ṣūtra*, the discourse on this topic is given not by a Buddha, but by a bodhisattva, and the text makes no pretense of claiming that these teachings were received from Śākyamuni Buddha himself. On the contrary, it states explicitly that the bodhisattva in question, Dharmamati, received these teachings from the Buddhas of the ten directions while he was absorbed in *samādhi*.

The ten stages of the bodhisattva path enumerated by Dharmamati (with the Sanskrit names found in the *Ganḍavyūha* given for comparison) are the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lokakṣema (T 283)</th>
<th>Zhi Qian (T 281)</th>
<th><em>Gaṇḍavyūha</em>&lt;sup&gt;50&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 波藍耆兜波</td>
<td>發意</td>
<td>prathamacittotpādika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 阿闍浮</td>
<td>治地</td>
<td>ādikarmika</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 渝阿闍</td>
<td>應行</td>
<td>yogācāra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 阔摩期</td>
<td>生貴</td>
<td>jannaja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 波渝三般</td>
<td>修成</td>
<td>pūrvayogasampanna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 阿耆三般</td>
<td>行等</td>
<td>śuddhādhyāśaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 阿惟越致</td>
<td>不退</td>
<td>avivarta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 鳳摩羅浮童男</td>
<td>童真</td>
<td>kumarabhūta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>48</sup> For a discussion of the two types of bodhisattva universalism – a “weak form,” which states that all people should become bodhisattvas and criticizes those who do not, and a “strong form,” which claims that all people are on the bodhisattva path to Buddhahood, whether they realize it or not – see Nattier 2003a: 174–176.

<sup>49</sup> A convenient (if by now somewhat dated) English summary of these and other bhūmi systems can be found in Hirakawa 1963: 65–69.

<sup>50</sup> Vaidya ed., p. 84, lines 19–28.
There are numerous thorny problems in establishing the Indic antecedents for these Chinese transcriptions and translations, and it is clear that the renditions given by Lokakṣema and Zhi Qian (and indeed, in the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the larger Buddhāvatamsaka) do not always match the Sanskrit terms given in the Gaṇḍavyūha. We need not examine these in detail, however, here. For our purposes it is most important to note the orderly progression from the initial inspiration to become a bodhisattva (prathamacittotpāda) to receiving consecration (abhiṣeka) as the Buddha’s rightful heir. Indeed, one of the most distinctive features of the system found in the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka is that its last three stages have explicitly royal symbolism. From the eighth stage, where the bodhisattva becomes a kumārabhūta (a term which means “prince” as well as simply “young man”), to the ninth stage of “crown prince” or “heir apparent” (yuvarāja) to the tenth stage of being consecrated (abhiṣikta) as the next king, the terms used for these levels all resonate with the symbolism of a young man succeeding his father on the throne.

In this respect it may be significant that an earlier part of the sūtra (§2a–j) lists only one bodhisattva for each of the ten directions. Each of these, to be sure, was accompanied by a large assembly of other bodhisattvas as they traveled to the Sahā world of Śākyamuni, yet these lesser bodhisattvas are never named. Might it be that the idea of linear succession is informing the narrative here as well?

In this regard we should also take note of the fact that, although this scripture is famous for its portrayal of manifold Buddhas throughout the ten directions, only one Buddha is mentioned in each of these directions. When larger numbers of Buddhas seem to appear – as, for example, when each of the Śakras in the Sahā world sees Śākyamuni Buddha appear directly before him (§7a) – the sūtra portrays these not as “real” Buddhas but only as emanations. For the authors of the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka, then, the universe is filled with Buddhas, yet this is still true in a somewhat restricted sense: only one Buddha resides in each of the ten directions, though other buddha-forms (that is, emanations) can also be made to appear. This vision of a universe with other Buddhas existing in the present thus coexists quite harmoniously, at least for the authors of this scripture, with the traditional idea that only one Buddha can appear in any given world at a time.

As to the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, the version found in the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka was clearly known to the authors of the Gaṇḍavyūha (where a nearly identical list of names appears), but the latter work does not discuss their content in detail. In the Pusa benye jing and the Dousha jing group, by contrast – that is, in the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka – practices associated with each stage are set forth. More

51 The full title, in the Sanskrit text, is mahādharma-yauvarājyābhiṣikta.
specifically, for each stage Dharmamati enumerates two sets of ten practices to be carried out by the bodhisattva as he progresses on the path.

For those familiar with the system found in the Daśabhūmika, what is most striking about the description of the ten stages in the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka is the utter absence of the pāramitās. The Daśabhūmika, as is well known, associates one pāramitā with each of the bodhisattva stages, expanding the list of perfections to ten in the process. In the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka’s discussion of the stages, however, the word pāramitā does not even appear. The word appears twice (translated as duwuji 度無極 “crossing to the limitless”) in Zhi Qian’s Pusa benye jing and three times (transcribed, in what would subsequently become the standard form in Buddhist Chinese, as boluomi 波羅蜜) in the Dousha jing group (all of the occurrences are in T 282). Yet in neither recension are the six items even listed, let alone discussed in detail. In T 281, cultivating “the various pāramitās” (no specific number is given) appears in a list of bodhisattva practices mentioned by the Jñānaśrī, while one of the many wishes for living beings recommended by Maṇjuśrī is that they may attain the tactical skill associated with the path (de daofangbian 得道方便) as well as prajñāpāramitā (hui duwuji 慧度無極). Lokakṣema’s version also contains a wish that living beings may enter the prajñāpāramitā, but here it seems to be considered a text (xi ru banruo boluomi jing zhong 悉入般若波羅蜜經中). Where Zhi Qian refers only to the various pāramitās, the parallel in Lokakṣema’s work refers to six (ru yu liu boluomi jing zhong 入於六波羅蜜經中). Elsewhere a third use of the term occurs in Lokakṣema’s version, this time explicitly referring to upāyakauśalya (ouhejushelu 濱和拘舍羅) as a pāramitā.

In sum, the treatment of the stages in the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka is completely unrelated to the system of pāramitās, focusing instead on bodhisattva practices of other kinds. The authors of the sūtra (or at least, those responsible for the composition of the middle portion of the text dealing with the bodhisattva’s good wishes for others) seem to be aware of the existence of some system of pāramitās, but that is clearly not a major inspiration here.

52 The list of the ten paramis found in certain late Pāli scriptures is significantly different and cannot be viewed as directly related to the Daśabhūmika list. I strongly suspect, however, that the fact that the Pāli list consists of ten (and not six) perfections reflects the late date of its composition, dating from a period in which texts like the Daśabhūmika were already in circulation. In other words, it seems likely that the Pāli list is a (deliberately different) imitation of the Daśabhūmika list rather than that the two share a common ancestry.
53 10.447b11.
54 447e21.
55 453b18.
56 451b2.
57 451c24–25.
58 Only Lokakṣema’s version specifies that there are six. Since no list is ever given, it is not clear – especially since upāyakauśalya seems to be considered a pāramitā in Lokakṣema’s text – whether the “standard” list of six items is meant. Non-standard lists of pāramitās occur in a
Dharmamati first provides the names of all ten of the stages, then describes the specific practices (grouped into two sets of ten items) associated with each. Though the pāramitās are absent from the discussion, many other practices listed here are quite familiar. The bodhisattva is instructed, for example, to practice loving-kindness (*maitrī* toward others and to view all things as characterized by impermanence, suffering, and absence of self (the well-known “three marks” of *anītya*, *duḥkha*, and *anātman*), plus a fourth item, emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which is often added to this list.  

He should review the four great elements (earth, water, fire, and wind) and the three levels of the triple world (*kāmadhātu*, *rūpadhātu*, *arūpadhātu*). He should cultivate equanimity when he hears that the Buddha and his Dharma are praised or blamed or that the Dharma is declining or not. He should become perfectly pure in the deeds of body, speech, and mind and increasingly skilled in the bases of paranormal power (*rūdhipāda*). As he reaches an advanced level in his practice, he gains the ability to know what others are thinking, as well as where and how they spent their previous lives.

None of this would be out of place in a non-Mahāyāna scripture, and most of these items could easily be used to describe an advanced candidate for Arhatship. Yet there are other practices recommended here that make it clear that we have entered another world. The path begins when the future bodhisattva, entering the first stage (*pratamacittotpādika*), sees the Buddha and is impressed by his physical beauty, his impressive deportment, and his teachings. This is reminiscent of what we find in the widely circulated Dīpamkara jātaka, yet the *sūtra* immediately takes the idea of “seeing the Buddha” to a further level. The first-stage bodhisattva, we are told, will not only make offerings to the Buddhas (Lokakṣema’s version adds “and bodhisattvas”), but will be able to see all the Buddhas and will attain a variety of *samādhis*. Thus the idea of being able to perceive the Buddhas of the ten directions—an experience made possible by the Buddha at the outset of the *sūtra*, and experienced in the following section by Dharmamati while in meditation—is appears as a part of the bodhisattva’s training from the very beginning.

The second stage (*ādikarmika*) begins with cultivating positive thoughts toward others: thinking of their welfare, purifying and softening their hearts, and practicing loving-kindness (*maitrī*) toward all. The bodhisattva is also told to practice seeing others as himself, as well as viewing all beings as the Buddha. The second set of ten practices associated with this stage is devoted to Dharma-study, and the bodhi-

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59 The text does not make the standard scholastic distinction between conditioned (*samskṛta*) dharmas, which are characterized by all three of the traditional marks, and the unconditioned (*asamskṛta*) which is characterized only by the mark of no-self.

60 I will not enumerate all twenty of the practices associated with each stage, but will simply summarize them throughout this discussion.
sattva is instructed to first study the scriptures, then leave home (Lokakṣema “dwell alone,” Zhi Qian “go far from his native place”) and apprentice himself to a good teacher. He should then devote himself to energetic study and should retain all that he has learned.

On the third stage (yogācāra) the bodhisattva trains himself to become detached from all the elements of his experience, seeing them as impermanent, painful, devoid of self, and so on. It is also at this stage that he reviews the four great elements and the three levels of the triple world, after being mindful of living beings, the Dharma, and buddha-fields.

Thus far the bodhisattva’s practice has been carried out in what we might call constructive terms – that is, cultivating positive actions with respect to the Buddhas (making offerings to them and viewing them in meditation) and correct thoughts toward living beings and the elements of one’s experience, without questioning the reality of any of them. Entering the fourth stage (*janmajaśṭha?), however, the deconstructive language (or perhaps better, a “rhetoric of negation”) that is so familiar from certain other Mahāyāna sūtras begins to appear. Now the bodhisattva is told to view all of these items – including living beings and the buddha-fields where they dwell – as empty, illusory, and (in Lokakṣema’s version) non-existent (wusuoyou 無所有). The second set of practices takes this approach even further, applying the concept of emptiness to past, present and future Buddhas (or, according to Zhi Qian, “buddha-mind” foyi 佛意). At this stage, in other words, the ontological status of the very items that have served as the focus of the bodhisattva’s self-cultivation is being challenged.

At the fifth stage (*prayogasampanna) the text resumes its positive language, for here the bodhisattva is urged to protect and benefit sentient beings and to cause them to attain nirvāṇa. In the second set of ten, however, the rhetoric of negation returns, for the bodhisattva should reflect that all the beings of the ten directions are entirely empty.

In the sixth stage (*adhyāṣayasaṃpanna) the bodhisattva begins by cultivating equanimity, remaining undisturbed whether the Buddha and his Dharma are praised or blamed, whether he hears that the Dharma is declining or not, and whether he hears that living beings (whom he should teach) and Buddhist scriptures (which he should learn) are many or few. The second set instructs him to view various items as being empty, illusory, and so on, clearly in an attempt to undermine the bodhisattva’s attachment to anything at all.61

It is well known that in the Daśabhūmika-sūtra the bodhisattva is said to become incapable of retrogression when he reaches the eighth stage. In the smaller Buddhā-

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61 This is one of the places where it is clear that Zhi Qian and Lokakṣema were working from quite different recensions. In Lokakṣema’s text the discussion concerns “all dharmas”; Zhi Qian’s version, by contrast, does not mention “all dharmas”, but begins by saying that the bodhisattva does not conceptualize and does not think in terms of a self or what belongs to the self.
vatamsaka, however, this takes place at the seventh (avaiwartika). The discussion of this level begins by recapitulating the first set of practices for the sixth stage, now rephrasing them in terms of “not turning back”: whether the Buddha, the Dharma, bodhisattvas (and so on) are available or not, the bodhisattva will not turn back from his goal. The second set turns to the relationship between the one and the many: the bodhisattva becomes adept at moving back and forth between a single dharma (Lokakṣema “a single wisdom” yihi 一慧) and many, between seeing a multitude of living beings and seeing nothing but emptiness, and between the diversity of conceptual thought and the one-pointedness of meditation.

At the eighth stage the bodhisattva becomes a prince (kumārabhūta), a term which in other texts often serves as an epithet of Mañjuśrī. It is here that he achieves complete purity in the actions of body, speech and mind, as well as acquiring the ability to read the minds of others. Now he views living beings exclusively with loving-kindness (maitri), and he cultivates the bases of paranormal power (shenzu 神足). In the second set of practices the bodhisattva focuses at first on the various buddha-fields, acquiring the ability not only to see them but to travel freely from one to another. He also prepares himself to teach as a Buddha does by studying the Buddha’s voice.

At the ninth stage the bodhisattva becomes a crown prince (yuvarāja), standing on the threshold of his coronation as Dharma-king. At this stage he is not only able to know what other people are thinking, but he perceives all of their good and bad actions, their past lives, and where they will be reborn. He also knows the good and bad features (i.e., the purity and impurity) of the various buddha-fields throughout the ten directions. In the second set of practices appropriate to this stage he is said to carefully study the conduct of a Dharma-king (i.e., a Buddha), whose activities he will soon be called upon to emulate.

In the tenth and final stage, the bodhisattva is “consecrated” (*abhiśikta, translated by Zhi Qian as “appointed to the place,” buchu 補處) and carries out his final preparations for buddhahood. Among the abilities acquired at this stage are the power to move and to illuminate countless buddha-fields (and to stop them from

62 It is probably significant that the only bhumi system in which kumārabhūta appears as the name of one of the stages appears in a scripture that prominently features Mañjuśrī.
63 As in many relatively early Mahāyāna scriptures, the first of the four brahmavihāras, i.e., maitri “loving-kindness,” is far more prominent than the second (karuṇā). Cf. Nattier 2003a: 146.
64 Lokakṣema 當學佛音響, Zhi Qian 學佛音出諸法.
65 Lokakṣema and Zhi Qian differ noticeably in content here. For Zhi Qian, the bodhisattva studies the Dharma-king’s departure, his comings and goings, his awesome appearance, issuing of commands, and circulating through (inspecting? xunxing 巡行) his buddhaksetra. Loka-kṣema, on the other hand, repeatedly refers to studying the Buddha’s palace (sic, fagong 佛宮). I suspect that there was some confusion concerning an underlying *rājaabhavana here.
66 This expression is of course used elsewhere (by Zhi Qian as well as by other translators) as part of the translation of ekajātikratibaddha as yisheng bu chu 一生補處, usually given in English as “bound to [just] one birth.”
moving, according to Zhi Qian). He will also establish the Dharma in these fields, benefiting and pacifying the beings there. At this stage he finally acquires all the dharmas that constitute a Buddha and is ready to succeed to his place. 67

Several things are noteworthy about this sūtra’s presentation of the bodhisattva stages. First, as noted above, it exhibits noteworthy continuity with non-Mahāyāna practices, such as the practice of maitrī, cultivating an awareness of the three marks, and being mindful of the four great elements. The basic stance of this sūtra, in other words, is not to reject earlier practices but to incorporate them into a larger scheme. Second is a distinctively Mahāyāna emphasis on the importance of seeing the many Buddhas — i.e., the Buddhas of the ten directions — coupled with the deliberate cultivation of visionary samādhi. Third, great emphasis is placed on the Buddha’s physical beauty and his paranormal powers (two of the items that are said to inspire the beginning bodhisattva to undertake the first stage of the path). Fourth is the ever-present refrain of buddha-fields, which are mentioned repeatedly, both as an object of contemplation and as a destination for travel, throughout the text.

The bodhisattva path as understood in the smaller Buddhāvatamśaka, in sum, involves seeing (and serving) a vast number of Buddhas in life after life, as one gradually acquires the qualities that will lead to becoming a Buddha oneself. It is an emphatically gradual path — there is no sudden enlightenment here, much less an inherent “buddha-nature” — but it is also a cosmic drama set in a universe filled with buddha-fields. The bodhisattva has earthly teachers, to be sure, but he is also a performer on a vast stage, observing and being observed by the Buddhas of the ten directions. The drama culminates, in its final stages, with his progression from prince to heir apparent to consecration as a king.

Symmetry and Soteriology: The Buddhas of the Ten Directions

The smaller Buddhāvatamśaka features a number of spectacular appearances of multiple Buddhas. Śākyamuni, who has just attained awakening as the sūtra begins (§1a), reappears on two occasions to divide his body in order to manifest himself in multiple locales (§4d and §7a), and the Buddhas of the ten directions, who become visible at the beginning of the sūtra (§2a–j) reappear (to the bodhisattva Dharmamati, at any rate, who sees them in a vision) toward the latter part of the text (§§8a–9a). Yet very little is actually said by any of these Buddhas in the course of the narrative. By far the majority of the sūtra is spoken by two bodhisattvas: Mañjuśrī, who offers a long discourse on bodhisattva practices to be carried out in everyday life (§6a–c), and Dharmamati, who describes the ten stages of the bodhisattva path (§9b–l).

67 Several of the items contained in the second set of practices for the tenth stage in Zhi Qian’s version occur in the first set in Lokakṣema’s text, and vice versa, so I have not treated the two sets separately here.
The traditional idea that authoritative teachings should ultimately stem from a Buddha is still present, for when Mañjuśrī offers his long discussion of the bodhisattva path he is described as doing so “by the Buddha’s power” (*buddhanubhāvena), and Dharmamati states that he was taught the content of the ten stages by the Buddhas of the ten directions. Nonetheless the actual speaker, in both cases, is not a Buddha but a bodhisattva.

This may well reflect the actual circumstances of the composition of the text; it is entirely possible – indeed, it is virtually certain – that the new teachings presented here were first articulated by men who had embarked on the bodhisattva path long after the death of Śākyamuni. Yet to admit that the source of these new teachings was not Śākyamuni but one of his followers was an audacious step. In a particular community where a certain individual held a position of authority, to revere one of his discourses (known to be the words of a certain Subhūti, or Mañjuśrī, or Dharmamati) might be quite acceptable during his lifetime. In subsequent generations, however, the idea that an unknown bodhisattva could speak on his own authority could open the door to innovations by any and all members of the Buddhist community. One solution to this problem, therefore, was to “domesticate” texts that made their non-*buddhavacana* status too transparent by shifting the discourse into the mouth of the Buddha. Elsewhere I have discussed the process of “sūtraification” – that is, the upgrading of a text that apparently began as a sermon by a well-known monk to the status of *buddhavacana*.68 In the case of the smaller *Buddhāvatāṃsaka* we may be able to observe such a shift taking place not in India, but in China. In two apocryphal scriptures that borrowed virtually the entire discussion of the ten stages from Lokakṣema’s T 283, the bodhisattva Dharmamati no longer appears. Now the speaker is Śākyamuni Buddha himself, portrayed as responding to a question posed by Mañjuśrī.69

Above we have noted that, while the *sūtra* devotes significant attention to the motif of the “Buddhas of the ten directions,” none of these figures is singled out for special attention. To put it another way, these Buddhas appear as a chorus and not as individuals, with no featured soloist among them. As a group, they convey important teachings to Dharmamati; yet the *sūtra* never speaks of the possibility of establishing a special relationship with any one of them. There is no exhortation to be mindful of a particular Buddha or to recite his name, nor is there even a single mention of the importance of aspiring to be born in a certain realm. Thus the smaller *Buddhāva-tāṃsaka* is not a “Pure Land” *sūtra*, if by this term we mean a text whose central focus is on a Buddha inhabiting another world and on the possibility of rebirth there.70

68 Nattier 2003a: 11–13, n.3.
69 See the discussion of T 284 and T 1487 in Appendix 2.
70 Elsewhere I have suggested that the *Aksobhya-vyāha* – though it deals with the world of Aksobhya and not that of Amitābha – should in fact be included among “Pure Land” texts (Nattier 2000).
On the contrary, the existence of buddha-fields throughout the ten directions appears here more as a stage-setting for most Buddhist practitioners and as a source of visionary insight for a few.71

It could well be said, then, that the smaller Bhuddhavatamsaka is not a “Buddha-centered” scripture at all. Buddhahood is, of course, the envisioned destination of bodhisattva practice, and much of what is said by bodhisattvas in the text is explicitly described as having been delivered “by the Buddha’s power.” But virtually all of the teachings presented in the sûtra are given not by Buddhas, but by bodhisattvas themselves. One might say, without too much exaggeration, that the Buddhas of the ten directions are both inspirational and ornamental, but the authors’ main concern is with the progress of the bodhisattva on his path.

As to the sûtra’s treatment of bodhisattvas themselves, we may provisionally divide these into two types: the bodhisattvas who actually appear in the sûtra (the narrative characters) and the bodhisattvas to whom the sûtra is addressed (the intended audience). The latter, as we have seen, theoretically includes all Buddhists, but the specifics of the text make it clear that the authors pictured the bodhisattva as a well-to-do male. Moreover, it is clearly assumed that, after leaving the home life, the bodhisattva will become a monk. Much of the imagery (including the stages of prince, heir apparent, and consecrated king) is distinctively male, and there is no indication that the authors thought of women (or for that matter, children or the denizens of other realms, such as nāgos, yakṣas, and so on) as capable of pursuing the bodhisattva path.

In the case of the bodhisattvas who appear as narrative characters, it is noteworthy that none of them are from Śākyamuni’s Sahā realm, but all have come from other worlds. Yet, despite their otherworldly origins and their clearly advanced level of spiritual development, these figures are not portrayed as “celestial bodhisattvas.” That is, none of them is ever described as a powerful being to whom a devotee might turn for assistance in times of distress or recommended as the focus of a devotional cult. Whatever they – or at least Mañjuśrī – may have become for later believers, they are not yet portrayed as “celestial bodhisattvas” here.72

71 See Harrison 1978.
72 On this topic see Paul Harrison’s important article “Mañjuśrī and the Cult of the Celestial Bodhisattvas” (Harrison 2000). Harrison argues that the use of the term “celestial bodhisattva” is misguided; more specifically, he points out that in Lokakṣema’s translations devotion to bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī is nowhere recommended. The sole exception – and it may be an important one – is a brief passage in the larger Sukhāvatīvyūha (T 362), which Harrison has argued is a revised version of a translation by Lokakṣema (or a member of his school) in which devotees are urged to take refuge in Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta when they find themselves in dire straits (p. 172, n. 24).
Concluding Reflections

The smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka* is a profoundly visual text. It opens with the illumination by Śākyamuni of the worlds of the ten directions, and bodhisattvas are encouraged to “see the Buddhas” in meditation by undertaking the practice of *samādhi*. But it is not only in such otherworldly visions that the primarily visual character of the text is made plain. The *sūtra* also states that new bodhisattvas are inspired to undertake their vocation after seeing the Buddha, an experience in which his physical beauty, including the color of his skin, plays a major role in inspiring the disciple to follow in his footsteps.

Most important for the subsequent history of those communities that accepted the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka* as canonical may have been its validation of visionary experience as a source of new revelations. When Dharmamati emerges from *samādhi* with an account of the ten bodhisattva stages, the text makes no claim that these teachings have been passed down from Śākyamuni. On the contrary, the fact that Dharmamati received them from the Buddhas of the ten directions is deemed quite adequate as a source of authority. In a very real sense the frame of reference of this scripture has shifted from one of the six senses to another, with “thus have I seen” replacing the traditional “thus have I heard.”

The text also makes much of a theme that we might describe as “the one and the many.” On more than one occasion the Buddha Śākyamuni divides his body, allowing living beings in a multitude of places to see him as if he were present before them. But it is not only these events that generate the appearance of a multitude of Buddhas. The Buddhas of the ten directions likewise seem to be multiple versions of one being, with all of them (as well as the bodhisattvas that accompany them) having parallel names. In the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka*, in sum, the similarity of one Buddha (or one bodhisattva) to another seems more important than the individual features of any particular one.

This symmetry, as we have seen, appears to be associated with the absence of a personal relationship with any particular being; since all Buddhas are equal (and indeed, virtually identical), no particular one of them plays any special role. As if refracted through a prism, these Buddhas and bodhisattvas appear as mirror images of one another.

But it is not only on an iconographic level that such reflectivity appears in this text, for it operates on a narrative level as well. The scene at the beginning of the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka*, where the Buddha Śākyamuni has just experienced awakening at Magadha, recurs several times in the larger text: in Śīkṣānanda’s version (T 279) it occurs at the beginning of chapters 1, 7 (the portion which corresponds to the beginning of the smaller *sūtra*), 27, and 38. The beginning of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* (chapter 26) also reflects this passage, but with several improvements (as it were): the Buddha is no longer on earth, but in the *Paranirmitavāsa-vartin* heaven; when he illuminates the universe he does so not with a ray of light from his foot, but from his head (more specifically, from the tuft of hair between his
eyebrows). And even this scene is reflected once again, for when Śākyamuni Bud-
dha emits light, the other Buddhas of the ten directions do so as well.

This vision of the universe clearly found a ready audience in China, for both
translations of the shorter Buddhāvatamsaka – the Pusa benye jing and the Dousha
jing group – were avidly appropriated by the authors of indigenous scriptures, in-
cluding not only Buddhist but also Daoist texts (see Appendix 2). By contrast, we
have little evidence concerning the impact that this scripture may have had in India –
with the exception, of course, of the fact that it was preserved and amplified into the
text known today in Chinese as the Huayan jing. For specialists in the latter (and
larger) text, an appreciation of the existence of the smaller Buddhāvatamsaka as a
separate work will make possible future comparative studies highlighting the dis-
tinctive elements that were introduced into the text at a later date. As to the smaller
Buddhāvatamsaka itself, I hope to have shown that it is eminently worthy of re-
ceiving scholarly attention as an integral text in its own right.

Appendix 1

Synoptic Table of the Smaller Buddhāvatamsaka

The section numbers given below are taken from the synoptic edition in Nattier
2005 of the Dousha jing group (Taishō nos. 280, 282 and 283) and the Pusa benye
jing (T 281). Line numbers are from the CBETA edition (all are in volume ten of the
Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō).

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<td>§1c</td>
<td>445a20–25</td>
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| §5a  | 451a6–18 | 447b6–9 |
| §5b  | 451a18–25 | 447b9–10 |
| §5c  | 451a25–b2 | 447b10–15 |
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Appendix 2

Borrowings from the *Pusa benye jing* and the *Dousha jing* Group in Indigenous Chinese Scriptures

Discussions of the popularity of the *Buddhāvatamsaka* in China are generally based on the extent to which the translations of the larger *Buddhāvatamsaka* produced by Buddhahadra and Śīksanānda were quoted and commented upon by Chinese thinkers. But the translations of the smaller *Buddhāvatamsaka* produced by Lokākṣema and Zhi Qian were widely influential as well. One indication of the success of these shorter translations in gaining an audience in China is the extent to which they were appropriated by the composers of indigenous (or “apocryphal”) scriptures. The following is a list of texts – both Buddhist and Daoist – that can be shown to have borrowed passages from either Lokākṣema’s or Zhi Qian’s translation. This list contains only those scriptures that have come to my attention thus far; there may well be others that have not yet been identified.

**Texts Borrowing from Lokākṣema’s Version**

**T 284 Pusa shizhu jing** 菩薩十住經

Supposedly a translation by Gitiṣṭhīla 戒事蜜 (fl. 317–420 CE), but the fact that this scripture reproduces virtually the whole of T 283 word-for-word makes it clear that it is not an independent translation of an Indian text, but a scripture created in China. (The attribution to Gitiṣṭhīla was first made by Fei Changfang 費長房 in his *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀). The enumeration of the ten stages of the bodhisattva path remains the same, but it is encased in a different frame story: the discourse is placed in the mouth of the Buddha, not of Dharmamati, and the teachings on the ten stages are portrayed as a response to a question from Mañjuśrī. This frame, in turn, has a parallel in (and indeed, appears to be drawn from) the *Pusa neijie jing* 菩薩內戒經 (T 1487), but in a different sequence from the one found there.73

**T 1487 Pusa neijie jing** 菩薩內戒經

Supposedly a translation by Guṇāvarman 求那跋摩 (367–431 CE), this text too reproduces virtually every word of Lokākṣema’s T 283. Indeed, it seems likely that the

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original borrowing was made by its authors, and that the composers of T 284 took
their material not directly from T 283, but from this text. No scripture by this title
appears in Sengyou’s catalogue; it is listed as an anonymous translation (shìyì 失譯)
in the Zhōngjīng múlu 經目錄.74

Texts Borrowing from Zhi Qian’s Version

T 778 Pusa neixi liu boluomi jing 菩薩內習六波羅蜜經

Credited to Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調 (fl. 181–188) in modern catalogues, but Sengyou in-
cludes it on Dao’an’s list of anonymous translations (assuming this is the same text
as the Nei wai boluomi jing 內外波羅蜜經).75 The entire text appears to be apocry-
phal; it contains material relating the six meditations of the Anban shouyi jing 安般
守意經 (T 602) to the six pāramitās, the six sense organs, etc. At the end of the text,
with no context or introduction, one finds the list of ten bodhisattva stages given in
Zhi Qian’s Pusa benye jing.

T 1331 Guanding qi wan er qiu shenwang hu biqiu zhou jing 灌頂七萬二千
神王護比丘呪經

Traditionally attributed to Bo Śrīmitra 布尸蜜多羅 (fl. early 4th century CE), but
this text can easily be recognized as an apocryphon (for a convenient discussion in
English see Strickmann 1990). The text replicates Zhi Qian’s list of Buddhas and
buddha-fields of the ten directions (none of the bodhisattva names found there are
given, though the speaker bears the name of one of them). In Sengyou’s catalogue
this text appears on the list of anonymous scriptures.76

T 1485 Pusa yingluo benye jing 菩薩璎珞本業經

Supposedly a translation by Zhu Fonian 竇佛念 (fl. late fourth century CE), this text
has long been known to be an an apocryphon. It incorporates substantial material
from the Pusa benye jing (including the title), though its authors also drew from the
Huoyan jing translated by Buddhabhadra.

74 T 2146: 55.139b23.
75 T 2145: 55.17c25.
76 T 2145: 55.31a24.
Lingbao 靈寶 #6 (Taishang wuji dadao ziran zhenyi wucheng fuwen shangjing 太上無極大道自然真一五稱符文上經, HY 671)

Copies the section of Zhi Qian’s text dealing with the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions almost verbatim.  

Lingbao 靈寶 #8 (Taishang dongxuan lingbao zhiihui zuigen shangpin dajie jing 太上洞玄靈寶智慧罪根上品大戒經, HY 457)

Contains an adaptation of Zhi Qian’s treatment of the ten stages.  

Lingbao 靈寶 #11 (Dongxuan lingbao changye zhi fu jiyou yuikui mingzhen ke 洞玄靈寶長夜之府九幽玉彌明真科, HY 1400)

Contains an adaptation of Zhi Qian’s treatment of the ten stages.  

Lingbao 靈寶 #25 (Xiaomo zhiihui benyuan dajie shangpin 消魔智慧本願大戒上品, HY 344)

Copies (and adapts) a substantial portion of the section on the bodhisattva’s wishes for other beings, here interpreting them as vows.  

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77 Bokenkamp 1983: 468.


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