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On some Buddhist Uses of the *kaliyuga*

Although their respective cosmologies have much in common, Hinduism and Indian Buddhism have, from an early period, developed fairly independent eschatological doctrines and prophecies that testify to widely diverging apocalyptic anxieties and hermeneutic strategies. Whereas Hinduism, from the second–third centuries CE onward, invariably resorted to a four-period degeneration scheme ending with the dreaded kaliyuga (often compared with Iron Age as described by Hesiod), sure signs of which the Brahmins saw in foreign rule over India and the increase in “heresies” (e.g., Jainism and Buddhism), the Buddhists were (and to some extent remain) obsessed with the gradual decline and final demise of Buddhism itself, a scenario which they predicted with numerous and regularly updated timetables. Quite unexpectedly though, the Buddhists increasingly resorted to the Brahmanical kaliyuga, using it in a surprisingly wide variety of doctrinal and historical contexts and often side by side with their own traditional eschatological repertoire (the so-called five degenerations or corruptions). The present paper aims at collecting the most significant instances of the Indian Buddhist appropriation of the kaliyuga, discussing them and attempting to disclose their internal logic. It ends with a detailed discussion of the question whether and under which circumstances buddhas appear in the End Times.

1 Introduction

From the earliest strata of the Purāṇas (fourth century CE?), Buddhists and other non- and/or anti-Vedic “sectarians” (*pāṣaṇḍa*) became a central feature of orthodox Brahmanical/Hindu apocalyptic prophecies centred on the *kaliyuga* and the imminence of the End.¹ The increase in “heresies” (a frequent but misleading translation

1 To put it in a nutshell, the *kaliyuga* is the fourth and final period in a fourfold degeneration sequence (*kṛtayuga*, *tretāyuga*, *dvāparayuga* and *kaliyuga*) describing the gradual corruption of cosmic and religious law (*dharma*), human morality and lifespan. On the *kaliyuga*, see, for example, Stietenron, “Kaliyuga in Indien;” Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 885–968; Koskikallio, “Yugas, Ideologies, Sacrifices;” González-Reimann, *Mahābhārata and the Yugas*; Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*; Eltschinger, “Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy,” 32–61 (and n. 13, 32–33, for further references) ≈ Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 40–72 (and n. 16, 40), and Bronkhorst, “Historiography of Brahmanism.” My understanding of the terms “apocalypticism” and “apocalyptic” (see Eltschinger, “Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy,” 31–33 ≈ Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 37–39) is strongly indebted to the work of Bernard McGinn. Let it be reminded that according to the American historian (McGinn, *Antichrist*, 88), “[o]ne of the characteristics of apocalyptic eschatology is its drive to find meaning in current events by seeing

Note: Most sincere thanks are due to Jérôme Ducor, Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Francesco Sferra.

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<https://doi.org/10.1515/10.1515/9783110597745-005>

of *pāṣaṇḍa*) is even considered the most unmistakable sign of the Last Days – something it was not yet in the slightly earlier epic descriptions of the *kaliyuga* (especially in *Mahābhārata* [MBh] 3.186 and 188).² By contrast, the *kaliyuga* does not feature in early – and genuinely – Buddhist eschatology. This is, in fact, hardly surprising, for the fourfold *yuga* scheme provides a fully mature and self-sufficient account of socio-cosmic time and degeneration when it first appears, with no easily reconstructible prehistory, in the Brahmanical *Mānavadharmasāstra* (MDhŚ) and MBh (both second to third century CE at the latest).³ The pattern thus looks like a typically and exclusively Brahmanical conception, one that the Buddhists apparently had no reason to emulate or to appropriate. At first sight, indeed, the Buddhists did not need to import any alien account of apocalyptic or cosmological eschatology. First, their own versions of the end of a sub-eon⁴ were frightful and

them in light of the scenario of the End. Such a posteriori, or after-the-fact, uses of apocalypticism are often reactions to major historical changes [...] that do not fit into the received view of providential history. By making a place for such events in the story of the End, the final point that gives all history meaning, apocalyptic eschatology incorporates the unexpected into the divinely fore-ordained and gives it permanent significance.” In what follows, I provisionally distinguish between apocalyptic and cosmological accounts of the *eschaton*. Whereas cosmological eschatology is focused (generally in the present tense) on the disappearance of the universe as a whole in both its physical and metaphysical constituents, apocalyptic eschatology often consists in a prophecy (generally in the future tense) that interprets dramatic present-day events as sure signs of the End. Whereas *Mānavadharmasāstra* (MDhŚ) 1.81–86 and *Mahābhārata* (MBh) 3.148 provide good examples of a cosmological description of the four *yugas* (see *Manu's Code of Law*, ed. and trans. Olivelle, 91 and *Mahābhārata*, trans. Buitenen, 504–506), MBh 3.186.26–75 is typical of an apocalyptic use of the *kaliyuga* (*Mahābhārata*, trans. Buitenen, 594–596).

2 See Eltschinger, “Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy,” 37–55 ≈ Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 45–66.

3 See especially Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, 885–890. The first- to second-century CE Buddhist monk poet Aśvaghōṣa alludes to the *kṛtayuga*, the *kaliyuga* and the *yugānta*, but may not have been familiar with the *tretāyuga* and the *dvāparayuga*. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same can be said of the roughly contemporary *Rāmāyaṇa*. For a more detailed discussion, see Eltschinger, “Aśvaghōṣa on Kings,” 321–323. Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* (JM, fourth century CE) yields similar results, with two allusions to the *kṛtayuga* (JM k. 10.30, Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, I.279; JM_H 100,17–18, Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, I.275) and at least three to the *yugānta* (JM k. 11.7, Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, I.291; JM k. 14.5, Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, I.349; JM k. 24.1, Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, II.129). To the best of my knowledge, the JM does not refer to the *kaliyuga*.

4 I.e., each of the twenty increase-and-decrease patterns constituting a period (*kalpa*) of the duration of renovation. Each sub-eon (*antarakalpa*) starts with a human lifespan of 10 years, which rises to 80,000 years before declining again to 10. The dark period of each sub-eon takes place at the end of a period of decrease, when the human lifespan is comprised between 100 and 10 years. See Nattier, *Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*, 14–19. This dark period is characterised by five corruptions or degenerations (*kaṣāya*): of the lifespan (*āyus*), of the defilements (*kleśa*), of morality (*sattva*, lit. “of the living being”), of the false opinions (*dṛṣṭi*), and of the cosmic period (*kalpa*). The latter is itself described, at least towards the end of the process (lifespan comprised between 30 and 10 years), as infested with war (from Skt. *śastra*, “weapon, sword”), famine (*durbhikṣā*), and illness (*roga*). On

pessimistic enough to easily bear comparison with their gloomy Brahmanical counterparts. Second, the Buddhists were inclined to favour apocalyptic scenarios centred not on the cataclysmic disappearance of the world and/or human society at the end of a deterioration process (as in the *kaliyuga* account) but on the final demise of the good law (*saddharmavipralopa*; “good law” = Buddhism) some 500, 1000 or more years after the death of the Buddha.⁵ Thus, contrary to what we find in Brahmanism, where *kaliyuga*-related apocalyptic prophecies and cosmological descriptions overlap to a great extent, Buddhist apocalypticism and cosmology were not meant to coincide and have, more often than not, remained separate discursive areas.⁶

the five *kaṣāyas*, see *Splendeur de l'Inébranlable*, trans. Dantine, 208–211. The motif of the five corruptions permeates the Buddhist imaginaire down to the present day. The so-called testament of the thirteenth Dalai Lama Thubten Gyatso (1876–1933) provides an interesting example of the way in which historical reality (in this case the brutally anti-Buddhist Soviet tutelage over the young Mongolian Popular Republic in the years 1920–1930) can be viewed through the prism of these old prophetic and apocalyptic categories: “Nowadays the manifestations of the five kinds of degeneration are manifest everywhere. Worst of all is the Red ideology, which is becoming more and more rampant. It has caused the search for the rebirth of the Jetsun Dampa to be banned, the property of the monasteries to be looted, and the monks to be forced into the army. Buddhism has been destroyed so completely that not even the name remains.” Thubten Gyatso continues as follows, this time in relation to Tibet: “If we are not able to protect our own country, then everyone who supports the Buddha’s teachings, whether they be commoners or nobility, and the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama in particular, will be wiped out so completely that not even their names will remain. The estates and property of the monasteries and monks will be annihilated. The tradition of government exemplified by the three ancestral dharma kings will degenerate into mere words. The low will be made high, so that everywhere serfs will steal the ancestral estates, wealth and property, and we will be forced to wander the land as the servants of our enemies. Everyone will be subjected to torture, and both day and night will be an unending round of fear and suffering. Such a time as this will come for sure!” Translation from Schaik, *Tibet*, 204.

5 See Nattier, *Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*, esp. 27–64.

6 Cf. the following statement by Nattier (“Buddhist Eschatology,” 155): “The vision of cosmic evolution and devolution [...] is central to Buddhist scholastic theory, but it appears to have had relatively little impact on the lives of average believers. Far more immediate were concerns not about the end of the cosmos, but the impending extinction of the Buddhist religion itself.” Properly apocalyptic uses of the five-corruption motif are very frequent, however. Note, for example, *Saddharma-puṇḍarīkasūtra* (SPSū) vv. 2.141–143: *kiṃ kāraṇaṃ pañcakaṣāyakāle kṣudrās ca duṣṭās ca bhavanti sattvāḥ / kāmair ihāndhikṛta bālabuddhayo na teṣa bodhāya kadāci cittam // śrutvā ca yānaṃ mama etad ekaṃ prakāśitaṃ tena jinena āsit / anāgate dhvani bhrayeyu sattvāḥ sūtraṃ kṣīpitvā narakam vrajeyuḥ // laj्ji śuci ye ca bhaveyu sattvāḥ samprasthitā uttamam agrabodhim / viśārado bhūtvā vademi teṣāṃ ekasya yānasya anantavarāṇān //*. “For the creatures, when at the period of the five corruptions, are vile and bad; they are blinded by sensual desires, the fools, and never turn their minds to awakening. [Some] beings, having heard this one and sole vehicle manifested by the Jina, will in days to come swerve from it, reject the *sūtra*, and go down to hell. But those beings who shall be modest and pure, striving after the supreme and the highest enlightenment, to them shall I unhesitatingly set forth the endless forms of this one and sole vehicle.” Translation from Kern, *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka*, 58–59. Note also the (Deutero?)Āryadeva’s *Skhalitapramardanayuktihetuisiddhi* (SPYHS) D19b2/P20b3–4: */snyigs ma lnga yi ’jig rten ’dir/ /’gro la phan phyir lam bshad pa/ /bdud*

In spite of this, several Buddhist uses of the *kaliyuga* can be located in the extant Sanskrit sources and/or their Tibetan translations. These occurrences are too scanty to allow anything like a typology based on recurring topical and/or rhetorical patterns. Some passages are obviously polemical (generally anti-Brahmanical) and seem not to reflect a genuine appropriation of the *kaliyuga* as a descriptive category on the part of the Buddhists. They target the Brahmins' pride in caste (*jāti*, *varṇa*), ritual violence (*himsā*) and political theory, and are the symbolic and non-philosophical counterparts of the sophisticated arguments put forward in other Buddhist literary genres or contexts such as dogmatics (*abhidharma*) and philosophy. Other passages more evidently reflect the Buddhists' concern about threatening aspects of their religio-political environment. These include texts that interpret the strength of Śaivism or certain political events in the light of the *kaliyuga*, and thus partly impinge on the precincts of the apocalyptic prophecies that announce the disappearance of the good law. Finally, yet other Buddhist uses of the *kaliyuga* testify to a full appropriation (but only partial domestication) of the notion in all its cosmological and apocalyptic dimensions. This is especially true of a short treatise on the topic by the (Deutero?)Mātrceṭa, the *Kaliyugaparikathā* (KP), and of the eschatological conceptions of the *Kālacakratantra*.⁷ On the whole, I am inclined to assume that the appeal of the *kaliyuga* to the Buddhist *literati* became increasingly strong in the specific context of apocalyptic prophecies. Nevertheless, scholastic attempts at systematically replacing traditional eschatologies by *kaliyuga* terminology and imagery seem to be entirely missing. This notwithstanding, several "early" Mahāyāna sources testify to the fact that the Buddhists showed no unanimity as regards cosmology. This is especially true of the question whether *buddhas* do or do not appear during the last and most degenerate period of a sub-eon – or, according to slightly later formulations, during the *kaliyuga*.⁸

dang bdud la phyogs pa dag/ |lam la log par lta ba'i phyir | /rang gi lta bas bden las¹ nyams/ |nor ba'i lam la lam du 'dod/ |yang dag pa la log rtsod pa/ |de dag bsal² phyir bshad par bya/. ¹las P: lam D. ²bsal D: gsal P. "[I am going to] explain the path in order to benefit the sentient beings [who are suffering] in this world of the five corruptions. Because they view the path in a wrong way, Māra and those who side with Māra swerve from the truth on account of their own views, accept an erroneous path as the [right] path, [and] wrongly object to the correct [path]. The following] is to be said in order to refute them."

⁷ Other Buddhist uses of the *kaliyuga* include mKhas grub rje's (1385–1438) reference to Ratnākaraśānti (970–1030?) as an "omniscient being of the Kali Age" (*kalikālasarvajña*, Tib. *rtsod pa'i dus kyi thams cad mkhyen pa*, *Antarvyāptisamarthana of Ratnākaraśānti*, ed. and trans. Kajiyama, 1) in his *rGyud sde spyi'i nam par gzhas pa rgyas par brjod pa* (D5489; see Lessing and Wayman, *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*, 78–79). This designation, which occurs in connection with the Vikramaśīla scholar's treatise on poetics, the *Chandoratnākara* (D4303 and 4304), is also frequently applied to the Śvetāmbara Jaina polymath Hemacandra (1089–1172) – a fact that points to the Indian origin of mKhas grub rje's allusion. This common characterisation of the two scholars might be due to the fact that they both authored works on a great variety of secular and non-secular subjects.

⁸ See below, part 2.

The reasons why the Buddhists resorted to the *kaliyuga* are unclear and likely to differ from one case to another. But there is little doubt that the motif offered interesting polemical possibilities. Claiming that Brahmanical institutions such as the caste-system or animal slaughter were typical of the *kaliyuga* pointed to their degenerate and immoral character in an evocative and powerful manner. Moreover, there are good reasons to believe that the Brahmanical *kaliyuga* quickly became a popular representation of the End, being one that made both a common (“transconfessional”) idiom and a more effective rhetoric possible.⁹ In comparison to the Buddhist ideas, which were either doctrinally overloaded (the five corruptions¹⁰) or applied too narrowly to Buddhism (the demise of the good law), the *kaliyuga* possibly appeared to be a more open, less dogmatically burdened eschatological framework. Finally, the above-mentioned bifurcation of the cosmological and the apocalyptic may have jeopardised a homogeneous and genuinely Buddhist discourse on the End.

My treatment of the Buddhist uses of the *kaliyuga* is certainly far from exhaustive. The occurrences of the motif discussed below are those I randomly came across in the course of my readings in Buddhist literature.¹¹ Given my lack of familiarity with Tantric corpora, I have limited myself to a brief exposition of the connection between the Islamic rise to dominance and the *kaliyuga* as it so strikingly appears in the *Kālacakratantra*. My treatment of these materials has to remain doctrinal rather than properly historical, even in instances where the suspicion of *ex post facto* apocalyptic descriptions arises. For, in addition to often being cryptic or vague, the sources under scrutiny can hardly ever be assigned to any precise socio-historical context that would help determine their intended and unintended meanings.

2 Some Buddhist Uses of the *kaliyuga*

2.1. One of the reasons why, from the early fourth century CE, the Buddhist *literati* increasingly resorted to *kaliyuga* terminology and imagery was presumably the latter’s strong polemical potential. For pointing to certain practices and/or ideas as being the products of the dreadful End Times amounted to condemning them as degenerate, and hence misleading and ultimately harmful – or, equivalently, as

⁹ For inscriptional evidence regarding the *yugas*, see Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, 890.

¹⁰ On this notion, see above, n. 4.

¹¹ Edification literature is replete with rhetorical allusions to the *kaliyuga*. See, for example, Ravigupta’s as yet unedited *Āryakoṣa* vv. 12 (= LSP v. 15), 103, and 121 (see Hahn, *Buddhistische Lehrbriefe aus Indien und Tibet*, 236, 252, and 255, respectively), and the same author’s *Lokasamvyavahārapravṛtti* (LSP) vv. 198 and 232 (see Hahn, *Ravigupta and His Niti Stanzas*, 25 and 29).

conflicting with Buddhist as well as “primordial” Brahmanical standards and values. This polemical strategy is clearly at play in three passages criticising a set of non-Buddhist practices and behaviours, viz. the violence (*hiṃsā*) inherent in Vedic animal sacrifices, the brahmins’ pride in caste (*jāti*, *varṇa*) and the governance practices that found normative expression in (the) *arthaśāstra*(s), the “treatise(s) on [politico-economic] profit/success.” The first two occur in the *Yogācārabhūmi* (YBh), while the third belongs to the *Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣayavikurvaṇanirdeśasūtra* (BGUVVNSū) and related literature.

2.2. In a section devoted to the critical examination of sixteen “alldoxies” (*paravāda*),¹² the YBh ascribes ritual violence (alldodoxy no. 8) and claims to socio-religious superiority (alldodoxy no. 14) to (the) brahmins of the *kaliyuga* (*kaliyugikā brāhmaṇāḥ*).¹³ Here is the account of the “doctrine [according to which ritual] violence is a [religious] duty(/is righteous)” (*hiṃsādharmavāda*):

[This doctrine consists in believing that] taking [a living being’s] life[, something that occurs] within sacrifices [and is] accompanied by [ritual] formula(s) and injunction(s), leads all [the following living beings] to heaven: the [person] who sacrifices, that which is sacrificed, and those who attend this [person] [...]. This [is] a doctrine that violates the established rule; [it has been] settled by rogues but [has certainly] not [been] established in [due] consideration of reason(ing). When the *kaliyuga* is at hand, the brahmins who wish to eat meat indulge in this [ritual violence, thus] transgressing the brahmins’ ancient [religious] duty.¹⁴

The YBh interprets meat-eating and sacrificial killing as typical of the degenerate brahmins of the *kaliyuga*, and this in a manner (*kaliyuge pratyupasthite*) that is reminiscent of epic and purāṇic formulations. The idea that meat-eating and/or ritual violence either did not exist (or were banned) in former times but (re)appeared as a result of moral degeneration is not infrequent in Indian Buddhist sources. Thus it is that in the *Lankāvatārasūtra* (LASū), a locus classicus for the Mahāyānist prohibition of meat-eating,¹⁵ the Buddha prophesies that unscrupulous future Buddhist legislators (*vinaya* specialists) will make meat-eating permissible, thus breaking with

¹² See Eltschinger, “*Yogācārabhūmi* against Alldoxies 1,” 194, n. 14. On the notion of “alldodoxy”, see *Yuktiṣaṣṭikāvṛtti*, ed. and trans. Scherrer-Schaub, xli, n. 63, and Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 36, n. 3.

¹³ YBh 155,11, YBh_{T/D} 78b2/YBh_{T/P} 90b8. On the YBh’s critique of these two alldoxies, see Eltschinger, “*Yogācārabhūmi* against Alldoxies: Ritual Violence,” and “The *Yogācārabhūmi* against Alldoxies 2.”

¹⁴ YBh 145,20–146,4, YBh_{T/D} 73b6–74a1/YBh_{T/P} 85b5–8: *yajñeṣu mantravidhipūrvakaḥ prāṇātīpātaḥ / yaś ca juhoti yaś ca hūyate ye ca tatsahāyās teṣāṃ sarveṣāṃ svargagamanāya bhavātīti / [...] utsamsthavāda eṣa śaṭhaviṭhapito no tu yuktīm abhisamikṣya vyavasthāpitaḥ / kaliyuge pratyupasthite brāhmaṇaiḥ paurāṇaṃ brāhmaṇadharmam atikramya māṃsaṃ bhakṣayitukāmair etat prakalpitaṃ /*. For text-critical notes, see Eltschinger, “*Yogācārabhūmi* against Alldoxies 1,” 214, n. 102.

¹⁵ On meat-eating in the Mahāyāna, see Seyfort Ruegg, “Ahimsā and Vegetarianism,” Schmithausen, “Fleischverzehr und Vegetarismus im Buddhismus,” 155–193 and Schmithausen, “Meat-Eating and Nature,” 190–194.

the rules laid down by him and shared by the *ṛṣis* of old.¹⁶ Here, degeneration and the resulting delusion are made responsible for the reappearance of a non-vegetarian diet. Very similar ideas can be found in Buddhist literature as regards ritual violence, whose reappearance in the context of funerary practices is condemned in the *Jātakas*.¹⁷

In the LASū passage just referred to, the Buddha claims his position to coincide with the practice of the wise and vegetarian *ṛṣis* of old, those not yet degenerate brahmins whom he regarded as the embodiment of Buddhist values and practice – the so-called “true brahmins”.¹⁸ Now, the connection between the *ṛṣis*, the rise of greed and the concomitant appearance of sacrificial violence is the subject-matter of the *Brāhmaṇadhammikasutta* of the *Suttanipāta* (Sn).¹⁹ In the argument of the *sutta*, the brahmins of Kosala ask the Buddha the following: “Do brahmins now, Gotama, live in conformity with the Brahmanical lore of the brahmins of old?”²⁰ Gotama’s answer is quite unambiguous: “No, brahmins, brahmins now do not live in conformity with the Brahmanical lore of the brahmins of old.”²¹ According to the Buddha, the “seers of old” (*isayo pubbakā*, Sn 284) were chaste (Sn 284, 285, 290, 291–293), virtuous (Sn 289, 292, 294), learned (Sn 289) and austere (Sn 284, 292). These original brahmins had “no cattle, no gold, no wealth” (Sn 285). Most importantly, these true brahmins “praised non-violence” (*avihimsam avaṇṇayum*, Sn 292). Accordingly, their rituals involved no animal slaughter:

Having asked for rice, a bed, clothes, and butter and oil, having collected them properly, from that they performed the sacrifice. When the sacrifice occurred, *they* did not kill cows. Like a

16 See LASū 249,14–250,6, and Eltschinger, “*Yogācārabhūmi* against Allodoxies: Ritual Violence,” 374 and n. 39.

17 See *Jātaka* I.166,12–15, and Eltschinger, “*Yogācārabhūmi* against Allodoxies: Ritual Violence,” 374–375 and n. 40.

18 For references and observations on the true brahmin, see especially Masefield, *Divine Revelation*, 146–164 (154 for canonical references), and also Eltschinger, “*Yogācārabhūmi* against Allodoxies 2,” nn. 29 and 46. Indian Buddhist normative descriptions of the true brahmin include reference to his refraining from any violence. Note, for example, Uv 33.36: *nikṣiptadaṇḍaṃ bhūteṣu traseṣu sthāvaṛeṣu ca / yo na hanti hi bhūtāni bravīmi brāhmaṇaṃ hi tam //*. “I call a [true] Brahmin [someone] who has renounced violence towards [all] beings[, both] moving and immovable, he who does not kill [living] beings.” In Uv 33.34, the true brahmin is said to be *ahiṃsaka*, “free from [any] violence”.

19 Sn 284–315 (50–55). See Norman, *Early Buddhist Poems*, 49–51. As already hinted at by Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya (see YBh, 146, n. 4), (a version of) this *sutta* constitutes the YBh’s most likely source of inspiration for associating these Brahmanical practices with an era of degeneration (the YBh’s *kaliyuga*). This genealogy is reflected in the very wording of the two texts: whereas the *Brāhmaṇadhammikasutta* expounds, as its title suggests, the Brahmanical lore/law of the brahmins of old (*porāṇānaṃ brāhmaṇānaṃ brāhmaṇadhammo*), the YBh accuses the meat-eating brahmins of transgressing the ancient Brahmanical lore/law (*paurāṇaṃ brāhmaṇadhammam*).

20 Sn 50: *sandissanti nu kho bho gotama etarahi brāhmaṇā porāṇānaṃ brāhmaṇānaṃ brāhmaṇadhamme ti*. Translation (slightly modified) from Norman, *Early Buddhist Poems*, 49.

21 Sn 50: *na kho brāhmaṇā sandissanti etarahi brāhmaṇā porāṇānaṃ brāhmaṇānaṃ brāhmaṇadhamme ti*. Translation (slightly modified) from Norman, *Early Buddhist Poems*, 49.

mother, father, brother, or other relative too, cows are our best friends, in which medicines are produced. They give food, strength, (good) complexion, and likewise happiness. Knowing this reason, *they* did not kill cows.²²

And “as long as [the lore] existed in the world, this race prospered in happiness.”²³ However, a “change” (*vipallāsa*, Sn 299, Norman, Masefield) for the worse occurred as these ‘brahmins’ covetousness (*abhijjhāyimsu*, Sn 301), desire (*icchā*, Sn 306) and craving (*taṇhā*, Sn 306) increased. Composing ad hoc ritual formulas (*manta*, Sn 302, 306) and, one may surmise, inventing related rituals, the brahmins prompted king Okkāka (Skt. Ikṣvāku) to patronise sacrifices and pay them substantial sacrificial fees. Here is the Sn’s account of the events:

There was a change in them. Seeing little by little the splendour of the king, and women adorned, and chariots yoked to thoroughbreds, well-made, with variegated coverings, dwellings and houses evenly proportioned and [well] laid out, [and] great human wealth, surrounded by herds of cows, combined with groups of excellent women, the brahmins coveted this. Having composed hymns for this purpose, they then went up to Okkāka. ‘You have much wealth and grain. Sacrifice, [for] your property is much. Sacrifice, [for] your wealth is much.’ And then the king, the lord of warriors, induced by the brahmins, having performed these sacrifices, the *assamedha*, the *purisamedha*, the *sammāpāsa*, the *vācapeyya*, (and) the *niraggaḷa*, gave wealth to the brahmins: cows, and a bed, and clothes, and adorned women, and chariots yoked to thoroughbreds, well-made, with variegated coverings. Having filled delightful dwellings, evenly proportioned, with various sorts of grain, he gave wealth to the brahmins. And they, receiving wealth there, found pleasure in hoarding it up. Overcome by desire, their craving increased the more. Having composed hymns for this purpose, they went up to Okkāka again. ‘As are water, earth, gold, wealth, and grain, so are cows to men. For this is a requisite for living creatures. Sacrifice, [for] your property is much. Sacrifice, [for] your wealth is much.’ And then the king, the lord of warriors, induced by the brahmins, had many hundreds of thousands of cows killed in a sacrifice.²⁴

²² Sn 295–297: *taṇḍulaṃ sayanaṃ vatthaṃ sappitelaṅ ca yāciya dhammena samudānetvā tato yaññaṃ akappayum, upaṭṭhitasmim yaññasim nāssu gāvo haniṃsu te. yathā mātā pitā bhātā aññe vā pi ca nātakā gāvo no paramā mittā, yāsu jāyanti osadhā. annadā baladā c’etā vaṇṇadā sukhadā tathā etam atthavaṣaṃ ṅatvā nāssu gāvo haniṃsu te.* Translation from Norman, *Early Buddhist Poems*, 50.

²³ Sn 298d: *yāva loke avattiṃsu, sukhaṃ edhittha ayaṃ pajā.* Translation from Norman, *Early Buddhist Poems*, 50.

²⁴ Sn 299–308: *tesaṃ āsi vipallāso: disvāna aṇuto aṇum rājino ca viyākāraṃ nariyo ca samalaṃkatā rathe cājaññasamyutte sukate cittasibbane nivesane nivese ca vibhatte bhāgaso mite gomaṇḍalapraibbūḷhaṃ nāriṃvaraṅāyutaṃ ulāraṃ mānuṣaṃ bhogaṃ abhijjhāyimsu brāhmaṇā. te tattha mante ganthetvā okkākaṃ ta upāgamum: ‘pahūtanadhaññaṃ si, yajassu, bahu te vittaṃ, yajassu, bahu te dhanam’ tato ca rājā saññatto brāhmaṇehi rathesabho assamedhaṃ purisamedhaṃ sammāpāsaṃ vācapeyyaṃ niraggaḷaṃ, ete yāge yajitvāna brāhmaṇānaṃ adā dhanam: gāvo sayanaṅ ca vatthaṅ ca nariyo ca samalaṃkatā rathe cājaññasamyutte sukate cittasibbane, nivesanāni ramāni suvibhattāni bhāgaso nānādhaññaṃ pūretvā brāhmaṇānaṃ adā dhanam. te ca tattha dhanam laddhā sannidhiṃ samarocayum, tesaṃ icchāvatiṇṇānaṃ bhiiyo taṇhā pavaḍḍhatha. te tattha mante ganthetvā okkākaṃ punam upagamum: yathā āpo ca paṭhavi ca hiraññaṃ dhanadhāniyaṃ, evaṃ gāvo manussānaṃ, parikkhāro so hi pāṇinaṃ, yajassu, bahu te vittaṃ, yajassu, bahu te dhanam.*

Thus according to the *Brāhmaṇadhammikasutta*, ritual violence as a scripturally legitimated practice is the end result of the brahmins' moral decay, and this is likely to be the reason why the YBh interprets alloxody no. 8, the brahmins' *hiṃsādhar-mavāda*, as typical of the *kaliyuga*.

2.3. The second allodoxy connected to the *kaliyuga* pertains to the caste-classes and targets the brahmins' claims to socio-religious superiority (*agravāda*). According to the YBh, the *kaliyugikā brāhmaṇāḥ* hold the following bombastic discourse:

Brahmins are the best caste-class; [any] other caste-class is inferior. Brahmins are the white caste-class; [any] other caste-class is black. Brahmins are pure; non-brahmins are not. Brahmins are the sons of Brahman, [his] legitimate [sons], born of [his] mouth, born of Brahman, created by Brahman. [Brahmins are] Brahman's retinue.²⁵

The issue of the brahmins' monopoly over whiteness and purity is reminiscent of a passage from the *Mahābhāṣya* (MBhāṣya), in which the grammarian Patañjali mentions light-coloured (*gaura*) complexion and pure conduct (*śucyācāra*) as characteristic marks of brahmins.²⁶ As for the brahmins' genealogical claim to go back to the (mouth of the) primordial Brahman itself or to Prajāpati, it goes as far back as *Ṛgveda* 10.90 and is criticised at length in numerous Buddhist sources.²⁷ Such is the background of the YBh's critique of the End-Time brahmins' pride in caste. The brahmins of old (the Vedic *ṛṣis* or "seers", among others) did not need to resort to birth or to any kind of argument, whether "biological", genealogical or other, in order to justify their (then real) charisma.²⁸ They had *become* brahmins through the excellence of their discernment (*prajñā*), morality (*śīla*), asceticism (*tapas*), truthfulness (*satya*), compassion (*dayā*, *karuṇā*) and control of the senses (*in-*

tato ca rājā saññatto brāhmaṇehi rathesabho nekā satasahassīyo gāvo yaññe aghātayi. Translation (slightly modified) from Norman, *Early Buddhist Poems*, 50–51. See also Masefield, *Divine Revelation*, 152–153 (SN IV.117–118 presents a different account of the fall).

25 YBh 155,8–10, YBh_{T/D} 78a7–b2/YBh_{T/P} 90b6–7: *brāhmaṇā agro varṇaḥ / hīno 'nyavarṇaḥ / brāhmaṇāḥ śuklo varṇaḥ / kṛṣṇo 'nyo varṇaḥ / brāhmaṇāḥ śudhyante nābrāhmaṇāḥ / brāhmaṇā brahmaṇaḥ putrā aurasā mukhato jātā brahmanā brahmanirmitā brahmapārśadā iti /*. For text-critical notes, see Eltschinger, "Yogācārabhūmi against Allodoxies 1," 223, n. 151. The canonical sources for this are *suttas* such as MN II.84 (*Madhurasutta*) and MN II.148 (*Assalāyanasutta*).

26 See MBhāṣya I.411,18, Halbfass, *Tradition and Reflection*, 355–356, Eltschinger, "Caste" *et philosophie bouddhique*, 111 and n. 302, and Eltschinger, *Caste and Buddhist Philosophy*, 111 and n. 145. Note, however, that Patañjali (MBhāṣya I.411,16–17) seems to regard asceticism (*tapas*), learning (*śruta*) and birth (*yoni*) as the only true marks of brahmanity; he who lacks asceticism and learning is a brahmin by birth only (*jātibrāhmaṇa eva saḥ*).

27 See Eltschinger, "Caste" *et philosophie bouddhique*, 48–55 and Eltschinger, *Caste and Buddhist Philosophy*, 42–49 (MBh 3.187.13 is to be added to the references).

28 The VS (133.7–8) lists seven factors a brahmin could possibly rely upon in order to justify his brahmanity/superiority: soul/life principle (*jīva*), birth (*jāti*), body (*śarīra*), knowledge (*jñāna*), (good) conduct (*ācāra*), action (*karman*) and Veda. The rest of the text is a refutation of each of these criteria.

driyaśamyama). These are all Buddhist values, which explains why the “true brahmin” in most Buddhist texts is generally none other than the Buddhist saint (*arhat*) himself.²⁹ Indeed, this also accords with a famous Buddhist etymology of the word *brāhmaṇa*:

one recognises the [true] brahmin neither on account of [his] matted hair nor on account of [his] clan/lineage nor on account of [his] birth/caste, but rather[, the true brahmin is he] who entirely expels [all] sins[, both] subtle and gross. And [it is precisely] because he has expelled [all] sins [that] he is called a ‘brahmin’.³⁰

As the Buddha has it in the Uv, “I do not call a “[true] Brahmin” [he who is] born in a [brahmin woman’s] womb [and] originates from a [brahmin] mother.”³¹ Much to the contrary,

I call a ‘[true] brahmin’ he who knows [his] previous abodes [in *saṃsāra*] and sees heaven and hell/(bad destinies) – for² a sage has obtained the destruction of [re]birth [and] applies himself to the higher forms of knowledge – [and who] discerns the end of suffering. I call a ‘[true] brahmin’ he who, unattached, well-gone [and] awakened, entirely knows [the living beings’] fall [from one existence] and rebirth [in another].³²

Possessing the six “higher forms of knowledge” (*abhiññā*, among which the recollection of one’s previous existences [*pūrvanivāsānusmṛti*] and the knowledge of the living beings’ rise and fall in *saṃsāra* [*cyutyupapattiññāna*] are alluded to in this passage) is a characteristic feature of liberated Buddhist saints such as *arhats* and *buddhas*.³³ Moreover, the reference made by this and other texts to the destruction of suffering and their use of epithets such as *sugata* and *buddha* make the identifi-

²⁹ On the “true Brahmin” and the connected issue of the degeneration of brahmins, see Masson, *Bouddhisme: chemin de liberation*, 97ff., Masfield, *Divine Revelation*, 150ff., and Eltschinger, “Caste” et philosophie bouddhique, 164–166 ≈ Eltschinger, *Caste and Buddhist Philosophy*, 164–167. The *Soṇadaṇḍasutta* (DN I.111–126) belongs to the most important canonical sources concerning the true brahmin.

³⁰ Uv 33.8: *na jaṭābhir na gotreṇa na jātyā brāhmaṇaḥ smṛtaḥ / yas tu vāhayate pāpāny aṇusthūlāni sarvaśaḥ / vāhitatvāt tu pāpānāṃ brāhmaṇo vai nirucyate //*. On this etymology, see Balbir, “Discours étymologique dans l’hétérodoxie indienne,” 132–133, and for additional references, Eltschinger, “Caste” et philosophie bouddhique, 17, n. 25 ≈ Eltschinger, *Caste and Buddhist Philosophy*, 8, n. 17.

³¹ Uv 33.15ab: *bravīmi brāhmaṇaṃ nāhaṃ yonijaṃ māṭṣambhavam /*.

³² Uv 33.47–48: *pūrvanivāsaṃ yo veti svargāpāyāṃś ca paśyati / atha jātikṣayaṃ prāpto hy abhiññāvyavasito muniḥ / duḥkhasyāntaṃ prajānāti bravīmi brāhmaṇaṃ hi tam // cyutiṃ yo veti sattvānāṃ upapattiṃ ca sarvaśaḥ / asaktaḥ sugato buddho bravīmi brāhmaṇaṃ hi tam //*.

³³ See, however, Eltschinger, *Dharmakīrti sur les mantra*, 71–72 (and n. 295). According to the Sarvāstivādins and the Vātsīputriyas, non-Buddhist saints may possess the five higher forms of knowledge – but, of course, not the sixth, the knowledge of the destruction of the influxes [*āśravakṣayaññāna*], the equivalent to *nirvāṇa* – something which the Dharmaguptakas and the Mahīśāsakas seem to deny. *pañcābhiññā* (“possessed with the five higher forms of knowledge”) is a standard epithet of the *ṛṣis*.

cation of the true brahmins with holy Buddhist figures even more explicit. Having become brahmins on account of their virtue and spiritual achievements, these personalities had no need to legitimise themselves by resorting to biology, obstetrics and genealogy. In other words, the Buddhists “criticised pseudo-brahmins, brahmins whose decadence begged for a substitution of self-legitimacy based on the excellence of one’s birth by a self-legitimacy based on spiritual excellence”.³⁴

2.4. The third passage witnessing a polemical use of the *kaliyuga* occurs in a Mahāyānasūtra, the BGVVNSū or *Satyakaparivarta*.³⁵ But let us firstly see how the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (BoBh) characterises the corruption of the false views:

Nowadays numerous counterfeits of the good law appear which, presupposing the conclusion that (a) [certain] wrong law(s) is/(are) beneficial, lead to the demise of the good law, to the disappearance of the good law.³⁶

This description combines two familiar components of Buddhist eschatology: the cosmological motif of the five corruptions and the prophetic/apocalyptic motif of the demise of the good law. But, contrary to the traditional accounts of the latter, which make disruptive forces internal to the Buddhist community responsible for this (gradual) disappearance, the factor blamed in the BoBh consists in the appearance of “counterfeits of the good law”, i.e. pseudo- or maybe even anti-Buddhist teachings that were mistakenly considered beneficial. The BoBh does not commit itself to identifying these “wrong laws”. But this or a very similar statement was the source of an interesting *kaliyuga* passage that occurs in the sixth chapter of the BGVVNSū, which deals with royal ethics (**rājanīti*, Tib. *rgyal po’i tshul*) and identifies the “counterfeits of the good law” as (the) *arthaśāstra*(s), i.e. “Treatise(s) on [politico-economic] Profit/Success”.³⁷

³⁴ Eltschinger, *Caste and Buddhist Philosophy*, 167.

³⁵ On this *sūtra*, see *Range of the Bodhisattva*, ed. and trans. Jamspal, and Silk, “Editing and Translating a Mahāyāna Sūtra” (*Satyakaparivarta*, according to ŚS 165,17; see Silk, “Editing and Translating a Mahāyāna Sūtra,” 159–161). On the Buddhist critique of the *arthaśāstra*/*Arthaśāstra*, see Zimmermann, “Mahāyānist Criticism of *Arthaśāstra*,” and Eltschinger, “Politics and/in the End of Times.”

³⁶ BoBh_D 173,8–10/BoBh_W 253,5–7: *tadyathaitarhi saddharmapralopāya saddharmāntardhānāya saddharmapratirūpakāṇi prabhūtāni prādurbhūtāni mithyādharmārthasantiraṇāpūrvikāṇi /*.

³⁷ The BGVVNSū does not make clear whether *arthaśāstra* is to be understood in the singular (either as the title of a work or as a literary genre) or in the plural (referring, then, to various works with this generic title). Be that as it may, Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* (AŚ 1.1.1) starts with the following statement: *prthivyā lābhe pālāne ca yāvanty arthaśāstrāṇi pūrvācāryaiḥ prasthāpitāni prāyaśas tāni samhr̥ṭyaikam idam arthaśāstram kṛtam /*. “This singular Treatise on Success has been composed for the most part by drawing together the Treatises on Success composed by former teachers for gaining and administering the earth.” Translation from Olivelle, *King, Governance, and Law*, 63. On this topic, see *Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, ed. and trans. Kangle, 5–10 and 42–53, and Olivelle, *King, Governance, and Law*, 6–8 and 25–28. Early *rājaśāstras* (“treatises on kings”) were likely authored by

[King Caṇḍapradhyota] asked: ‘What is it to be confused by a wrong law (*mīthyādharma?*)’ [Satyaka:] ‘It is to regard [it] as virtuous (*guṇadr̥ṣṭi?*) due to a [false] view that has been ingrained (*parivāsita?*) by [one’s] adhesion (*adhimukti, adhimokṣa?*) to the [law] called (*sañjñita?*) Arthaśāstra, [which is] a counterfeit of the good law (*saddharmapratirūpaka*) created by wicked people during the *kaliyuga*.’ [The king] asked: ‘Brahmin, which are the treatises (*śāstra*) based on which a righteous (*dhārmika?*) king protects [his] subjects (*prajā?*)’ Answer: ‘Great King, they are [those] treatises in which the antidotes (*pratipakṣa?*) against evil desire (*ayuktarāga?*), evil aversion (*ayukta dveṣa?*) and evil delusion (*ayuktamoha?*) are expounded according to [their] nature (*svabhāva?*), [their] subdivisions (*vibhāga*) and [their] benefits (*anuśaṃsa?*).’³⁸

According to this *sūtra*, only a “wheel-turning monarch” (*cakravartin*, the ideal figure of the universal ruler in Buddhism) “does not have to rely on *śāstras* [...] when ruling his empire, due to his knowledge resulting from the *dharma* and the immaculate moral behaviour of his subjects. All other kings are in need of *śāstras*.”³⁹ However, the available treatises on political governance lead to harm (hence their disig-

Bṛhaspati and Uśanas/Śukra/Kāvya (see MBh 12.59.86–92 and BC 1.41), viz. the *Bārhaspatyaśāstra* and the *Auśanasaśāstra*.

38 BGVVNSū 60b5–8 (as edited in Zimmermann, “Mahāyānist Criticism of Arthaśāstra,” 187): *smras pa / log pa'i chos kyis 'khor ces bya ba gang yin / smras pa / don gyi bstan bcos su ming btags pa / gnod par 'gyur ba dang ldan pa / dam pa'i chos ltar bcos pa / rtsod pa'i dus na skyes bu dam pa ma lags pas bgyis pa la mos pas yongs su bgos pa'i lta bas yon tan du lta ba lags so // smras pa / bram ze bstan bcos gang la chos dang ldan pa'i rgyal pos brten cing skye dgu skyong bar byed pa'i bstan bcos gang yin / smras pa / rgyal po chen po de ni bstan bcos gang las mi rigs pa'i chags pa dang / mi rigs pa'i zhe sdang dang / mi rigs pa'i gti mug gi gnyen po'i rang bzhin nam / rab tu dbye ba'am / phan yon gyi sgo nas bstan pa ste /*. See also Zimmermann, “Mahāyānist Criticism of Arthaśāstra,” 187, to which my translation is indebted.

39 Zimmermann, “Mahāyānist Criticism of Arthaśāstra,” 183. On the *cakravartin*, see DN III.58–79 (Walshe, *Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 395–405; see also Nattier, *Buddhist Prophecy of Decline*, 13–15 for a summary) and *Kośa* II.196–198 and 202–203. The important *Cakkavattisihanādasutta* associates the degeneration of political power (failing to rule *cakravartin*-wise, i.e. according to *dharma*; see DN III.61 and Walshe, *Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 396–397) with moral and physical decay (see especially DN III.64–73 and Walshe, *Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 398–402). Under the rule of several successive wheel-turning monarchs, the living beings have a 80,000-year lifespan. One day, however, a king resolves to rule “according to his own ideas” (*svamatena*) and fails to give property (*dhana*) to the needy (*adhana*). Thereupon, poverty (*dāridrya*), theft (*steḥya, adattādāna*), the use of weapons (*śastra*) and killing (*prāṇātipāta*) appear in succession; the humans’ lifespan decreases to 40,000 years and their beauty vanishes. Then arise the lie (*mṛṣāvāda*, 20,000), slander (*paiśunya*, 10,000), sexual misconduct (*kāmamithyācāra*, 5,000), harsh speech (*pāruṣya*) and idle chatter (*sambhinnapralāpa*, 2,500), covetousness and malice (*abhidhyāvyaḥpāda*, 1,000), wrong views (*mīthyādr̥ṣṭi*, 500), illicit desire (*adhamarāga*), improper greed (*viṣamalobha*) and wrong law(s) (*mīthyādharma*, 250). From then on, people cease to honour their mothers, fathers, the ascetics, the brahmins and the elders of the family; their lifespan gradually decreases from 100 to 10 years. The humans’ lifespan gradually increases again from 10 to 80,000 years after they renounce evil (*akuśala*) ways and promote wholesome actions. When their lifespan reaches 80,000, a new *cakravartin* (Śaṅkha) appears in Ketumatī (the future name of Vārāṇasi) together with the next *budha*, Maitreya (DN III.75–76 and Walshe, *Long Discourses of the Buddha*, 403–404).

nation as “wrong laws” and “counterfeits of the good law”) in that they reflect and promote the evils of desire (*rāga*), aversion (*dveṣa*) and delusion (*moha*), the defilements regarded by Buddhism as ultimately responsible for the humans’ bad intentions and actions. (On the contrary, Buddhism – the good law – is a genuinely beneficial *śāstra* in that it provides antidotes to these defilements and hence leads to the *summum bonum*, salvation.) According to our *sūtra*, the nefarious treatises styled *arthaśāstra*(s) are typical of the *kaliyuga*. To the best of my knowledge, the BGUVNSū does not shed additional light on the nature of this/these *arthaśāstra*(s). Fortunately, the *sūtra* is not the only Buddhist source to exhibit some familiarity with – and bad opinion of – the *arthaśāstra*(s). In chapter 23 of his *Jātakamālā* (JM), Āryaśūra (fourth century CE) has the future Buddha (in his former birth as the religious mendicant Bodhi) criticise the *arthaśāstra*, which he also refers to as *kṣatratridyā* (“science of political power”), *kṣatranaya* (“system of political power”) and *rājaśāstra* (“treatise on kings”). In this *jātaka*, evil-minded ministers try to convince their king to reject the precepts of the Bodhisattva and to embrace fatalism, theism, Jainism, annihilationism and the science of statecraft, all of which are explicitly condemned as false views (*dṛṣṭigata*). Here is Āryaśūra’s introductory statement concerning what he calls the *kṣatratridyā*:

Another [minister] instructed the [king] in the evil inclinations to crookedness in governance [which are] seen(/prescribed) in the science of political power [and which he presented] as the *dharma* of (the) king(s) although, tarnished [as they are] with cruelty[, they are] incompatible with *dharma*: ‘By resorting to men as to a shady tree, one should seek fame through acts of gratitude, but only while you have no use for them. When duty calls, use them like sacrificial beasts.’⁴⁰

A little later, Āryaśūra provides yet another short description of the *arthaśāstra*:

This [science] allows any act to be performed, good or bad, if it leads to [personal] profit. Only after a person has raised himself up through [personal] profit should he perform(/realize) *dharma*.⁴¹

As we can see, the science of statecraft is represented as a cruel, unvirtuous/irreligious and cynical opportunism, which fits the bill of a *kaliyuga*-related system of knowledge. Most importantly, the JM explicitly associates this science with *kauṭilya*, literally “crookedness”, the very name of the alleged author of the extant *Arthaśāstra*-

⁴⁰ JM_K147,5–10/JM_MII.96,11–17 (together with JM k. 23.21): *apara enaṃ kṣatratridyāparidṛṣṭeṣu niti-kauṭilyaprasaṅgeṣu nairghṛṇyamalineṣu dharmavirodhiṣv api rājadharmo ’yam iti samanusaśāsa – chāyādrameṣv iva nareṣu kṛtāśrayeṣu tāvat kṛtajñacaritaiḥ svayaśaḥ paripset | nārtho ’sti yāvad upayoga¹nayena teṣāṃ kṛtye tu yajña iva te paśavo niyojyāḥ ||*. ¹upayoga- JM_M : upabhoga- JM_K. The above translation of JM 23.21 is borrowed from Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha’s Past Lives*, II.97.

⁴¹ JM k. 23.51: *anuṣṭheyam hi tatreṣṭam arthārtham sādhu asādhu vā | athoddhṛtya kilātmānam arthair dharmāḥ¹ kariṣyate ||*. ¹dharmāḥ JM_M : dharmāṃ JM_K. Translation (slightly modified) Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha’s Past Lives*, II.115.

tra.⁴² There is thus little doubt that by the early fourth century CE, some Buddhist *literati* were well aware of a *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* and interpreted it, if not always against the background of prophetic eschatology, at least as resulting from and promoting detrimental false views – one of the five *kaṣāyas*, by the way.

Note that the claim that the science of statecraft reflects gloomy historical circumstances is not entirely unparalleled, for the MBh insists that this science was made necessary by the moral degeneration that took place in the wake of the *kṛtayuga*. According to the epic, during the *kṛtayuga* “there was neither kingship nor a king, neither punishment (*daṇḍa*) nor a punisher (*daṇḍika*), and all creatures protected each other lawfully.”⁴³ But delusion, greed (*lobha*), love (*kāma*) and desire gradually corrupted these creatures’ practice and ruined their righteousness. Their inability to distinguish between duty and sin (*kāryākārya*), permitted and forbidden food (*bhakṣyābhakṣya*), allowable and unallowable speech (*vācyāvācya*), wrong and right (*doṣādoṣa*), and licit and illicit love (< *agamyāgamana*) made the recourse to (the science of) the administration of punishments necessary. And thus it is that at the gods’ request, Brahman composed a work in 100,000 chapters, in which socio-religious duty (*dharma*), politico-economic profit (*artha*) and eroticism (*kāma*) were taught together with the triple Vedic science (*trayī*), the investigative science (*ānvikṣikī*), economics (*vārttā*) and government (*daṇḍanīti*).⁴⁴ Although the MBh’s and the BGVVNSū’s appreciation of this and similar works differs entirely, the two of them agree in regarding them as intrinsically connected to a period of moral and social degeneration.

2.5. The three Buddhist uses of the *kaliyuga* examined all have polemical intent. The End-Time rhetoric underlying them critically addresses elements of non-Buddhist ideologies that were also recurrently made the target of technical arguments in Buddhist canonical and scholastic literature. No less importantly, however, the Buddhist authors resorted to the *kaliyuga* imagery in order to highlight the threatening and at times even hostile nature of their historical environments. Providing present threats with End-Time related meaning and relevance – the main motivation for resorting to apocalyptic prophecies – is characteristic of two other passages belonging to Mahāyāna literature.

2.6. The first occurs in the tenth chapter (*sagāthaka*) of the LASū and resorts exclusively to the system of the four ages in order to account for both the dispensation

⁴² Note, in passing, that Uv 33.13 explicitly characterises the true brahmin as *niṣkauṭīliya*, i.e. free from crookedness/duplicity. This, however, is very unlikely to allude to the alleged author of the *Arthaśāstra* or this textual tradition’s most revered quality.

⁴³ MBh 12.59.14: *naiva rājyaṃ na rājāsīn na daṇḍo na ca daṇḍikah | dharmeṇaiva prajāḥ sarvā rakṣanti ca parasparam ||*.

⁴⁴ As noted by Kangle (*Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra*, 5), however, the epic’s summary of this original treatise refers to politics and statecraft only. Moreover, according to MBh 12.59.78, the treatise was entitled *Daṇḍanīti*.

and the demise of the good law. Here is the *sūtra*'s apocalyptic prophecy concerning the latter:

Once I have passed away, afterwards, there will be [teachers] such as Vyāsa, Kaṇāda, Ṛṣabha, Kapila and the Guide of the Śākya. Once I have passed away, within one hundred years there will be Vyāsa as well as [his] *Bhārata*, the Pāṇḍavas, the Kauravas, Rāma and, afterwards, Kṛṣṇa. [There will be] the Mauryas, the Nandas and the Guptas, and then, the barbarians (*mleccha*) [will be] the vilest among rulers. At the end of the barbarians, [there will be] an armed conflagration (*śastrasaṅkṣobha*), and at the end of the warfare (*śastrānte*), the *kaliyuga* [will open up]. And at the end of the *kaliyuga*, the good law will no longer be cultivated by the people. [Events] such as these having taken place, the world [starts to] spin as a wheel, [and] the realm of desire is torn asunder due to the conjunction of fire and sun.⁴⁵

This prophecy presents us with a rare and fascinating insider's look at Indian religio-philosophical, literary and political history. It takes the Buddhist dispensation to be contemporaneous with the foundation of the Sāṅkhya, Vaiśeṣika and Jaina religio-philosophical systems, and slightly earlier (?) than the most prominent epic characters (Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, the Pāṇḍavas, the Kauravas). It incorporates (and inverts!) some of the most significant events of ancient Indian political history (in the correct historical order: the Nanda [ca. 364–321 BCE], Maurya [ca. 321–185 BCE] and Gupta dynasties [ca. 320–500/550 CE]). The prophecy follows the dynastic thread until the advent of unspecified foreigners/barbarians, whose final disappearance coincides with the beginning of the *kaliyuga* and the gradual demise of Buddhism. The author or authors do not state at which point in the time sequence (Gupta or post-Gupta?) they are standing. Interestingly enough, none of the epic-historical events related here are interpreted as heralding or belonging to the *kaliyuga*, which quite surprisingly breaks out once all political events have come to an end – as if the *kaliyuga*, in its function as the period during which Buddhism disappears, corresponded to the end of history. Whatever the case may be, violent political events and the *kaliyuga* are substituted for the internal factors traditionally associated with the disappearance of Buddhism.

45 LASū vv. 10.784–787: *vyāsaḥ kaṇāda ṛṣabhaḥ kapilaḥ śākyanāyakaḥ / nirvṛte mama paścāt tu bhaviṣyanty evamādayaḥ // mayi nirvṛte varṣaśate vyāso vai bhāratas tathā / pāṇḍavāḥ kauravā rāmaḥ paścāc chaurī bhaviṣyati // mauryā nandās ca guptās ca tato mlecchā nṛpādhamāḥ / mlecchānte śastrasaṅkṣobhaḥ śastrānte ca kalir yugaḥ / kaliyugānte lokaiś ca saddharmo hi na bhāvitaḥ // evamādyāny atītāni cakravad bhramate jagat / vahnyādityasamāyogāt kāmadhātur vidiryate //*. Let it be noted that the events following the disappearance of the good law and, more specifically, what can probably be interpreted as the final cataclysm and the rise of a new *kṛtayuga* betray a strong alignment with non-Buddhist standards (LASū v. 10.788–789ab: *punaḥ saṁsthāsyate divyaṁ tasmin lokaḥ pravartsyate / cāturvarṇā nṛpendrās ca ṛṣayo dharmam eva ca // vedās ca yajñaṁ dānaṁ ca dharmasthā vartsyate punaḥ /*): “Heaven will come again, and within it the world will proceed [again, together with] the four caste-classes, the kings, the ṛṣis and the *dharmā*. The Vedas, the sacrifice and giving, as well as virtuous [people], will re-arise.”

2.7. The LASū is not the only late-fifth- to sixth-century *sūtra* reflecting a Buddhist apocalyptic/prophetic use of the *kaliyuga*. In a very suggestive passage, the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra* (KVSū), a Mahāyānist scripture dealing with the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara’s miraculous endeavours for the sake of the living beings, Hindu deities, most importantly Śiva Maheśvara, are reported to originate from Avalokiteśvara.⁴⁶ To Śiva, Avalokiteśvara delivers the following prophecy:

O Maheśvara, you will be there when the Kaliyuga arrives. Born as the primary god (*ādideva*) in the realm of wretched beings you will be called Creator and Agent [of the world]. All beings who will hold the following discourse among the common people will be deprived of the path to awakening: ‘Space they say is the *liṅga* [phallus, VE], the earth his pedestal (*pīthikā*); it is the dwelling (*ālaya*) of all beings. Because of merging (*liyanāt*) into it, it is called *liṅga*.’⁴⁷

Most telling is our passage’s explicit association of Śiva and Śaivism with the *kaliyuga*. Indeed, as recent and ongoing research by Alexis Sanderson shows, Śaivism appears to be the most successful Indic religion from at least the sixth century onwards, with its increasing

appeal to royal patrons by extending and adapting its repertoire to contain a body of rituals and theory that legitimated, empowered, or promoted key elements of the social, political and economic process that characterises the early medieval period.⁴⁸

To put it in other words, from this period on Śaivism is the most dangerous religio-political challenge to Buddhism, which responded by adopting and adapting Śaiva elements in order to shape an esoteric synthesis of its own. As we can see, the KVSū’s apocalyptic prophecy presents a threatening feature of the immediate religio-historical environment – the rise of Śaivism to dominance and the concomitant struggle for patronage – as an unmistakable sign of the End. Let it be noted that the

⁴⁶ On the KVSū in general, see Studholme, *Origins of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*, Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 114–120 and 136–144, and Bisshop, “Buddhist and Śaiva Interactions in the Kali Age.”

⁴⁷ KVSū 265,4–8: *bhaviṣyasi tvaṃ maheśvara kaliyuge pratīpanne / kaṣṭasattvadhātusamutpanna ādideva ākhyāyase sraṣṭāraṃ kartāram / te sarvasattvā bodhimārgeṇa viprahīṇā bhaviṣyanti ya idṛṣaṃ pṛthagjaneṣu sattveṣu sāṅkathyaṃ kurvanti // ākāśaṃ liṅgam ity āhuḥ pṛthivī tasya pīthikā / ālayaḥ sarvabhūtānāṃ liyanāl liṅgam ucyate //*. For text-critical notes, see Eltschinger, “Apocalypticism, Heresy and Philosophy,” 71, n. 186. Translation from Bisshop, “Buddhist and Śaiva Interactions in the Kali Age,” 398; see also González-Reimann, *Mahābhārata and the Yugas*, 172. On this passage, see Studholme, *Origins of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*, 30–31, 44–45 and 123–124, Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 140–144, and Bisshop, “Buddhist and Śaiva Interactions in the Kali Age;” on the verse quoted here (and especially *liyana*), see Studholme, *Origins of Oṃ Maṇipadme Hūṃ*, 19–20 and 28–29, Regamey, “Motifs vichnouites et śivaïtes,” Bisshop (“Buddhist and Śaiva Interactions in the Kali Age,” 400–403) succeeded in identifying the verse as a quotation from *Śivadharmasāstra* 3.17.

⁴⁸ Sanderson, “Śaiva Age,” 253. See, more generally, Sanderson’s detailed account in Sanderson, “Śaiva Age,” 252–303, and Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 106–113.

prophecy is not without a polemical dimension either, for, as we are told, adopting Śaivism makes ipso facto every progression towards enlightenment (*bodhimārga*) impossible.

2.8. Kumāriḷa's *Tantravārttika* (TV, sixth century?) possibly reflects yet another early Buddhist use of the *kaliyuga*. In this profoundly anti-Buddhist work, the great Mīmāṃsaka controversialist quotes a half-verse from an as yet unidentified (Mahāyāna Buddhist?) scripture (*āgama*), which apparently claimed that a/the Buddha (s) take(s) full moral and retributive responsibility for all the sins the *kaliyuga* is to be blamed for:⁴⁹ "May [all sins] done in the world due to the dirt of the *kali* age fall down upon my head, [and] may this world be freed [from them]!"⁵⁰ Nothing can be said at present on the origin of this half-stanza, but its second part may point to a Sukhāvātī connection: "May all living beings reach the Sukhāvātī [realm] with supreme delight, thanks to my own good deeds."⁵¹ Similarly, the doctrine at stake in this citation, if any, remains obscure: is the mention of the Buddha or Buddhas taking on the sins of humans a purely rhetorical statement or does it reflect an actual belief in "demerit transference" and/or the power of confession?⁵² Be that as it

49 Kumāriḷa introduces this citation as follows (TV on MiSū 1.3.4/II.114,5): *buddhādeḥ punar ayam eva vyatikramo 'laṅkārabuddhau sthitaḥ / tenaivam āha [...]*. "As for this very transgression of the Buddha, etc., it stands(/appears) [explicitly] in the *Alaṅkārabuddhi*. Thus [it is that the Buddha] himself speaks as follows [...]" Does *Alaṅkārabuddhi* refer to a Buddhist text (*āgama*, KAṬ 6,14) and, if yes, does it allude to it in an incorrect (*-buddhau* for *-bhūmau*, *-sūtre?* *Alaṅkāra-* for *Laṅkāvatāra?*) or correct form? See the answers to Patrick Olivelle's query [July 10, 2013] on this very topic on the forum "Indology".

50 TV on MiSū 1.3.4/II.114,6–7: *kalikaluṣakṛtāni yāni loke mayi nipatantu vimucyatām sa¹ lokaḥ //*.¹ *sa* KAṬ 6,13: *tu* TV. Translation (slightly modified) from La Vallée Poussin, "Buddhist Āgamas," 371.

51 KAṬ 6,13–14: *mama hi sucaritena sarvasattvāḥ paramasukhena sukhāvātīm prayāntu //*. As pointed out by Schopen, however, reference to the Sukhāvātī does not necessarily presuppose the cult of Amitābha, for "rebirth in Sukhāvātī came to be a generalized religious reward or goal [...] open to virtually any member of the Mahāyāna community as a whole [...]" (Schopen, "Sukhāvātī as a Generalized Religious Goal," 201).

52 The basic Buddhist doctrine on the subject holds that the retribution of deeds is inescapable. As the KV (30,3–5) puts it: *karmasvakān ahaṃ māṇava sattvān vadāmi / karmadāyādān karmayonin karmapratiśaraṇān / karma māṇava sattvān vibhajati / yad idaṃ hīnotkṛṣṭamadhyamatāyām /*. "As for myself I declare, O young man, that living beings are possessors of [their] deeds, heirs to [their] deeds, born of [their] deeds, [and] based on [their] deeds. Deeds, O young man, divide the living beings, and this into [being of] vile, high, [and] middle [conditions]." But, at least according to the *Caturdharmakasūtra* referred to by Śāntideva in the ŚS (160,4), past sins can be purified (*pāpaśodhana*) or overcome (*pāpam abhibhavati*) in four ways, including the performance of self-denunciation of one's own past sins (*vidūṣaṇāsamudācāra*; see BHSD 487^b–488^a). The practice of self-denunciation is then minutely described in a long citation from the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* (SBhUSū; ŚS 160,13–164,7). It includes the following entreaty (SBhUSū v. 3.47 ≈ ŚS 163,7–8): *kleśakarmamalaṃ¹ mahyaṃ vāhayantu² tathāgatāḥ / snāpayantu ca māṃ buddhāḥ kārūṇyasalilo³ dakaiḥ //*.¹ *malaṃ* SBhUSū: *-phalaṃ* ŚS (see *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, ed. Nobel, 31, n. 17).² *vāhayantu* SBhUSū: *pravāhayantu* ŚS (see *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, ed. Nobel, 31, n. 18).³ *salilo-* SBhUSū: *-sarito-* ŚS (see *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, ed. Nobel, 31, n. 19). "May the Tathāgatas annul the impurity(/sin)

may, the quotation suggests that, in the author's view, human beings cannot be held responsible for the defilements and hence the misdeeds into which the *kaliyuga* forces them – as if cosmological compulsions lay behind human intentions and actions. But, whatever the correct interpretation may be, Kumārila's argument is clear: by taking on all the sins perpetrated by humans during the *kaliyuga*, the Buddha disqualifies himself as a reliable teacher, for, according to the Mimāṃsaka doctor, “how could he who deceives himself be beneficial to another”.⁵³

2.9. The *kaliyuga* is the subject matter of a thirteen-verse work, the *Kaliyuga-parikathā* (KP) ascribed to the famous second-century Buddhist poet and scholar Mātṛceṭa.⁵⁴ In view of its strong emphasis on the cosmological, social, political and moral conditions that are supposed to characterise the last age, this short text appears to be strongly indebted to epic and purāṇic accounts of the *kaliyuga*. The KP, at any rate, together with the *Kaliyugasāṅghātaka* (KS) to be examined below, represents one of the most developed stages ever reached by the Buddhist appropriation and incorporation of the *kaliyuga* (the term occurs at vv. 2d, 3b, 4c, 8c, 10b, 11b; *yugānta* in KP v. 11d). Cosmic and natural disorders are in the majority, and at times even regarded as having been caused by human immorality and disregard for *dharma* (a concept apparently used in a Brahmanical rather than a Buddhist sense): “rainlessness” (3a, 7c, 8d), drought (3a, 9a, 9c), the lack of harvest (3b), fruit (3c, 8d, 10d) and corn (7d), violent winds (3b, 6d), hailstorms (3c, 7c), “milklessness” of cows (7d), disorder of seasons (7d, 9c), inversion of the courses of the sun and the moon (9c). Second in number are the references to human vices and depravities, ignorance and immorality (1, 5cd, 8b, 11b and d, 12b, 13a). Issues recurring in the Brahmanical sources include women's misbehaviour (9d, 11a), plagues and illnesses (4a, 7b), the inefficacy of medicines (8a), the injustice, greed and tyranny of kings (7a, 10a, 10d), lawlessness, warfare and other threats (5b, 6c, 7ab, 8c), breaches in social and family order (10a, 11a), importance of money and wealth (2b, 5a), misplaced veneration (2a, 5ab, 6d, 9d), greediness of brahmins (11a), fear of enemies and robbers (7a), etc. While these purely secular concerns represent more than ninety per cent of the whole, allusions to properly Buddhist motifs (*bhadrakalpa* 4c, 4d, 11bc, 12; *Māra* v. 13) and to the decline of the good law are comparatively few in

of my evil deeds for me; may the Buddhas wash me clean in the flowing waters of mercy.” Translation (slightly modified) from *Śikshā-Samuccaya*, ed. Bendall and Rouse, 160. As we can see, the belief in the Buddhas' capacity to remove people's sins is relatively well attested. In the case of the Sukhāvati, it is the merit (*puṇya*) engendered by the (future) Buddha's (Dharmākara/Amitābha) vows and their realisation that is believed to empty the living beings of “karmic defilements and passions” (*Three Pure Land Sutras*, ed. and trans. Inagaki, 37) and create the Sukhāvati world-system itself.

53 TV on MiSū 1.3.4/v. 270cd, II.114,4: *ātmānaṃ yo 'tisandhatte so 'nyasmai syāt katham hita iti //*.

54 On Mātṛceṭa, see *Varṇārhavarṇastotra des Mātṛceṭa*, ed. and trans. Hartmann. According to Dietz (*Mātṛceṭas Kaliyugaparikathā*, 173), “[d]ie Authentizität der Autorschaft des Mātṛceṭa läßt sich nicht mit Sicherheit nachweisen”, and no parallel to the Stotras of Mātṛceṭa can be identified.

number. As far as I can see, only parts of verses 5 and 6 deserve to be mentioned in this connection: “Deceivers will cause the demise of the good law,”⁵⁵ and: “Those who live in [moral] restraint [and] turn to the supreme teaching [will be very] few [in number]. There can be no doubt that the teaching of the Seer will decline in a short time.”⁵⁶ The KP gives every impression of being a rather late work modelled on Brahmanical prophecies and of providing a very weakly “buddhicised” account of the *kaliyuga*.

2.10. The *Kaliyugasamghātaka* (KS), whose unknown author was apparently familiar with the KP, is yet another late (eleventh century CE?) Buddhist monograph on the *kaliyuga*.⁵⁷ Contrary to the (pseudo-)Mātṛceṭa’s KP, the KS concentrates on the dramatic increase in human vices and their deleterious effects, but hardly ever alludes to cosmic disasters except by way of similes or metaphors.⁵⁸ Similarly, the KS makes no mention whatsoever of the demise of the good law, the Buddhists’ most central apocalyptic concern. As far as I am aware, the work alludes three times to the *kaliyuga* (*kali* in v. 11; *kaliyuga* in v. 17; *kaliyugakāla* in v. 49) and twice to the *yugānta* (vv. 18 and 44). During the *kaliyuga*, the world knows “[n]o distinction [...] between rights and wrongs”⁵⁹ or between humans and animals.⁶⁰ At that time, “[t]he swords of *adharmā* fall from all sides. Broken into pieces are the barriers of *dharmā*”.⁶¹ And, indeed, virtues and virtuous people (*guṇa*, *guṇavat*, *ādhyaguṇa*, vv. 9, 10, 11, 20, 22, 30, 37), good conduct (*samyagvṛtta*, v. 1), good deeds (*satkriyā*,

55 KP v. 5d: *g.yon can nmams kyis dam chos bs nub par ’gyur /*

56 KP v. 6ab: *gang zhig sdom pa la gnas bstan pa’i mchog la ’jug par byed pa nyung / the tshom yod min drang srong bstang pa ring por mi thogs nub par ’gyur /*

57 The KS’s 50 verses were likely the work of a (Nepalese?) poet who was either “a Buddhist, or at least ha[d] studied a number of Buddhist texts” (Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 103–104), among which might have been Vasubandhu’s *AKBh* (see Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 116, n. 12). KS v. 43 imitates KP v. 12 (see Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 124, n. 46).

58 Note KS v. 18cd: *yugāntasūryā iva dīptaraśmayāḥ pradīpayantīva mahīm asādhavaḥ //*. “It appears the wicked are burning the earth, [l]ike many suns with burning rays at the end of the age.” Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 118. Other hybrid examples include KS v. 3ab (*timiram abhibhavati ruciram atipatati /*. “Darkness overshadows, brightness flies past.” Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 115) and v. 6 (*naddheva phalapuṣṭeṇa bhū rajastamasor iyam / sattvasya phalapuṣṭe tu patito vāsavāśaniḥ //*. “This land seems covered with fruit [a]nd flower of *rajas* and *tamas*, [b]ut upon the fruit and flower of *sattva* has landed the thunderbolt of *Vāsava*.” Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 115).

59 KS v. 11d²: *tulyam asatām ca satām ca*. Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 117.

60 Note KS v. 36: *bhāyasaratisaññā mānuṣāṇaṃ samānāḥ khagamrgapaśusaṅghair hrīr nṛṇāṃ bhūṣaṇaṃ tu / tad api sugaticihnaṃ dūṣitaṃ ced anāryaiḥ ka iva bata narāṇāṃ kaḥ paśūnāṃ viśeṣaḥ //*. “The human sensations of fear, taste, and love [a]re equal to those of birds, and wild or tamed animals, [b]ut modesty is the unique ornament of men. If that very mark of humanity is spoiled by ignoble men, [w]hat is, alas, the difference between men and animals?” Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 122.

61 KS v. 8ab: *paripatanty adharmanistriṃśāḥ śakalikṛtā dharmasetavaḥ /*. Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 116.

sukṛta, *sucarita*, vv. 2, 3, 43), good manners (*sādhuvṛtta*, v. 49) and good people (*sajjana*, *satpuruṣa*, *sādhū*, vv. 9, 10, 18, 19) are disappearing; uprightness (*sādhutā*, v. 4), nobility (*bhadratā*, *āryatā*, vv. 2, 12) and the “manner of behaviours of the nobles” (*āryavyavahāranīti*, v. 46) are fading away, as too are good dispositions such as affection (*sauhṛda*, v. 5), friendship (*saṅgata*, v. 5), reverence (*gaurava*, v. 5), assistance (*upakāra*, v. 26), serving others’ interests (*parahita*, v. 21), consent (*saṃmata*, v. 5), discipline/modesty (*vinaya*, v. 8) and piety (*śuci*, v. 26). During the *kaliyuga*, “only a few civilised men have remained”,⁶² and “even intelligent people, being afflicted [b]y the fear of finding no means of subsistence, although their minds are embraced by scriptures, set out to go by the same path that the wicked have trampled”.⁶³ The KS’s depiction of the *kaliyuga* covers the whole array of human vices, defilements and perversities. Humans exhibit faulty views (*duṣṭadṛṣṭi*, v. 31), insanity (*pramāda*, v. 44) and stupidity (*mauḍhya*, v. 35). Vices (*mala*, vv. 9–10), bad deeds (*vikriyā*, vv. 2, 31), evil (*kukṛta*, v. 3) and defilements (*doṣa*, v. 20) are increasing together with delusion (*moha*, v. 7), unlawful lusts (*adharmarāga*, v. 7) and depraved longings (*viṣamalobha*, v. 7). Those bad people (*durjana*, v. 9) who are destitute of virtues (*aguṇavat*, v. 11) and enemies of virtues (*guṇadviṣ*, v. 37) get the upper hand, following wrong paths (*kāpatha*, *asatpatha*, vv. 9, 31, 45, 49), the path of impurity (*avyavadānacārin*, v. 19). Cruel (*krūra*, *ghṛṇa*, vv. 29, 45) and merciless (*niranunaya*, v. 29), these wicked people are moved by their taste for wealth and money (*bhūti*, *vitta*, *dhana*, vv. 25, 27, 33): “[i]n whichever manner worldly affairs, [t]heir strides entangled with money, [a]vail themselves to the six measures of success, [i]n that very manner the world moves.”⁶⁴ People in the *kaliyuga* are overwhelmed by all possible forms of conceit: self-satisfaction (*svatṛptatā*, v. 30), arrogance (*svadṛptatā*, *avalepa*, vv. 30, 32), pride (*mada*, vv. 32, 44, 47) and conceit (*māna*, v. 32). Similarly, they exhibit all varieties of dishonesty and untruth (*anṛta*, v. 46): cheats (*kitava*, v. 39) and villains (*pāmara*, v. 48), skilled in deception (*vañcanāpaṇḍita*, v. 48) and brought up in the skills of trickery (*kalikalākauśalodbhāvita*, v. 48), they act out of trickery (*māyā*, vv. 44, 46) and deceit (*śāṭhya*, vv. 44, 47). During this inauspicious period, humans are full of ingratitude (*kṛtaghnatā*, v. 30), malice (*vyāpāda*, v. 47), vehemence (*samrambha*, v. 47) and savagery (*raudratā*, v. 2), and act out of self-interest alone (*svahita*, v. 21). With sinful intentions (*pāpāśaya*, v. 41), they give themselves up to theft (*steya*, *parimoṣa*, vv. 32, 45, 47), offences (*vinikāra*, v. 39), abuse (*kṣepa*, v. 32), (female) adultery (*vyabhicāra*, v. 45), insult (*pāruṣya*, v. 46), backbiting (*paiṣunya*, v. 46), and diverse forms of misconduct (*anaya*, v. 37) and evil (*vyasana*, v. 33). In short, “[t]he words of the wise con-

⁶² KS v. 7d: *kati cid eva śiṣṭāḥ śiṣṭāḥ*. Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 116.

⁶³ KS v. 34bd: *medhāvino ’pi yad avṛttibhayāvasannāḥ / śāstropagūḍhamatayo ’pi pathā pravṛttās tenaiva durjanajanaprahatena gantum //*. Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 122.

⁶⁴ KS v. 15ac: *yathā yathārthapratibaddhayānā prasiddhiṣāḍguṇyam upaiti yātrā / prayāti loko ’dya tathā tathāyam [...] //*. Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 118. On the six measures of success of the *Arthaśāstra*, see Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 118, n. 19.

versant with the truth have almost faded out. This world has become melancholic as if the feast were over.”⁶⁵

2.11. With the *Kālacakratāntra*, which presents itself as “a yoga for the liberation of men at the time of the *kaliyuga*,”⁶⁶ the Buddhist appropriation of the *kaliyuga* reached its apex. The earliest parts of the *Wheel of Time Tantra*, which is often regarded as the last great revelation cycle in Buddhist India, date back to the late-tenth or early eleventh century.⁶⁷ They reflect their authors’ or milieu’s strong concern about the first Muslim campaigns and about Brahmanism/Hinduism gradually getting the upper hand in its age-old competition with Buddhism.⁶⁸ This dual threat permeates the Tantra’s eschatology, which “presents a prophetic vision in which Buddhism, allied with a subordinated Hinduism, triumphs over the ‘barbarian’ religion of Islam in a final apocalyptic war.”⁶⁹ As a point of fact, the *Kālacakratāntra* is well known for providing the most developed account of Islamic (likely Ismā‘īlī, perhaps from Multān) doctrines and practices in pre-Islamic or, at any rate, Buddhist India.⁷⁰ *Kālacakra* literature describes the Muslim barbarians’ abhorrent diet (involving animal sacrifice), violent iconoclasm and strange customs (such as circum-

65 KS v. 43cd: *parimlānaprāyā budhajanakathā tattvanipuṇā nirānandaṃ jātaṃ jagad idam atitotsavam iva //*. Translation from Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*, 124.

66 LKT 1.1d (VP I.30,27): *yogaṃ [...] kaliyugasamaye muktihetor narāṇām*. Translation from Newman, “Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra,” 331.

67 On Kālacakra literature, see Sferra, “Kālacakra.”

68 A comparable motif occurs in a letter in which Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1365–1448) answers Byang chub seng ge’s (1372/[1377]–1439) question as to whether Marpa ever met the great Indian *siddha* Nārōpa (the author alludes here to the time of the [five] degenerations/corruptions, not to the *kaliyuga* proper) (*Sa skya bka’ ’bum*, vol. 7, 429, l. 4): */sngigs ma’i dus su gyur pas na/ /dbsu ’gyur kla klos rgyal po bcom/ /chos ltar bcos pas sa stengs gang/ /chos bzhin de la skur ba ’debs/*. “Since this is the evil time, the barbarian [Turk] king is victorious in Magadha. He falsifies religion and spreads it [Islam] all over, vilifying true practitioners.” Translation from Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 146. Thanks are due to the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (www.tbrc.org) for making the *Sa skya bka’ ’bum* accessible.

69 Newman, “Eschatology in the Wheel of Time Tantra,” 202. Note also Newman, “Eschatology in the Wheel of Time Tantra,” 203–204: “Like many other prophetic, eschatological traditions, the Wheel of Time Tantra responded to contemporary religious, social, and political tensions by projecting them and their resolution onto an idealized future. The Buddhist author of the *Wheel of Time* was greatly troubled by the decline of Buddhism vis-à-vis Hinduism, and by the ominous appearance of marauding Muslim armies on the western borders of India. Earlier Buddhist eschatology (the prophecy of the future Buddha Maitreya) provided no clear solution to these problems, so the Wheel of Time presented its own creative response. By adapting a Hindu myth to counter the threat of Islam, the Buddhists hoped to draw Hindus into the Buddhist camp to face a new common enemy. Whereas the Hindu myth of Kalki was devised to assert the caste privileges of the brahmins, the Buddhist myth attempted to unite all Indians against a foreign invader. Although this strategy met with no great success in India, the myth of the Kalkins of Sambhala lives on among the Tibetan and Mongol followers of the Wheel of Time.”

70 On the *Kālacakratāntra*’s depiction of Islam, see Newman, “Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra;” see also Sferra and Luo, “Materials for the Study of the *Paramārthasevā*,” 237–238.

cision), but also mentions their heroism, truthfulness, asceticism and egalitarianism (absence of caste system). In stanzas 1.154–155, the Buddha prophesies the future development of Islam, which he refers to as the barbarian religion/law (*mlecchadharmā*; the Muslim barbarians are known as the Tāyins⁷¹) preached by Muḥammad alias Madhumati(/-pati), the incarnation of (Allah) al-Raḥmān (*rahmaṇāvātāra*):⁷²

Adam, Nūḥ, and Ibrāhīm [are the first three barbarian teachers]; there are also five others whose nature is *tamas* [darkness, VE] in the family of demonic snakes: Mūsā, ‘Īsā, the White-Clad One,⁷³ Muḥammad, and the Mahdī, who will be the eighth – he will belong to the darkness. The seventh will clearly be born in the city of Baghdād in the land of Makka, where the demonic incarnation – the mighty, merciless idol of the barbarians – lives in the world. [The barbarians] kill camels, horses, and cattle, and briefly cook the flesh with blood. They cook beef and amniotic fluid with butter and spice, rice mixed with vegetables, and forest fruit, all at once on the fire. Men eat that, O king, and drink bird eggs, in the place of the demon [barbarians].⁷⁴

The early eleventh-century authors of the *Laḡhukālacakratāntra* (LKT) and the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary (VP) adapted ancient India’s most popular messianic myth, that of the advent of Kalki(n) at the end of the *kaliyuga*. This Brahmanical myth has its *locus classicus* in the third book of the *Mahābhārata*, at the close of the great epic’s most detailed description of the *kaliyuga*:

Then, when the Eon is closing amidst terrifying destruction, the world begins gradually to regenerate from the brahmins onward. At this time fate once more turns favorable in order to prosper the world again. When sun, moon, Tiṣya, and Jupiter are in conjunction in the same sign of the zodiac, the Kṛta age will begin again. Parjanya rains in season, the stars are favorable, and the planets, making their orbit, are propitious. There will be safety, plenty of food, and health without sickness. A brahmin by the name of Kalki Viṣṇuśaśa will arise, prodded by Time, of great prowess, wisdom, and might. He will be born in the village of Sambhala, in a pious brahmin dwelling, and at his mere thought all vehicles, weapons, warriors, arms, and coats of mail will wait on him. He will be king, a Turner of the Wheel, triumphant by the Law,

71 On the etymology of *tāyin*, a word denoting peoples of western Asia (Tib. *stag gzig*, not *skyob pa*, from Arabic *ṭayyī*, perhaps reinforced by the ethnonym *tājika*, “Tajik”), see Seyfort Ruegg, *Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism*, 115, n. 156, and Newman, “Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra,” 316–319, 333 (318: “‘Tāyin,’ like ‘Tājika,’ is a somewhat vague ethnonym referring collectively to the Muslim Turks, Persians, and Arabs of the northwestern borderlands of the Indian world.”)

72 An epithet for Allah meaning “the Benefactor”.

73 The identity of the White-Clad One remains obscure; see Newman, “Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra,” 321–322.

74 LKT 1.154–155 (VP I.153,15–22, as edited in Newman, “Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra,” 352): *ardo nogho varāhī danubhujaḡakule tāmasānye ’pi pañca mūṣeśau śvetavastrī madhumati mathanī yo ’ṣṭamaḡ so ’ndhakaḡ syāt | sambhūtiḡ saptamasya sphuṭa makhaviṣaye vāḡadādaḡ nagaryāḡ yasyāḡ loke ’surāḡśī nivasati balavān nirdayo mlecchamūrṭiḡ || uṣṭrāśvau ḡāś ca hatvā sarudhirapiṣitam śuddhapakvaḡ hi kiñcit gomāṡsaḡ sūtatoyaḡ ḡhṭakaṭukasamaḡ taḡḡḡḡlāḡ śākamiśram | ekasmin vahniḡpakvaḡ vanaphalasaḡhitam yatra bhojyaḡ narāḡḡḡḡ pānaḡ cāḡḡḡḡḡ khagāḡḡḡ bhavati naraḡpate tatpadaḡ cāsuraḡḡḡḡḡ ||. Translation from Newman, “Islam in the Kālacakra Tantra,” 320 and 319, to be compared with Newman, “Eschatology in the Wheel of Time Tantra,” 206.*

and he will bring this turbulent world to tranquillity. That rising brahmin, blazing, ending the destruction, noble-minded, will be the destruction of all and the revolver of the Eon. Surrounded by brahmins, that brahmin will extirpate all the lowly barbarians, wherever they are.⁷⁵

From this myth, the *Kālacakra* retained (and reinterpreted) the figure of Kalki(n), his relation to *kāla* (“Time”) and brahmins, Sambhala as his fiefdom (no longer a small village, but a big territory with Kalāpa as its capital city), and the leading role he played in the extirpation of the barbarians (now the Muslim Tāyins). According to the *Wheel of Time Tantra*, the bodhisattva Sucandra, to whom the Buddha preached the Tantra, was the first emperor and Dharma-king of Sambhala. His eighth successor, Yaśas, “unified all the brahman families of Sambhala within a single Buddhist Adamantine Vehicle clan”,⁷⁶ for which he was given the title of *kalkin* (now an epithet⁷⁷ applying to the 25 successive rulers of Sambhala⁷⁸). The twenty-fifth *kalkin*, Raudracakrin, is the one who, at the very end of the *kaliyuga*, will come out of Sambhala and, with the help of the Hindu gods, crush the Mahdī Kṛṇmati’s irreligious barbarians (he is described as *mlecchadharmāntakṛt*, “destroyer of the barbarian religion/law” in VP I.26,3) in what John Newman has called “a righteous crusade”.

The Armageddon is described in LKT 1.159–164:

At the end of the age, among those Kalkins, at the end of twenty-five reigns, the wrathful Kalkin Cakrin, lord of the gods, honored by the best gods, will appear in the lineage of Kalkins. His peaceful form will delight the righteous; he will annihilate the race of barbarians. Cakrin, mounted on a mountain horse, a short spear in his hand, radiant as the sun, will strike all the foes. When eight Kalkins have reigned, the barbarian religion will certainly appear in the land of Mecca. Then, at the time of the wrathful Kalkin Cakrin and the vicious barbarian lord, a fierce battle will occur on earth. At the end of the age Cakrin, the universal emperor, will come out from Kalāpa, the city of the gods built on Mount Kailāsa. He will attack the barbarians in battle with his four-division army. The Hindu gods Śiva, Skanda, Gaṇeśa, and Viṣṇu will assist

⁷⁵ MBh 3.188.85–93: *tatas tumulasaṅghāte vartamāne yugakṣaye / dvijātipūrvako lokaḥ krameṇa prabhaviṣyati // tataḥ kālāntare ’nyasmin punar lokavivṛddhaye / bhaviṣyati punar daivam anukūlaṃ yadṛcchayā // yadā candraś ca sūryaś ca tathā tiṣyabr̥haspatī / ekārāśau sameṣyanti prapatsyati tadā kṛtam // kālavarṣī ca parjanyo nakṣatrāṇi śubhāni ca / pradakṣiṇā grahās cāpi bhaviṣyanti anulomagāḥ / kṣemaṃ subhikṣam ārogyaṃ bhaviṣyati nirāmayam // kalkir viṣṇuśā nāma dvijaḥ kālpracoditaḥ / utpatsyate mahāvīryo mahābuddhiparākramaḥ // sambhūtaḥ sambhalagrāme brāhmaṇāvasathe śubhe / manasā tasya sarvāṇi vāhanāny āyudhāni ca / upasthāsyanti yodhās ca śastrāṇi kavacāni ca // sa dharmavijayī rājā cakravartī bhaviṣyati / sa cemaṃ saṅkulaṃ lokaṃ prasādam upaneṣyati // utthito brāhmaṇo dīptaḥ kṣayāntakṛd udāradhīḥ / sa saṅkṣepo hi sarvasya yugasya parivartakaḥ // sa sarvatra gatān kṣudrān brāhmaṇaiḥ parivāritaḥ / utsādayiṣyati tadā sarvān mlecchagaṇān dvijaḥ //*. Translation from *Mahābhārata*, trans. Buitenen, 597.

⁷⁶ Newman, “Eschatology in the Wheel of Time Tantra,” 203.

⁷⁷ On the etymology of *kalkin*, see Seyfort Ruegg, *Symbiosis of Buddhism with Brahmanism/Hinduism*, 121, n. 160.

⁷⁸ On this list, see VP I.25,9–26,3 Newman, “Brief History of Kālacakra,” 81–82 and Reigle, *Lost Kālacakra Mūla Tantra*.

Kalkin, as will the mountain horses, elephant masters, kings in gold chariots, and armed warriors. There will be ninety million dappled mountain horses swift as the wind, four hundred thousand elephants drunk with wine, five hundred thousand chariots, six great armies, and ninety-six crowned kings. Kalkin, with Śiva and Viṣṇu, will annihilate the barbarians with this army. Ferocious warriors will strike the barbarian horde. Elephant lords will strike elephants; mountain horses will strike the horses of Sindh; kings will strike kings in equal and unequal combat. Hanūmān, son of Mahācandra, will strike Aśvatthāman with sharp weapons. Rudra will strike the protector of the barbarian lord, the master of all the demons. The wrathful Kalkin will strike Kṛṇmati. Kalkin, with Viṣṇu and Śiva, will destroy the barbarians in battle with his army. Then Cakrin will return to his home in Kalāpa, the city the gods built on Mount Kailāsa. At that time everyone on earth will be fulfilled with religion, pleasure, and prosperity. Grain will grow in the wild, and trees will bow with everlasting fruit – these things will occur.⁷⁹

3 Buddhas and/at the End Times

3.1. Do *buddhas* appear at the end of sub-eons⁸⁰? Vasubandhu's AKBh, which reflects the Kashmirian Sarvāstivādin/Vaibhāṣika orthodoxy, is very clear about this. First, *buddhas* never preach during the periods of increasing human lifespan (*utkarṣakāla*), because then the living beings are not responsive to the Buddhist dispensation (a therapeutics of suffering) since they are not frightened by painful existence.⁸¹ Second, *buddhas* never appear when the human lifespan decreases beyond one hundred years,

79 LKT 1.159–164 (VP I.154,9–155,8): *tanmadhye pañcaviṃśatkrāmaparigaṇite viṣṭarāṇāṃ yugānte kalkigotre sureśvaḥ suravarānamito raudrakalki bhaviṣyat / sādhnāṃ śāntarūpaḥ sukhada iti tathāivāntako mleccajāteḥ śailāśvārūḍhacakrī hanadarisakalaṃ sellahasto 'rkatējāḥ // 159 // kalkigotrasya madhye karaguṇitayuge putrapautre 'py atīte tasmin kāle bhavad vai khalu makhaviṣyaye mleccadharmapravṛtīḥ / yāvan mleccendraduṣṭaḥ suravarānamito raudrakalki ca yāvat tasmin kāle dvayoś ca kṣītitalanilaye raudrayuddhaṃ bhaviṣyat // 160 // yuddhe mleccān hanan yaḥ sakalabhūvi tale cāturaṅgaiḥ svasāinyaiḥ kailāsādrau yugānte suraracitapure cakravarty āgamiṣyat / rudraṃ skandaṃ gaṇendraṃ harim api ca sakhin dāsyate kalkinā ca śailāśvān vāraṇendrān kanakarathanṛpān śāstrahastān bhātāṃś ca // 161 // śailāśvair vāyuvegair guṇaguṇitaguṇaiḥ koṭivirbhīśvavarnāir vedākhyair lakṣasamkhyair madamuditagajaiḥ syandanair bhūtalakṣau / ṣaḍbhiś cākṣauhiṇobhī rasanavatikulair maulibaddhair narendrair etat sānyena kalki hariharasahito mleccanāśaṃ kariṣyat // 162 // hantavyaṃ mleccavṛndaṃ varakaṭukabhaṭair vāraṇendrain gajānāṃ śailāśvaiḥ saindhavanāṃ samaviṣamarāṇe pārhivaiḥ pārhivānām / aśvatthāmā mahācandratānyahanumāms¹ tiṅṣaśāstrair haniṣyad rudro mleccendranāthaṃ sakaladanupatiṃ kṛṇmatī raudrakalki // 163 // hatvā mleccāṃś ca yuddhe hariharasahitaḥ sarvasānyaiakalki kailāsādrau vrajiṣyat² suraracitapure samsthito yatra cakrī / tasmin kāle dharānyāṃ sakalajalakulaṃ dharmakāmārthapūrṇaṃ śasyāny āraṇyajāni sthīraphalanamitās te bhaviṣyanti vṛkṣāḥ // 164 //*

¹ hanumāms em.: hanūmāms (non-metrical) Ed. ²vrajiṣyat em.: vrajiyaṣyat (sic; hypermetrical) Ed. Translation from Newman, “Eschatology in the Wheel of Time Tantra,” 206–207.

80 On this notion, see above, n. 4.

81 AKBh 182,24.

because then, the five corruptions, i.e. the corruption of the lifespan, the corruption of the eon, the corruption of the defilements, the corruption of the false views and the corruption of the living beings, become too abundant [for the *buddhas* to preach properly. For] beyond a decrease [of the humans' lifespan to one hundred years, these humans'] lifespan, etc., are too low.⁸²

As a consequence, “the [*buddhas* only] appear [in the world] in [periods of] decline[, when the human beings' lifespan decreases from 80,000] to one hundred [years].”⁸³

3.2.1. However, the Sarvāstivādin/Vaibhāṣika account far from exhausts the Indian Buddhists' views on the topic.⁸⁴ Some important segments of “early” Mahāyāna, maybe less scholastically but more devotionally, if not prophetically, oriented, accepted the advent of *buddhas* during the degenerate last period of an eon – one of the surest signs of their great compassion.⁸⁵ These *buddhas* allegedly appeared in

82 AKBh 183,1–3: *tadā hi pañca kaṣyā abhyutsadā bhavanti / tadyathāyuskaṣyāḥ kalpakāṣyāḥ kleśakaṣyāo dṛṣṭikaṣyāḥ sattvakaṣyāsa ca / apakarṣasyādastāt pratyavarā āyurādayaḥ [...]* / *Traité* I.299 (MPPŚ 93a) expresses the same Sarvāstivādin/Vaibhāṣika view: “[Q]uand la durée de vie dépasse 80.000 ans, les hommes vivant longtemps (*dīrghāyus*) abondent en plaisirs (*sukha*); leurs entraves: amour, désir, etc. (*rāgaṭṣṇādīsaṃyojana*) sont grosses (*sthūla*) et leurs facultés sont faibles (*mṛdvindriya*). Ce n'est pas le moment de les convertir. D'autre part, quand la durée de vie est inférieure à 100 ans, les hommes ont une vie courte (*alpāyus*) et sont accablés de douleurs (*duḥkha*); leurs entraves: haine, etc. (*dveṣādīsaṃyojana*) sont épaisses (*sthūla*). Cette période de plaisir [quand la vie dépasse 80.000 ans] et cette période de douleur [quand elle est inférieure à 100 ans] ne sont pas des époques favorables pour trouver le Chemin (*mārgalābha*). C'est pourquoi les Buddha n'apparaissent pas [à ces moments-là].” See also *Traité* I.574–575.

83 AK 3.94a,b: *apakarṣe hi śatād yāvat tadudbhavaḥ* /. The story of King Kṛkin's eleven dreams in the *Mahīśāsakavinaya* (see Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues*, 336, n. 1, and 343–349) provides a somewhat hybrid prophecy. Śākyamuni will appear when the human lifespan is one hundred years. As they are described in the *vinaya*, however, the pitiable conditions prevailing during this period are suggestive of the *pañcakaṣyā* (*/kali*) age: 1° Thirty-year-old humans will have grey hair; 2° Twenty-year-old men will beget children; 3° Children will be in command of the household; 4° Rich people will give only to the rich, not to the poor; 5° Kings and court officers will levy excessive taxes and despoil their subjects; 6° Newly married girls will have to feed their mothers; 7° Drought will prevail; 8° People will marry for money rather than according to caste; 9° Kings will be unfair and cruel; 10° Buddhist monks will have worldly interests; 11° The Buddhist law will be decaying in Madhyadeśa but thriving in the bordering areas.

84 For some Mahāyānist arguments against the Sarvāstivādin/Vaibhāṣika position, see *Traité*, 1.299–302. On the periods in which *buddhas* appear, see also Lamotte, *Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, 385–386, n. 29, and Kloetzli, *Buddhist Cosmology*, 86–88.

85 The lightly “mahāyānist” (Mahāsāṅghika?) *Lalitavistara* (LV, see Jong, “Recent Japanese Studies on the Lalitavistara,” 252–253) may belong to this broad category. Note LV 248,13–14: *pañcakaṣyākāle 'ham iha jambudvīpe 'vatirṇo hīnādhimuktikeṣu sattveṣv ākīrṇatīrthyavargeṣu [...]*. “I have made my appearance in this Jambudvīpa at the time of the five corruptions, among beings of weak inclination [towards the law and] filled with multitudes of outsiders.” Note also LV 17.2: *pañcasu kaṣyākāle hīne 'dharmādhimuktike / jāto 'smiṃ jambudvīpe dharmakriya uddhare loke* //. “I was born in the Jambudvīpa at the time of the five corruptions, a vile [period] inclined towards irreligion, in a world neglecting lawful action.” On *uddhara*, see BHSD 130^b.

order to preach “easier” paths, i.e. salvational methods better suited to the corrupt dispositions of mankind. This seems to be true of the apocalyptically inclined *Saddharma-puṇḍarīkasūtra* (SPSū, the Lotus Sūtra) and its doctrine of the One Vehicle (*ekayāna*):

Moreover, O Śāriputra, the *tathāgatas*, the saint [and] perfectly awakened *buddhas* appear at [the time of] the corruption of the eon or at [the time of] the corruption of the living beings or at [the time of] the corruption of the defilements or at [the time of] the corruption of the lifespan. Then, O Śāriputra, as the corruptions [that are characteristic] of the disturbances of an eon are of this kind, as the numerous living beings are greedy [and] with [very] little roots of merit, the *tathāgatas*, the saint [and] perfectly awakened *buddhas*, on account of [their] skill in [salvific] means, [actually] teach the One Vehicle of the *buddhas* by teaching the three vehicles.⁸⁶

The doctrine of the One Vehicle postulates that the non-Buddhist religious traditions and especially the two non-Mahāyānist vehicles/dispensations – viz. the vehicle of the “hearers” (*śrāvaka-yāna*) and the vehicle of the solitary, non-preaching *buddhas* (*pratyekabuddhayāna*) – are created by the *buddhas* as didactic/salvific means, expedients or stratagems (*upāya*) “in order to adapt their teaching to the circumstances of the practitioners.”⁸⁷ Salvation, however, is only possible by means of the Mahāyāna. As our passage suggests, there is an intimate connection between the One Vehicle doctrine and the age of the Last Days, during which human beings are so greedy and devoid of merit that the *buddhas* can only preach them salvation via the (ultimately illusory) three vehicles. As Williams rightly says, “[i]t is only because *buddhas* who appear at the decay of a cosmic epoch find that beings are so full of demerit and evil that they teach the other vehicles”.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ SPSū_{K/N}43,4–8, SPSū_{W/T} 39,29–40,4, SPSū_{M/D} 32,21–25: *api tu khalu punaḥ śāriputra yadā tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyaksambuddhāḥ kalpakaṣāye votpadyante sattvakaṣāye vā kleśakaṣāye vā dṛṣṭikaṣāye vāyukaṣāye vā vāyukaṣāye votpadyante | evaṃrūpeṣu śāriputra kalpasanīkabhakaṣāyeṣu bahusattveṣu lubdheṣv alpakuśalamūleṣu tadā śāriputra tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyaksambuddhā upāyakaṣāyena tad evaikaṃ buddhayānaṃ triyānanirdeśena nirdeśanti |*. Note also SPSū v. 2.124 (Śākyamuni is speaking): *ahaṃ pi evaṃ samudācariṣye yathā vadantī vidu lokanāyakāḥ | ahaṃ pi sanīkṣobhi imasmi dāruṇe utpanna sattvāna kaṣāyamadhye ||*. “I, too, will act according to the indications of the wise leaders of the world; having myself been born in the midst of the corruption (*kaṣāya*) of creatures, I have known agitation in this dreadful world.” Translation Kern, *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka*, 56.

⁸⁷ Zimmermann, “Mahāyānist Criticism of *Arthaśāstra*,” 184. On the One Vehicle, see Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 145–150.

⁸⁸ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 147. Apocalyptic concerns are at the heart of Nichiren’s understanding and use of the SPSū. See Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 159–166, and especially 162: “For Nichiren, in the era of *mappo* one can be saved only through faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*. [...] [I]n the age of *mappo* the people require a simple teaching.” See also Bowring, *Religious Traditions of Japan*, 332–343, and below, n. 95. On the one/three vehicles and the last age, see also KPSū 51,3–15, quoted below, §2.4, n. 103.

3.2.2. With its manifold didactic expedients, the three-vehicle dispensation is apparently well suited for the short-lived, unintelligent and defiled humans born at the end of a sub-eon. A similar idea seems to be at home in early Indian Pure Land Buddhism (Sukhāvati, the western blissful paradise-like world-system of the *buddha* Amitābha/Amitāyus).⁸⁹ The two *Sukhāvativyūhasūtras* (SVSū) that form the textual basis of the Amitābha-related Pure Land traditions also reflect the belief that *buddhas* appear and teach among the five corruptions. And it is for doing exactly this that the other *buddhas* praise Śākyamuni in the shorter SVSū:

A most difficult task has been accomplished by the Blessed One, Śākyamuni, the Sage of the Śākyas, the Monarch of the Śākyas. After he awakened to unsurpassable, perfect, and full awakening in this Sahā world,⁹⁰ he taught a *dharma* that the whole world was reluctant to accept, at the time of the corruption of the eon, at the time of the corruption of the living beings, at the time of the corruption of the false views, at the time of the corruption of the life span, at the time of the corruption of the defilements.⁹¹

Buddhas, then, do appear during the age of the five corruptions. Among the things they teach are the meditative/contemplative means to visualise Amitābha's Pure

⁸⁹ Nattier, "Realm of Akṣobhya," 74–75: "Pure Land Buddhism consists of all Buddhist teachings that look forward to the possibility of rebirth in another world-system (*lokadhātu*) or Buddha-field (*buddhakṣetra*), where a Buddha is presently teaching the Dharma." Besides Amitābha's Sukhāvati, this includes Akṣobhya's eastern Abhirati world-system (see Nattier, "Realm of Akṣobhya," and Strauch, "Early Pure Land Buddhism"). In India, Pure Land cults and literature were already well established by the second century CE (see Ducor, "Sources de la Sukhāvati," 358, 372–373, 395, and, more generally, Eltschinger, "Pure Land Sūtras."). For a short introduction to Indian and East Asian Pure Land Buddhism, see Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 251–276; see also Schopen, "Sukhāvati as a Generalized Religious Goal," and Bowring, *Religious Traditions of Japan*, 196–216 and 245–266. For a useful summary of recent research, see Ducor, "Sources de la Sukhāvati." Note that the SPSū (see, for example, SPSū vv. 24.30–33 and Kern, *Saddharma-Pundarīka*, 417) is also indebted to beliefs in the Sukhāvati. On this point, see Fujita, "Pure Land Buddhism," and Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 152–154.

⁹⁰ Sahā is the world-system (*lokadhātu*, a multi-layered universe) or *buddha*-field (*buddhakṣetra*) in which we are living and Śākyamuni was(/is) active. On Sahā and the *buddhakṣetras*, see Lamotte, *Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, 395–404 and *Traité* 1.574–576.

⁹¹ Shorter SVSū 99,15–18: *suduṣkaraṃ bhagavatā śākyamuninā śākyādhirājena kṛtam / sahāyāṃ lokadhātāv anuttarāṃ samyak sambodhim abhisambudhya sarvalokavipratyayāniyo dharmo deśitaḥ kalpakaṣāye sattvakaṣāye dṛṣṭikaṣāya āyuskaṣāye kleśakaṣāye /*. Translation (modified) from *Land of Bliss*, trans. Gómez, 21. In the shorter SVSū (99,19–22), Śākyamuni repeats the same statement (see *Land of Bliss*, trans. Gómez, 21–22). Note also the following passage from the longer SVSū (49,19–50,1): *sarve te tatropādāya na jātv ajātismarā bhaviṣyanti sthāpayitvā tathārūpeṣu kalpa-saṅkṣobheṣu ye pūrvasthānapraṇihitāḥ pañcasu kaṣāyeṣu vartamāneṣu yadā buddhānāṃ bhagavatāṃ loke prādurbhāvo bhavati / tadyathāpi nāma mamaitarhi /*. "And all of them from that moment on never lose their remembrance of past lives – except for those who, in a previous existence, have made the resolution to appear in the midst of the five corruptions in times of the decline of the cosmic age, when *buddhas*, blessed ones, make their appearance in the world, like my own appearance in the present age." Translation (slightly modified) from *Land of Bliss*, trans. Gómez, 98.

Land. But how will the humans of the Last Days be able to visualise the Sukhāvati once their *buddha* has departed? This is the question Śākyamuni is asked by Vaidehī (the wife of King Bimbisāra) in the *Amitāyurbuddhānusr̥tisūtra* (ABASū):

World-Honoured One, through the Buddha’s power, even I have now been able to see that land. But after the Buddha’s passing, sentient beings will become defiled and evil, and be oppressed by the five kinds of suffering. How then will those beings be able to see the Land of Utmost Bliss of Amitāyus?⁹²

In answer, Śākyamuni teaches sixteen methods of contemplation designed to enable living beings to rid themselves of the “evil karma which [they] have committed during [...] hundred *koṭis* of *kalpas* of *saṃsāra*”⁹³ and to be reborn in the Sukhāvati (before becoming awakened⁹⁴). The teaching is especially well tailored for beings caught in the corruptions of the Last Days: “[R]ebirth in Sukhāvati and eventual enlightenment is [...] much easier than trying to attain enlightenment under adverse conditions in this decadent world!”⁹⁵

3.3. Interestingly, one meets with exactly the same kind of doctrinal hesitation concerning the question whether *buddhas* appear during the *kaliyuga*. Although he rejects the idea of the advent of *buddhas* in the midst of the five corruptions of the last age, Vasubandhu admits that *buddhas* appear during the *kaliyuga*:

Formerly, there was a perfectly awakened [*buddha* also] named Śākyamuni, under whom [our] Blessed One, [still] in the state of a *bodhisattva*,⁹⁶ made his initial vow[, saying]: ‘May I become a *buddha* of exactly this kind!’ Just like ours, he also arose during the *kaliyuga* [and], like the Noble One, his teaching also lasted one thousand years.⁹⁷

⁹² ABASū 341c. Translation from *Three Pure Land Sutras*, trans. Inagaki, 323.

⁹³ ABASū 343a. Translation from *Three Pure Land Sutras*, trans. Inagaki, 330.

⁹⁴ The *bodhisattvas* inhabiting the Sukhāvati are said (shorter SVSū 97,5–6) to be *ekajātipratibaddha*, “bound to [only] one [more] birth”.

⁹⁵ Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 254. The East Asian connection between Pure Land and *mōfa/mappo* beliefs can be traced to Daochuo (562–645) and Shandao (613–681). *Mappo* ideology permeates the thought of Honen (1133–1212) and Shinran (1173–1262). These two great Japanese exponents of Pure Land Buddhism were convinced that “such a path was in fact the only conceivable one for those living in an advanced state of *mappo*” (Bowring, *Religious Traditions of Japan*, 262; see also Bowring, *Religious Traditions of Japan*, 246, 262, and 264). Pure Land Buddhism “saw no possibility of hope in this world, preferring to stress the irredeemably vile nature of life in the here-and-now, and arguing that a guarantee of enlightenment was only available in the next life” (Bowring, *Religious Traditions of Japan*, 339). Contrary to Honen and Shinran, Nichiren (see above, n. 88) saw *mappo* “not as an occasion for pessimistic resignation but as a marvellous chance[, b]ecause the *Lotus* which gave humanity the one best chance of salvation tells us that it will only be expounded in this world and only in a time of *mappo*. The proper, ideal time was therefore here and now” (Bowring, *Religious Traditions of Japan*, 337–338).

⁹⁶ According to Yaśomitra (AKVy 432,7–8), the *bodhisattva* was named Prabhāsa and was the son of a potter (*kumbhakārumāra*). On the earlier Śākyamuni, see *Kośa* III.228.

According to this statement (in which, let it be noted, the two apocalyptic motifs of the *kaliyuga* and the disappearance of the good law are conflated), the two Śākyamunis arise during a *kaliyuga*. The statement is especially noteworthy in the mouth of an eminent dogmatician such as Vasubandhu. That the second Śākyamuni appeared during the *kaliyuga* is also the opinion of the former *buddha* Viraja in verse 10.794 of the LASū:⁹⁸

[The world-ages amount to four, i.e.,] the *kṛtayuga*, the *tretā[yuga]*, the *dvāpara[yuga]* and the *kali[yuga]*. Myself and others [arose] in the *kṛtayuga*, [whereas] the Lion of the Śākyas [will arise] in the *kaliyuga*.⁹⁹

But, a few verses below, the same Viraja insists that

neither in the *dvāpara[yuga]* nor in the *tretā[yuga]* nor afterwards in the *kaliyuga* do [*buddhas*,] the protectors of the world, arise. They [only] get awakened in the *kṛtayuga*.¹⁰⁰

According to this last statement, there are no *buddhas* to alleviate human beings' suffering during the dreadful last period.

3.4. As we have just seen, the two SVSū-s praise Śākyamuni for preaching during the age of the five *kaṣāyas*. Now, extolling Śākyamuni's compassionate activities in the degenerate last period is the central concern of the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīkasūtra* (KPSū). Like the early Pure Land circles, and perhaps in reaction to them,¹⁰¹ the KPSū unambiguously accepts the advent of *buddhas* – first and foremost Śākyamuni – at the time of the five corruptions. But, contrary to the sources examined so far, the *sūtra* explicitly (and quite consistently) associates the *kaṣāyas* with the

⁹⁷ AKBh 266,25–267,2: *śākyamunir nāma samyaksambuddhaḥ pūrvaṃ babhūva / yatra bhagavatā bodhisattvabhūtenādyam prañidhānaṃ kṛtam / evaṃprakāra evāhaṃ buddho bhaveyam iti no 'py evaṃ kaliyuga evotpannavān āryavat tasyāpy evaṃ varṣasāhasrāntaṃ śāsanam babhūva /*

⁹⁸ Whereas this *sūtra*'s chapters 2–8 (T. 670) had already been translated into Chinese in 443 CE, chapters 1, 9 and 10 are only recorded in Bodhiruci's 513 translation (T. 671). The late composition of the relevant passages can hardly be questioned since they refer explicitly to the Guptas (reg. ca. 320–500/550 CE).

⁹⁹ LASū v. 10.794: *kṛtayugaś ca tretā ca dvāparaṃ kalinas tathā / ahaṃ cānye kṛtayuge śākyasiṃhaḥ kalau yuge //*. On *kalina*, see BHSD 172^b.

¹⁰⁰ LASū v. 10.804: *na dvāpare na tretāyāṃ na paścāc ca kalau yuge / sambhavo lokanāthānāṃ sambudhyante kṛte yuge //*.

¹⁰¹ Note *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, trans. Yamada, I.3: “[The KPSū] concludes that Śākyamuni Buddha who has chosen the impure Sahā world and the salvation of helpless beings is ultimately motivated by the highest compassion, in contrast to those who have chosen the pure worlds and pure beings. Thus, in the [KPSū], Amitābha Buddha and Akṣobhya Buddha, who have enjoyed great popularity from an early period in Mahāyāna Buddhism, as well as many other *buddhas* in the pure buddhahlands, are assigned no more than supporting rôles in order to illuminate the unique position of Śākyamuni Buddha.” According to Yamada (*Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, 174), the original compilation of the KPSū may be dated to 200–400 CE or certainly no later than 419, the date of Dharmarakṣa's Chinese translation (T. 157).

kaliyuga. The KPSū can actually be said to reflect a systematic integration of the *kaliyuga* into the eschatological framework of the five corruptions.¹⁰²

At the beginning of Chapter 3, the *bodhisattva* Śāntamati asks Śākyamuni the following questions:

O Blessed One, what is the cause, what is the reason why the other blessed *buddhas* possess pure *buddha*-fields, *buddha*-fields without impurities, without [any of] the five corruptions [and] with a multitude of different [good] qualities? [What is the reason why] in these [*buddha*-fields] all the *bodhisattvas*, the great beings, are replete with numerous [good] qualities [and] granted different pleasures, [whereas] the *śrāvakas* and the *pratyekabuddhas* do not even exist by name? [...] O Blessed One, what is the cause, what is the reason why the Blessed One has arisen in a *buddha*-field with the five corruptions? [What is the reason why the Blessed One] has awakened to supreme perfect awakening at the time (*varṭamāne*) of the corruption of the lifespan, at the time of the corruption of the eon, at the time of the corruption of the living beings, at the time of the corruption of the false views, at the time of the corruption of the defilements? And [what is the reason why the Blessed One] teaches a law pertaining to the three vehicles to the four assemblies? Why did the Blessed One not take a pure *buddha*-field, [a *buddha*-field] without [any of] the five corruptions?¹⁰³

According to Śākyamuni, a *buddha*'s activity in a pure (*parisuddha*) or an impure (*aparīsuddha*) land reflects his original vow (*praṇidhāna*) as a *bodhisattva*. Indeed, Śākyamuni also says:

[it is] on account of [their initial] vows [that] the *bodhisattvas* take a pure *buddha*-field, [as it is] on account of [their initial] vows [that] they take an impure *buddha*-field. Because they are endowed with great compassion, [...] the *bodhisattvas*, the great beings, take an impure *buddha*-field. Thus [it is that] I have made a vow according(/thanks) to which I am now reborn in such a way in a comparatively bad *buddha*-field with the five corruptions.¹⁰⁴

What did this original vow consist of? The KPSū actually culminates in the story, told by Śākyamuni, of Samudrarenū's five hundred vows and the *buddha* Ratnagarbha's prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) concerning him. According to this prophecy, the

¹⁰² To the best of my knowledge, the KPSū never alludes to any of the other three Brahmanical *yugas*.

¹⁰³ KPSū 51,3–15: *ko bhagavan hetuḥ kaḥ pratyayo yad anyeṣāṃ buddhānāṃ bhagavatāṃ parisuddhā buddhakṣetrā apagatakaluṣā apagatapañcakaṣāyā nānāguṇavyūhā buddhakṣetrāḥ sarve cātra bodhisattvā mahāsattvā nānāvidhaguṇaparipūrṇā nānāsukhasamarpitā nāpi śrāvakapratyekabuddhānāṃ nāmāpi vidyate / [...] ko bhagavan hetuḥ kaḥ pratyayo yad bhagavān pañcakaṣāye buddhakṣetra utpanna āyukṣāye kalpakaṣāye sattvakaṣāye dṣṭikaṣāye kleśakaṣāye varṭamāne 'nuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambuddhaś catasraś ca pariśadas trīṇi yānāny ārabhya dharmā deśayati / kasmād bhagavatā parisuddhaṃ buddhakṣetraṃ na pariḡḥitaṃ apagatapañcakaṣāyam /* On this passage, see also *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, trans Yamada, I.77.

¹⁰⁴ KPSū 51,16–52,5: *praṇidhānavaśena [...] bodhisattvāḥ parisuddhaṃ buddhakṣetraṃ pariḡḥanti / praṇidhānavaśenāparīsuddhaṃ buddhakṣetraṃ pariḡḥanti / mahākaruṇāsamanvāgatavāt [...] bodhisattvā mahāsattvā aparīsuddhaṃ buddhakṣetraṃ pariḡḥanti / [...] tathā mayā praṇidhānaṃ kṛtaṃ yenāham etarhy evaṃ pratikaṣṭe pañcakaṣāye buddhakṣetra utpannaḥ /* On this passage, see also *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, trans Yamada, I.77–78.

brahmin Samudrarenū, a chaplain/minister to the *cakravartin* king Araṇemin, will one day be the *buddha* Śākyamuni in the impure Sahā world, among the five corruptions, as the *kaliyuga* is at hand. Put into Samudrarenū's mouth:

If, O Venerable, O Blessed One, such an expectation of mine could be fulfilled and [if] I could, as a consequence (*tathā*), [awaken to the supreme perfect awakening] in the future, during the Fortunate eon, when the corruption of the depravities and the *kaliyuga* with [their] violent defilements are at hand, in a blind world, in a world without a guide, without a leader, [in a world] left to the addiction to [false] views and darkness [...].¹⁰⁵

This is but one instance of the ubiquitous association of the *kaṣāyas* with the *kaliyuga* in the KPSū.¹⁰⁶

3.5. To end, let me draw attention to an interesting passage from Prajñāvarman's commentary on the *Devatīśayastotra* (DAS). In stanza 14 of this short *Stotra*, the "Praise of the [Buddha's] superiority over the [Hindu] deities", Śaṅkarasvāmin alludes to the well-known Vaiṣṇava theological scheme according to which Viṣṇu's

105 KPSū 270,1–5: *yadī me bhadanta bhagavann evaṃrūpāśā pariṇīyeta tathā cāham anāgate 'dhvani bhadrake kalpe tīvrakleṣe raṇakaṣāye kaliyuge vartamāne 'ndhaloke 'nāyake 'pariṇāyake dṛṣṭivyaśānāndhakāraprakṣipte loke [...]* /.

106 Similar formulations in similar contexts include KPSū 218,4–5 (*kaliyugakāle vartamāne*, "when the time of the *kaliyuga* is at hand"), KPSū 218,18 (*mahākaliyugakāle*, "at the time of the great *kaliyuga*"), KPSū 268,10 (*pañcakaṣāye kaliyuge vartamāne*, "among the five corruptions, when the *kaliyuga* is at hand"), KPSū 268,18–19 (*tīvrapañcakaṣāye kaliyuge buddhakṣetre*, "among the violent five corruptions, during the *kaliyuga*, in an [impure] *buddha*-field"), KPSū 269,4 (*tīvrapañcakaṣāye kleṣe kaliyuge*, "among the violent five corruptions, within defilement, during the *kaliyuga*"), KPSū 287,18 (*pañcakaṣāye loke tīvrakleṣaraṇe kaliyuge vartamāne*, "among the five corruptions, in a world of violent defilements and depravities, when the *kaliyuga* is at hand"), KPSū 297,8–9 (*pañcakaṣāye loke tīvrakleṣaraṇike kaliyuge vartamāne*, "among the five corruptions, in a world with violent defilements and depravities, when the *kaliyuga* is at hand"), KPSū 308,13–14 (*tīvrapañcakaṣāye kaliyuge vartamāne kāle*, "among the violent five corruptions, when the *kaliyuga* is at hand, when it is time?"), KPSū 319,18–19 (*[a?]dharmadurbhikṣakṣiṇakāle mahākṣeṣaraṇe kaliyuge pañcakaṣāye vartamāne loke 'nāyake*, "at the wasted time of irreligion? and famine, when the *kaliyuga* with [its] great defilements and depravities [as well as] the five corruptions are at hand, when the world is without a guide"), KPSū 377,7–10 (*pañcakaṣāye loke vartamāne tīvrakleṣaraṇe kaliyuge vartamāne*, "when the world with the five corruptions is at hand[/when the five corruptions are at hand in the world], when the *kaliyuga* with [its] violent defilements and depravities is at hand"). See also KPSū 286,13 and 295,17–296,1. Note also KPSū 282,7–10 (verse): *kleṣayoge kaliyuge yā bodhis tvayā samāśrītā / chīnda kleṣe samūlāṃs tvam sīdhyate praṇīdhīr dṛḍhā //* (On *kleṣe* as an accusative plural masculine, see BHSG §8.95). "You can rely on the awakening [that you will obtain] during the *kaliyuga* which partakes of the defilements. You, cut off the defilements together with their roots, [and your] vow will succeed!" Other references to the *kaliyuga* in the KPSū include 198,10, where the shortening of life (*āyus*) is regarded as a sign of the *kaliyuga* (*kaliyuganimitta*), 224,6–7, where the two motifs of the *kaliyuga* and the *kaṣāyas* appear in a compound (*tīvrakleṣāvāraṇakaliyugakaṣāyāḥ*, "the corruptions of the *kaliyuga* in which the obscuration consisting in the defilements is violent"), 225,16, where the "great *kaliyuga*" is associated with darkness (*andhakāra*). See also KPSū 198,20, 200,5 and 307,8–9.

ninth *avatāra* (“descent” or “historical manifestation”) is none other than the Buddha. Far from testifying to an alleged Hindu/Vaiṣṇava “tolerance” or open(minded)ness toward Buddhism, this motif is strongly anti-buddhistic, in that it presents the Buddha as an heresiarch whose deluding, antivedic teachings made the gods’ victory over the demons (*asuras*) possible.¹⁰⁷ As Johannes Schneider makes clear, however, Śāṅkarasvāmin’s account of the Buddha as Viṣṇu’s ninth *avatāra* makes no mention of delusion and falsity.¹⁰⁸ Quite to the contrary, even, for Viṣṇu’s motivation for manifesting himself was, according to Śāṅkarasvāmin, compassion towards the suffering human beings:

There is the old pauranic tradition that this world-honoured Buddha is in fact Viṣṇu who once saw that the world is subject to birth, old age and death; inspired by compassion he was born in the illustrious Śākya family as Gautama, saviour of mankind and endowed with a remarkable mind; which foolish person does not realize now that he is the helpful teacher?¹⁰⁹

Śāṅkarasvāmin’s verse presents itself as an invitation to the devotees of Viṣṇu to draw the consequences of their theological conceptions and to embrace the Law of the Buddha. In particular, verse 14 does not state precisely when Viṣṇu will manifest himself as Śākya-muni. While commenting on verse 5 (and not 14), however, Prajñāvarman quotes a stanza known also to the author (Bhāviveka/Bhavya?) of the *Tarkajvālā*: “[Viṣṇu’s] ten [*avatāras* are]: the fish (*matsya*), the tortoise (*kūrma*), the boar (*varāha*), the man-lion (*narasimha*), the dwarf (*vāmana*), Rāma [I], Rāma [II], Kṛṣṇa, Buddha and Kalkin.”¹¹⁰ The commentator then briefly introduces these ten

107 See, for example, Eltschinger, *Buddhist Epistemology as Apologetics*, 57–66.

108 See Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 94–96. In this regard, Śāṅkarasvāmin’s attitude does not differ from Kṣemendra’s, who, in stanza 9.2 of his *Daśāvatāracarita*, presents Viṣṇu’s motivation as follows: *sa sarvasattvopakṛtipratyānaḥ kṛpākulaḥ śākyakule viśāle / śuddhodanākhyasya narādhipendor dhanyasya garbhe ’vatātāra patnyāḥ //*. “Im Bestreben, allen Wesen zu helfen, stieg er voll Mitgefühl hinab ins große Śākyageschlecht, hinab in den Schoß der glücklichen, der Gattin des mondgleichen Königs Śuddhodana.” Translation and Sanskrit text from Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 95. Note also *Daśāvatāracarita* stanza 9.45cd: *saṃsāramuktyai suramartyanāgasanḡhasya saddharmam athādideśa //*. “Zur Befreiung aus dem Wiedergeburtenskreislauf lehrte er nun die Schar der Götter, Menschen und Nāgas den wahren Dharma.” Translation and Sanskrit text from Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 96.

109 DAS, v. 14: *paurāṇī śrutir eṣa lokamahito buddhaḥ kilāyaṃ harir dṛṣṭvā janmajarāvināśavaśagaṃ lokam kṛpābhryadyataḥ / jātaḥ śākyakule vare (?) ’dbhutamatis trātā nṛṇāṃ gautamaḥ śāstāraṃ hitam eva kas tam adhunā nāvaiti mūḍho janaḥ //*. On *vare ’dbhutamatis*, see Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 91. Translation from Śāṅkarasvāmin’s *Devatāvīmarśastuti*, ed. and trans. Hahn, 325 (as quoted in Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 91).

110 DASṬ D ka 50b3 (as edited in *Buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter*, 90,21–24, ed. and trans. Schneider = Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 96–97): *inya dang rus sbal phag dang ni/ /mi yi seng ge mi thung dang/ /dga’ byed ra ma ṅa naḡ po/ /sangḡ rgyas kal ki rtse dang bcu/*. For the stanza as found in TJ D *dza* 296a4, see Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 96–97 and *Buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter*, ed. and trans. Schneider, 91, n. 59.

avatāras. Here is what he has to say about the Buddha: “Rāma had slain ten million immeasurable [quantities] (**apramāṇa*) of demons (**rākṣasa?*). In order to purify himself of this crime (**pāpa?*), Viṣṇu will appear in the world in the form (**rūpa*) of the Buddha during the *kaliyuga*. Thus speak worldly people (**laukika*).”¹¹¹ It is difficult to say whether Prajñāvarman alludes here to a story known to him (from Vaiṣṇava or Buddhist circles?) or, as Johannes Schneider is inclined to believe, models the reason for Viṣṇu taking the form of the Buddha on Śiva’s self-punishment after slaying a brahmin.¹¹²

Bibliography

Abbreviations

ABASū	<i>*Amitāyurbuddhānusmṛtisūtra</i> . T. 365. See <i>Three Pure Land Sutras</i> , ed. Inagaki, 317–350.
AK(Bh)	<i>Abhidharmakośabhāṣyam of Vasubandhu</i> . Edited by Prahlād Pradhān. Vol. 8, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series 8. Patna: Kāshī Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975 (1967 ¹).
AKVy	<i>Sphuṭārthā Abhidharmakośavyākhyā, the Work of Yaśomitra</i> . Edited by Unrai Wogihara. Tokyo: Sankibo Buddhist Book Store (The Publishing Association of Abhidharmakośavyākhyā), 1989 (1936 ¹).
AŚ	<i>The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra</i> . Edited by R. P. Kangle. Part I: Sanskrit Text with a Glossary. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986 (Bombay 1969 ¹).
BC	<i>The Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha</i> . Edited by Edward H. Johnston. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984 (Lahore 1936 ¹): Johnston’s edition covers Cantos 1–14, the Sanskrit of which has been preserved. For Cantos 15–17 (Tibetan), see <i>Leben des Buddha von Aśvaghōṣa</i> , ed. and trans. Weller. For Cantos 18–28 (Tibetan), see P no. 5356, <i>Nge</i> 1–124b8.
BGUVVNSū	<i>Bodhisattvagocaropāyaviṣayavikurvaṇanirdeśasūtra</i> . P no. 813, <i>Nu</i> 37a8–101b8. Quoted according to Zimmermann, “Mahāyānist Criticism of <i>Arthaśāstra</i> .”
BHSG	Edgerton, Franklin. <i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary</i> . Vol. I: Grammar. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970 (New Haven 1953 ¹).
BHSD	Edgerton, Franklin. <i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary</i> . Vol. II: Dictionary. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970 (New Haven 1953 ¹).
BoBh _p	<i>Bodhisattvabhūmiḥ [Being the XVth Section of Asaṅgapāda’s Yogācārabhūmiḥ]</i> . Edited by Nalinakṣha Dutt. Vol. 7, Tibetan Sanskrit Works Series.

¹¹¹ DASṬ D ka 51a6–7 (as edited in *Buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter*, 94.14–16, ed. and trans. Schneider = Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 98): *ra ma ṇas srin po bye pa dpag tu med pa bsad pas sdīg pa de sbyang bar bya ba’i phyir / rtsod pa’i dus su ’jig rten ’dir khyab ’jug sangs rgyas kyi gzugs su ’byung bar ’gyur ro zhes ’jig rten pa dag sgrogs so //*. See also *Buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter*, ed. and trans. Schneider, 95.

¹¹² See Schneider, “Buddhistische Sicht auf den Buddhāvātāra,” 98–100.

- Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1978.
- BoBh_w *Bodhisattvabhūmi. A Statement of Whole Course of the Bodhisattva (Being Fifteenth Section of Yogācārabhūmi)*. Edited by Unrai Wogihara. Tokyo: Sankibo Buddhist Book Store, 1971 (1936¹).
- D *sDe dge Tibetan Tripiṭaka bsTan 'gyur preserved at the Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo*. Edited by Jikido Takasaki, Zuiho Yamaguchi and Noriaki Hakamaya. Tokyo: Sekai Seitan Kankō Kyōkai, 1977–1981.
- DAS *Devātiśayastotra (Śāṅkarasvāmin)*. See *Buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter*, ed. and trans. Schneider, 164–167 for the Sanskrit text and 40–51 for the Tibetan version and a German translation.
- DASṬ *Devātiśayastotraṭīkā (Prajñāvarman)*. D no. 1113, Ka 45a3–61a3. See *Buddhistische Kritik der indischen Götter*, ed. and trans. Schneider, 62–157 for an edition of the Tibetan text and a German translation.
- DN I *The Dīgha Nikāya*. Edited by Thomas W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter. Vol. I. London: Pali Text Society, 1890.
- DN III *The Dīgha Nikāya*. Edited by J. Estlin Carpenter. Vol. III. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1911.
- Jātaka I *The Jātaka together with Its Commentary, Being Tales of the Anterior Births of Gotama Buddha*. Edited by Viggo Fausbøll. Vol. I. London: Pali Text Society, 1962 (1877¹).
- JM_H *Āryaśūras Jātakamālā. Philologische Untersuchungen zu den Legenden 1 bis 15*. Edited by Albrecht Hanisch. Vol. 43/1, Indica et Tibetica. Marburg: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 2005. See also Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*.
- JM_K *The Jātaka-Mālā or Bodhisattvāvadāna-mālā by Ārya-çūra*. Edited by Hendrik Kern. Vol. 1, Harvard Oriental Series. Boston/Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1891.
- JM_M See Meiland, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*.
- KAṬ *Kāvyaṅuśāsanaṭīkā (Hemacandra)*. Mahāmahopādhyāya Paṇḍit Śivadatta and Kāśīnāth Pāṇḍurang Parab. *The Kāvyaṅuśāsana of Hemacandra with His Own Gloss*. Bombay: Tukārām Jāvajī (Kāvyaṅmālā 70), 1901.
- Kośa *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu. Traduction et annotations*. 6 vols. Translated by Louis de La Vallée Poussin. Vol. 16, Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques. Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1980 (Paris/Louvain 1923–1931¹).
- KP *Kaliyugaparīkathā*. See Dietz, *Mātṛceṭas Kaliyugaparīkathā*.
- KPSū *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīkasūtra*. Translated by Isshi Yamada. *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*. Vol. II. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1968.
- KS *Kaliyugasaṅghātaka*. See Acharya, *Kaliyugasamghātaka*.
- KV *Mahākarmavibhaṅga (La grande classification des actes) et Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa (Discussion sur le Mahā Karmavibhaṅga)*. Edited by Sylvain Lévi. Paris: Librairie Ernest Leroux, 1932.
- KVSū *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*. In Parashuram L. Vaidya. *Mahāyānasūtrasaṅgraha*, 256–308. Part I. Vol. 17, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts. Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1961. See also *Gilgītfragmente des Kāraṇḍavyūha*, ed. Mette.
- LASū *The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*. Edited by Bunyiu Nanjio. Bibliotheca Otaniensis 1. Kyoto: Otani University Press, 1956 (1923¹).
- LKT *Laghukālacakratāntra*. See VP.
- LSP *Lokasaṃvyavahārapravṛtti*. See Hahn, *Ravigupta and His Nīti Stanzas*.

- LV *Laṭita Viṣṭara. Leben und Lehre des Ćākyā-Buddha.* Edited by Salomon Lefmann. Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1902.
- MBh *The Mahābhārata. For the First Time Critically Edited.* Edited by Vishnu S. Sukthankar and Sukthankar K. Belvalkar. 19 vols. Pune: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1933–1959.
- MBhāṣya *Patanjali's Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣhya.* Edited by Franz Kielhorn. 3 vols. The Department of Public Instruction, Bombay. Bombay: Government Central Book Depot, 1880, 1883, 1884.
- MDhŚ *Mānavadharmāśāstra.* See *Manu's Code of Law*, ed. and trans. Olivelle.
- MīSū *Mīmāṃsāsūtra* (Jaimini). See TV.
- MN II *The Majjhima-Nikāya.* Edited by Robert Chalmers. Vol. II. London: Pali Text Society, 1898.
- MPPŚ *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* (ascribed to Nāgārjuna). T. 1509. See *Traité I.*
- P *The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, Kept in the Library of the Otani University, Kyoto.* Edited by Daisetz T. Suzuki. Tokyo/Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1957.
- SBhUSū *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra. Das Goldglanz-sūtra, ein Sanskrittext des Mahāyāna Buddhismus.* Edited by Johannes Nobel. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1937.
- Sn *Suttanipāta.* Edited by Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith. London: Pali Text Society, 1965 (1913¹).
- SN IV *The Saṃyutta-Nikāya of the Sutta-Piṭaka.* Part IV: *Saḷayatana-Vagga.* Edited by Léon Feer. London: Pali Text Society, 1894.
- SPSū_{K/N} *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka.* Edited by Henrik Kern and Bunyiu Nanjio. Bibliotheca Buddhica 10. Saint-Petersbourg: Commissionnaires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1908–1912.
- SPSū_{M/D} *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtram, with N.D. Mironov's Readings from Central Asian MSS, revised by N. Dutt.* Edited by Nikolai D. Mironov. Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1986 (1953¹).
- SPSū_{W/T} *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-Sūtram. Romanized and Revised Text of the Bibliotheca Buddhica Publication.* Edited by Unrai Wogihara and Chikao Tsuchida Tokyo: The Sankibo Buddhist Book Store, 1994 (1934–1935¹).
- SPYHS *Skhalitapramardanayuktihetusiddhi* (Deutero-Āryadeva?). D no. 3847, *Tsha* 19b1–22b1/P 5247, *Tsha* 20b1–24a8.
- SVSū (longer) *Sukhāvativyūha.* Edited by Astuuji Ashikaga. Kyoto: Librairie Hozokan, 1965.
- SVSū (shorter) *Sukhāvati-Vyūha. Description of Sukhāvati, the Land of Bliss.* Edited by Friedrich M. Müller and Bunyiu Nanjio. Anecdota Oxoniensia, Texts, Documents, and Extracts Chiefly from Manuscripts in the Bodleian and Other Oxford Libraries, Aryan Series, vol. I, part II. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883.
- Śivadharmāśāstra *Śivadharmā Paśupatimatam Śivadharmamahāśāstram Paśupatināthadarśanam.* Edited by Yogin Naraharinatha. Kathmandu: Yogin Narahari, 1998.
- ŚS *Ćikshāsamuccaya. A Compendium of Buddhist Teaching Compiled by Ćāntideva Chiefly from Earlier Mahāyāna-Sūtras.* Edited by Cecil Bendall. Vol. 1, Bibliotheca Buddhica. Saint-Petersbourg: Commissionnaires de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1897–1902.
- T. *Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo, the Tripiṭaka in Chinese.* Edited by Junjiro Takakusu and Kaigyoku Watanabe. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taisho Issaikyo Kankokai, 1924–1934.
- TJ *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvālā* (Bhāviveka/Bhavya?). D no 3856, *Dza* 40b7–329b4.

- Traité I *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)*. Edited by Étienne Lamotte. Vol. I. Vol. 25, Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain. Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1981 (1944¹).
- TV *Tantravārttika* (Kumārila). Subbaśāstrī. *Śrīmajjaiminiprañītaṃ Mīmāṃsādarśanam*. 6 vols. Pune: Ānandāśramamudraṅālaya, 1994 (1929–1934¹).
- Uv *Sanskrittexte aus den Turfanfunden X: Udānavarga*. Edited by Franz Bernhard. Vol. I. Vol. 54, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, philologisch-historische Klasse, Dritte Folge. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965.
- VP *Vimalaprabhāṭikā of Kalkin Śrīpuṇḍarīka on Śrīlaghukālacratantarāja by Śrīmañjuśrīyaśas*. Edited by Jagannatha Upadhyāya. Vol. 11, Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series. Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986.
- VS Mukherjee, Kumar Sujit, ed. *The Vajrasuci of Asvaghosa, Critically Edited with Notes and Translations*. *Visvabharatī Annals* 2 (1949): 125–184.
- YBh *The Yogācārabhūmi of Ācārya Asaṅga. The Sanskrit Text Compared with the Tibetan Version*. Edited by Vishushekhara Bhattacharya. 2 vols. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1957.
- YBh_T *Yogācārabhūmi* (Tibetan version). D 4035, Tshi 1b1–283a7/P 5536, Dzi 1–332a2.

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