

Two interpretations of human-flesh offering : misdeed or supreme sacrifice*

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The offering of one's own body is a leitmotif of the Sūtras of the Great Vehicle. One can find many examples like the following stanzas from the prologue to the *Lotus Sūtra*¹⁾:

*Then I see bodhisattvas by whom
Bodily flesh, hands and feet,
Even wives and children are presented
In quest of the Unexcelled Path
Again, I see bodhisattvas by whom
Heads and eyes, torso and limbs
Are joyously presented
In quest of the Buddha's wisdom.*

Such offerings occupy an important place among the edifying tales of the *Jātakas* and the *Avadānas*. Some of these tales, depicted in paintings and sculptures, became famous throughout most of the Buddhist world. Let us mention two of the most well-known tales: the King of the Śibis²⁾ who cut off a piece of his own flesh equivalent in weight to a dove that he wished to protect from a ferocious hawk ; or Prince Mahāsattva³⁾ who threw himself off a cliff in order to feed a hungry tigress and her cubs. In the *Jātakas*, the offering of human flesh as food seems to be made only to carnivorous animals or anthropophagical *yakṣas* or similar non-human beings. Such offerings belong to a category different from the offering of the eyes or limbs, which are mostly given to human beings, who request the offering or need it to replace their own body part. A well-represented theme in the Mahayanic literature is the rather purified version of the body offering found in relation to the worship of the book⁴⁾: blood is used as ink, marrow as water, bones as *calamus*, and skin as paper.

The case that will be studied below belongs to yet another cate-

gory. The offering is made for medicinal purposes. Several tales include descriptions of human marrow or blood being used as an ointment or potion. It is the case in the story called by Lamotte “Candraprabhajātaka”⁵⁾ of which interesting variants have been collected by Anna Seidel⁶⁾ and Iyanaga Nobumi⁷⁾: a prince who has never felt hate, whose marrow is needed as an ointment and his blood as a potion in order to save sick people. In the rather homogenous collection of tales that will be described here, the life of a human being is to be saved through the consumption of a piece of human flesh, the cutting off of which generally does not put the life of the donor in jeopardy. Although we are confronted with two different scenarios, the core of the edifying tale or anecdote is the same in two well-known Mahāyāna texts: the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*⁸⁾ and the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*.⁹⁾ Both traditions can be read as extensions of “Hinayanic” rules about medicines (*bhaiṣajya*) in the monastic disciplinary collections known as Vinaya that will be also part of this survey.

The offering of one’s own flesh to save another person’s life can be considered from several standpoints. Well known is the Buddhist opposition to excessive asceticism, which other Indian religious traditions¹⁰⁾ have seen as a source of superpowers. The Buddhist “Middle Way”¹¹⁾ treads between the two extremes of hedonism and asceticism, both of which were practiced by the Buddha himself before his awakening. Nevertheless, there are “mortifications” praised by Buddhists. The term “mortification” is used here deliberately in its strongest meaning, which is close to *chöchen* (sino-japanese : *shashin*) 捨身 meaning “renunciation of one’s own body”. Apparently, none of the Sanskrit equivalents proposed in the new *Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary* by A. Hirakawa¹²⁾ — *ātmabhāva*-or *svadeha-parityāga*, *kāyasya nikṣepam*, *śarīra-bheda* — ever enjoyed the wide currency that the Chinese term did. As expected, the renunciation of the body in order to make an offering of it can be compared to suicide. As our case study does not lead to that extremity, I will not deal with that kind of suicidal offering, which appears in famous chapters of the *Lotus Sūtra* and of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*^{1, 4)} and has been studied by Jacques Gernet¹⁵⁾ and by Jean Filliozat¹⁶⁾.

Let us only remark here that the offering of the body is at the junction of some of the main virtues of Buddhist ethics : the perfections (*pāramitā*) of giving (*dāna*), of energy (*vīrya*), and of patience (*kṣānti*), with all of them subsumed in the super-virtue of compassion (*karuṇā*). As we know from the *Lotus* and *Samādhirāja* examples quoted above, the best of these renunciations of the body have been offered to the Buddha, but they can also be made to the Dharma¹⁷⁾ and to the Saṃgha, as well as to sentient beings. We will see that all the offerings of human flesh considered here are made in order to heal a member of the Saṃgha, whom we can see through our texts, from the *Nidānas* (tales about the origins of certain rules) in the Vinayas to the Mahayanic episodes, evolving into a more and more eminent monk.

All these texts tell of the voluntary sacrifice by a donor of a piece of his or her own flesh. There are three basic elements present in all the narratives: 1. the donor is a woman (except in a Chinese translation limited to the relevant chapter of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*¹⁸⁾); 2. the woman offers a piece of her thigh (*ūru-māṃsa*); 3. the person who eats the flesh is a sick monk. Methodologically speaking, this particular form of cannibalism can be found at the junction of two types of cannibalism, according to its classification by anthropologists and historians, i.e., survival cannibalism, and medical use of human flesh.¹⁹⁾

The Vinaya Tradition

An extensive study on the subject would include examination of numerous texts, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Our survey will limit itself to the six complete Vinayas and to two Mahayanic Sūtras. We will start with the *Nidānas* of the Vinayas, which in the section on remedies (*bhaiṣajya*) forbid monks to use human flesh. Concerning the broader field of flesh-eating (肉食), i.e., animal-flesh eating, I refer the reader to the recent studies by Shimoda Masahiro.²⁰⁾ One more observation has to be made about the Vinaya tradition: in the Vinaya attributed to the Haimavatas, which is extant only in Chinese translation and is reduced to its articles (*mātykā*), thus without any *nidāna*, there is one probably archaic category of ten abject misdeeds.²¹⁾ The Chinese term for this category, 偷蘭遮, corresponding to the Pāli *thullaccaya* and to the Sanskrit *sthūlātyaya*, is well known elsewhere but in a different and

perhaps late meaning. It seems that originally the category of *sthūlātyaya* was intended for ten object misdeeds,²²⁾ six of which consisted of abuses against the human body: eating human flesh, using human skin, cutting pubic and underarm hair, using medicinal anal suppositories, using human hair for dress-making, and adhering to nakedness.

The *nidānas* of the prohibition against eating human flesh in the six complete Vinayas seem to be the prototypes of the edifying tales discussed in the second part of our survey: the offering of the thigh flesh in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* and the sacrifice of the Princess in the *Jñānavatī-parivarta* of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*.

Let us remember a few points about the six complete Vinayas well described in the fundamental works by Erich Frauwallner²³⁾ and Hirakawa Akira,²⁴⁾ in the overview of Etienne Lamotte,²⁵⁾ in the bibliographical survey of Akira Yuyama²⁶⁾ and in the repertory of tales compiled by Jampa Losang Panglung.²⁷⁾ Four of the five Vinayas extant in Chinese were translated into Chinese during roughly the same period: the end of the fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century. For the issue that we study here, we can group them roughly into three classes. This classification, which can be extended to many vinayic analyses, (1) isolates the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya,²⁸⁾ perhaps the oldest text and one that preserves many original elements; (2) groups together the Mahīśāsaka²⁹⁾ and the Dharmagupta³⁰⁾ Vinayas, which seem to be related to the Pāli Vinaya of the Theravādins³¹⁾; and (3) sets in a third group the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādins,³²⁾ akin to the bulky Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins,³³⁾ whose later translation into Chinese in the early eighth century does not mean that its contents are of later origin than the more systematic divisions of the five other and shorter Vinayas.

There are other versions of our edifying tale that are close to the Vinaya tradition of the Sarvāstivādin group. They belong to the Abhidharmic *Mahāvibhāṣā*³⁴⁾ and to the Collection of *Avadānas* “Sūtra of the Wise and of the Fool.”³⁵⁾ They could not be included in the present survey.

The material that we study here is a drama with a happy ending. Its basic scenario is the same in all six Vinayas but there is much

variation among the secondary episodes. Its plot can be outlined in a few words: unable to buy a remedy made of flesh for a sick monk who is in dire need of it, a laywoman (*upāsikā*) cuts off a piece of her own thigh, cooks it and serves it to the monk, who recovers his health without knowing the origin of the salvific dish. The woman is married to a layman (*upāsaka*) who is absent at the moment of her sacrifice. The Buddha intervenes to prohibit the use of human flesh and in most cases to heal the woman. In all these cases (the exception being the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya), the Buddha is introduced as having been invited as a guest to a meal at the house of the two lay people before the woman's sacrifice, and as coming to the house shortly after she has cut off a lump of her flesh. The visit of the Buddha seems to be unconnected to the monk's illness.

In this drama, there are four main characters :

(1) The compassionate laywoman who not only cuts off her own flesh but also cooks it. The distinction between raw meat and cooked meat plays a role in the Vinayic rules (as in the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*). It is obvious that the human flesh has to be disguised or the monk will not eat it. It can be pointed out that by cutting off her flesh, the laywoman puts her own life in jeopardy. The miracle of her recovery shows her the compassion and the power of the Buddha. The behaviour of the laywoman is exemplary as she fulfills her *upāsikā* vow to take care of the needs of the Saṃgha, which are clothes, lodging, and, more relevant to the present case, food and medicine. It is for that reason that she is exalted among the holy *upāsikās* in the *Anguttara-nikāya*³⁶⁾ and in the *Milinda-pañha*.³⁷⁾

(2) The sick monk, who is an ambiguous figure. He calls for the laywoman's help but does not pay close attention to the meal served him. In some of the narratives (Mahāsāṃghika and the three related to the Pāli), when he recovers from his illness, he is reprimanded for not having asked the origin of his remedy. In the other narratives, the holiness that he gains from such a cure is emphasized. This holiness adds also to the merits of the woman donor. The Mahāsāṃghikas depict him as the saviour of the lady as he is informed by a *yakṣa* about the pain she endured for him. It is an important feature of that Vinaya

that she is healed by the strength of the monk's concentration on benevolence (*maitri-samādhī*) and not by the Buddha, who intervenes only to legislate, after having been informed of rumors about the monk's anthropophagy.

(3) The husband of the compassionate woman, who is a rather marginal figure. Like his wife, he is a lay disciple of the Buddha. In the Vinayas of the Sarvāstivādin group, it is the woman whose riches and generosity allow her to take charge of the Buddha and his group during a complete retreat season (*varṣa*). In the other traditions, it is the husband who is offering a meal to the Buddha and his group. The reactions of the husband range from admiration and boasting to anxiety and irritation about the sacrifice made by his wife, which he learns about only after the fact. His absence at the crucial moment and his obligation to act as host to the Buddha during the sickness of his wife are constant elements of the tradition.

(4) The Buddha. He intervenes as a healer in only five narratives, while in the Mahāsāṃghika tradition it is the monk who heals the woman. The complete healing by the Buddha of the wounded thigh is effected either through the vision (*darśana*) that the lady receives from the Buddha in his presence or, according to the Sarvāstivādin group, by a long distance intervention by the Buddha, who is a guest in her house but does not enter her room. In the Vinaya account, the main role of the Buddha is the preliminary examination of the monk's misdeed and the setting of an appropriate new rule. Therefore he asks the monk a few questions and proclaims that eating human flesh is a serious abject misdeed (Pāli: *thullaccaya*, Sanskrit: *sthūlātyaya*, 偷蘭遮); to do it without having investigated the origin of the dish is a wrongdoing (Pāli: *dukkata*, Sanskrit: *duṣkṛta*, 突吉羅).

Secondary figures are, first, the slave-women who are in charge of buying (without success) meat at the market, cooking their mistress's flesh and bringing it to the sick monk, and, second, the physician introduced in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya. In the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya, a *deus ex machina* is the *yakṣa* who informs the monk of the sufferings of his lady benefactor.

Looking at the setting and onomastics, we see that for the Mahāsāṃghikas, the events occur in Śrāvastī, in Vaiśālī for the Mahīśāsakas and in Benares for the rest of the tradition, with the Buddha arriving there from Rājagaha in the Pāli Vinaya. As for the name of the heroine, one first notices that she always bears a feminine version of her husband's name. It is Suppiyā in Pāli, and we can reconstruct the Sanskrit Supriyā from the Chinese transliteration by the Mahāsāṃghikas as well as by the Mahīśāsakas and the Dharmaguptas. In the other traditions, her name is Mahāsenā, "Great Army", (Sarvāstivādins, Gilgit manuscript of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, as well as *Mahāvibhāṣā*,³⁸⁾ "Woman Great Army" 大軍女 (*Chinese Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*). We find a Chinese transliteration based on Mahāsenadattā in the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. In the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Fool*,³⁹⁾ the husband is called Mahāsenā and his wife Upasenā or Mahā-Upasenā. In a Song-period enumeration of virtuous ladies nursing sick people we find 大軍 and 善愛 (Supriyā), both of Benares.⁴⁰⁾ In the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya, the monk is called Supriya, similar to the name of the layman and the laywoman, and he profits from that homonymy to be fed by them when claiming the title of their preceptor (*ācārin*). Such insistence on a family relation between the man who receives the human flesh and the woman who gives it could be an echo of a certain type of anthropophagy, endophagy, of which there are traces in Chinese society, but perhaps also in Indian society.⁴¹⁾

The motives for the action are, on the one hand, the sickness of the monk, whom the woman's vows commit her to take care of, and, on the other hand, the distressing coincidence that the monk's sickness occurs on a day when slaughtering is forbidden and thus also the selling of meat in the marketplace.

In the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya, the monk's sickness is only described as a disharmony among the elements, necessitating a meat broth. The Mahīśāsakas and the Dharmaguptas refer to a more specific sickness characterized by vomiting. The Pāli Vinaya mentions also a meat broth (*paṭicchādaniya*), which is authorized in the same Vinaya,⁴²⁾

as a remedy against a purgative taken by the monk. The Mūlasarvāstivādins introduce a physician arguing about the peril of death for the monk and recommending meat broth. Once again we find parallelism in the description of the sickness in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins and in the Mahayanic Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra.

About the killing and slaughtering prohibition, the Mahāsāṃghikas refer to the classical term, “ritual day.”⁴³⁾ The Pāli Vinaya uses the expressive term, *Mā ghāta*, “Do not kill!” The Chinese translation of that term figures in similar renditions in the Vinayas of the Mahīṣāsakas and the Dharmaguptas, of the Sarvāstivādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins. This prohibition is attributed to King Prasenajit by the Mahīṣāsakas (who locate the events in Vaiśālī), to King Brahmadatta by the Sarvāstivādins (who locate the events in Benares) and to a birth in the king’s family by the Mūlasarvāstivādins. The same Mūlasarvāstivādins tell about the monk himself ordering a slavewoman to make an unsuccessful trip to the market and giving her money (*karṣāpaṇa*) for the shopping. In the other Chinese Vinayas, the laywoman herself goes to the market, but in the Pāli Vinaya it is a servant *antevāsin* who makes the trip. In almost every tradition the laywoman is helped by a servant to cook her own flesh.

The crucial episode is the woman’s sacrifice of a part of her thigh. She is always described as acting alone in a secluded room and using a sharp knife (a butcher’s knife [*potthanikā*] according to the Pāli). The Mahāsāṃghikas refer to a seasoning that the lady had already prepared before her mutilation and that she uses for the cooking. Details vary on the cooking. The lady is now rather incapacitated and must request the help of a servant. It is generally said that the dish had to be boiled, and the Mūlasarvāstivādins add that the flesh had to be minutely hacked and boiled in order to get an attractive broth. The qualification of “delicious” (美) in its culinary meaning is still in use today and is found in most of the traditions. The Mahāsāṃghikas add that the servant first washed the hands of the monk.

The retreat of the suffering woman is described in detail in the Pāli: “having rolled her upper-garment above her thigh (*uttarāsaṅgena*

ūrum vethetvā), having reached an inner room (*ovarakam pavisitvā*), she laid down on a bed (*mañcake nipajji*).” But the Chinese versions put more emphasis on the return of her husband, whom she was unable to greet. We have seen above the reactions of the husband. Let us point out once again the originality of the Mahāsāṃghikas. With a rather ironical touch, they mention that he was furious at the self-mutilation of his wife, but after her recovery he returned to his shop to boast of the energy of his wife to his employees who were surprised that the *śramaṇas Śākyaputras* needed to eat human flesh. It was that reaction that motivated the immediate intervention of the Buddha.

The Sarvāstivādins call the pain of the mutilated laywoman a sickness of the wind element, i.e., a sickness that is often mental.⁴⁴⁾ It must reflect her intense pain and the fact that she is near death. The most sympathetic description of her pain and anguish is given in the Dharmagupta Vinaya.

Such a great sacrifice must receive compensation in a final apotheosis, consisting in the restoration of the lady’s thigh to its original state, including its hair (*succhavi lomajāto*) as pointed out by the Pāli Vinaya. From a religious standpoint, this episode is important. As said before, the Mahāsāṃghika tradition is here alone in attributing the woman’s healing to the effects of the *maitri-samādhi* of the healed monk who had been informed of her pain by a *yakṣa*. The Buddha, having heard a rumor about the anthropophagy of his monks, is concerned only with the monk, whom he reprimands, and not with the woman. The remaining tradition praises the Buddha coming to the house at the invitation of the husband who has had to take charge of the meal preparation by himself during the night preceding the arrival of the Buddha.

As the Mahāsāṃghikas represent a completely different tradition, we must look at the other texts for the details of the Buddha’s visit. The group of the Pāli, Mahīśāsaka and Dharmagupta Vinayas describes the miracle as happening just when the Buddha arrives, before the meal. In contrast, for the Sarvāstivādins, it happens after the meal, which is not mentioned at all by the Mūlasarvāstivādins. The sick

lady is healed through the vision (*dassana*) of the Buddha according to the Pāli; she has to be called three times by the Buddha before showing herself to him in a sick woman's dress, according to the Mahīṣāsakas; and the Dharmaguptas explain that she hoped for the vision of the Buddha and of the Saṃgha and that the sudden healing occurred when she left her bed. In what seems to be a special attention to formalities, the Sarvāstivādins report that after the meal the husband had first to announce to his wife that the Buddha was calling for her before she could recover.

In the same tradition connected to the visit of the Buddha, we find variations in the content of the Buddha's sermon to the lay couple. There is no mention of a sermon in the Pāli Vinaya. According to the Mahīṣāsakas, the Buddha referred to the well-known famine he endured during a *varṣa* in Verañjā⁴⁵) : is it to be understood as a reprimand of the sick monk? According to the Dharmaguptas, the Buddha insisted on the point that the lady must practice giving without inflicting pain on herself and without becoming overly impassioned in her zeal for other people. In the Sarvāstivādin group, emphasis is put on spiritual rewards. According to the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivādins, the laywoman reaches the second stage (*sakṛdāgāmin*) and her husband only the first stage (*srotaāpanna*) on the four-stage graduated path to Arhantship. The Mūlasarvāstivādins adopt a Mahayanic approach: the Buddha acknowledges that the woman is able to perform *bodhisattva* conduct. She replies that it is easy to possess a body but that one has to cross thousands of *kalpas* before having the opportunity to meet a *Baghavat*.

Before the prohibition of the use of human flesh, which is the scope of the Vinaya, there is a questioning of the monk, again in a few different versions. One can distinguish two main currents: in the first, represented by the Pāli, Mahīṣāsaka and Dharmagupta Vinayas, the monk is made to look ridiculous; in the second, his lack of discernment does not impede his progress toward a level of holiness higher than that which he was already reaching before his sickness. The lack of a preliminary enquiry, which is an obligation of still other rules of the Vinaya, is viewed as a transgression in the Pāli Vinaya. The monk is called stupid by the Mahīṣāsakas when he responds to the Buddha that

the dish was tasty and by the Dharmaguptas when he says that it was not only good but unusual. The Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya takes a middle path in saying that the benefactor is healed by the holy power of the monk himself but having the monk accuse himself of not having performed the necessary “fixation” on the dish. The Mūlasarvāstivādins set the story in an *avadāna* frame : through multiple rebirths the donor and the monk, promoted to Arhantship, had been exchanging the roots of goodness (*kuśala-mūla*).

The prohibition of human flesh is expressed in different forms in the different Vinayas. The Mahāsāṃghikas do not assign the prohibition and the lack of “fixation” by the monk to a specific category of fault. As already mentioned, the Pāli Vinaya divides the monk’s mistakes into *thullacayya* and *dukkata*. The Dharmaguptas point out the *duṣkṛta*, the keeping in a reserve of food which has already been bitten. The Sarvāstivādins state that eating human flesh, fat, blood and nerves is a serious and abject misdeed, but that eating human bones is no sin. There is perhaps here a reminder of the consumption of boiled human bones in case of famine (*śvetāsthi durbhikṣa* 白骨飢饉), which is referred to in the *Abhidharmakośa*,⁴⁶⁾ and which probably reflects the distinction between the consumption of raw meat (*ōmophageia*) and of cooked meat. In the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, where the promulgation is mixed with problems of monastic organization, it is stated that the consumption of human flesh is indeed a serious and abject misdeed, and the lack of investigation into the origin of the dish is classed among the minor sins called “transgressions” (越法罪).

Here ends the first part of our survey, limited to the Vinaya and to what can be called the “Hinayanic” tradition. There is, I think, an undeniable interest in a case study, a “tranche de vie,” showing us some aspects (meat markets, prohibition days, etc.) of Indian urban life in a period undatable chronologically (between the “time of the Buddha” and the translations into Pāli and Chinese made during the first centuries of the common era). Besides that, we can observe that the generosity of the laywoman is almost uncontested but the consumption of human flesh is strongly condemned.

Mahāyāna Views of Human-flesh Offerings

Leaving the *nidāna* tales of the Vinayas, which provide background accounts of excesses in need of reform, and reaching the edifying tales of the Mahāyāna, we often have the impression that it is not so much a question of changing doctrine (the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya already permeates Mahāyāna) but of changing atmosphere. The concrete aspects of the Vinayas are replaced by a docetic influence : again a woman or, better, a young princess sacrifices her own flesh and her own blood for a holy monk, but it seems to happen in a unreal realm of appearances. How is heroism admirable if the human body is illusion?

This change in atmosphere can be noted already in the *Jātaka* tales, classified as Hinayanic literature but very close in many cases to some Mahayanic ideals as their heros are bodhisattvas. The *Vessantara Jātaka*,⁴⁷⁾ admittedly a rather late creation, but still today the most popular Jātaka, introduces a prince who reaches the supreme wisdom through the most extreme gifts: all his possessions, his children, his wife. In some Chinese and overtly Mahayanic versions of this tale, he is also asked for his eyes. Other famous famous *Jātakas* culminate in gifts of flesh to hungry animals or non-human beings — not, as far as I know, to a human being in order to heal him or her. The result of this insistence on extreme gifts appears to be the bodhisattva's cliché of numerous Mahāyāna Sūtras and Śāstras. The two main facets of his giving propensities are that he can be asked either for his possessions, including his wife and children, or for his own body or parts of it: eyes, brain, limbs.⁴⁸⁾

Just as there is uncertainty about the Indian chronology of the Vinayas, most of them translated into Chinese during the same period, there are many uncertainties about the chronology of the much wider realm of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. Among them, the *Samādhirāja-Sūtra* seems to be a rather old text that was very influential during the first millennium of the common era. On the other end, the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, which includes several quotations from earlier Mahāyāna Sūtras, seems to belong to what Lamotte has called the “second wave” of Mahayanic literature.⁴⁹⁾ We will first examine the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, because its tale is the closest to the Vinaya *nidānas* investigated in the first part of this study.

Given the numerous but very short Sanskrit fragments of this text found mostly in Central Asia and in Japan, and the Tibetan translation based on a Sanskrit text, we can believe in the historicity of the discovery by Faxian in Pātaliputra⁵⁰⁾ of a comparatively short *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* that he translated into Chinese. There is an extended version of the same text translated by Dharmakṣema⁵¹⁾ and later revised⁵²⁾ a few years after the translation by Faxian. The extended parts, grouping new chapters, do not correspond to any Sanskrit fragment. Moreover we know that the extended Tibetan version including these new chapters was translated not from a Sanskrit text but from the Chinese extended version. The origin of the new chapters thus remains far from clear.

It is one of these new chapters of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* that presents the tale about the offering of flesh for medicinal purposes in terms close to those used in what we called the Sarvāstivādin group of the Vinayas. We have already seen that the Sarvāstivādins and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* share almost the same name for the heroine, called here Mahāsenadattā. We can conclude that there is no doubt about the Indian origin of this tale in the extended *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*. Due to the lasting influence of this Mahāyāna Sūtra in the Far East, this tale was introduced into the medieval literature of Japan.⁵³⁾

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the episode of Mahāsenadattā⁵⁴⁾ is presented in a concise style and in sober terms. It is permeated with the docetic spirit. Let us first point out a few differences from the Vinaya version: there is no trace here of a husband or of a day of prohibition of killing. The monk is only mentioned and no Vinaya rule is referred to. The story centers on the *upāsikā* and the Buddha. In Benares, Mahāsenadattā is in possession of “roots of goodness” going back to numerous Buddhas of the past (a theme that we have seen in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya). She wishes to offer to the Saṃgha the facilities for a ninety-day *varṣa*. Informed of the sickness of a monk, she goes, without success, to the market in order to buy human meat. As a substitute, she uses her own flesh. From a distance, the Buddha, still in Śravastī, miraculously hears the invocations *Namo Buddhāya* of the suffering lady. He uses his supernatural powers to send her instantaneously a medicine that, set immediately on the wound, heals her completely. The two important points of this edifying tale are the

power of the Buddha, who does not need any contact with the victim, and the merits of the generosity of Mahāsenadattā.

These two points are made clearer if we compare the Mahāsenadattā tale with the preceding tale in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*.⁵⁵⁾ Here too we have a tale that includes similarities with the early Buddhist tradition—in this case not with the Vinaya, but with the *Therīgāthā* and the *Jātakas*, in the stories of women who have lost a child and were despairing, disheveled and naked, before being converted and becoming nuns. One of them is known as Vāsetṭhī Therī.⁵⁶⁾ She is known also in the *Mahāvibhāṣā*.⁵⁷⁾ In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, she appears as a mother, Vāśiṣṭhā, (婆私吒), who has gone mad with grief after the death of her child. She walks naked in the streets and embraces the Buddha as if he were her son. Ānanda gives her clothes, and she recovers her sanity and embarks on the way of *bodhisattva*. As for Mahāsenadattā what is emphasized is the compassion of the poor woman and the docetic power of the Buddha who was only in appearance embraced like a son.

In a Buddhist context, I think that the offering of flesh and blood has its loftiest presentation in chapter 34, “Jñānavatī-parivarta,” of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, a text that is extant in Sanskrit.⁵⁸⁾ It is the subject of a talk between the Buddha and a bodhisattva named Candraprabha who is his main interlocutor in this sūtra. Candraprabha was also the name of the bodhisattva who offered his marrow as ointment and his blood as potion in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* quoted above. Did the multiple and unrelated mythical existences of Candraprabha help this bodhisattva to play a messianic role⁵⁹⁾ in Chinese Buddhism?

The most complete version of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* in Chinese has been made by the important but comparatively late translator Narendrayaśas (517-589), well known as an introducer of apocalyptic sūtras in China. This Chinese translation in ten rolls has been incorporated in the canon under the title *Yueteng sanmei jing* 月燈三昧經, which can be reconstituted as “Candraprabhasamādhī-sūtra”. A few observations on the reception of the tale in China will follow at the end of this article.

In the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, we are far from the city-life atmosphere surrounding a sacrifice offered by a well-settled lady wishing to fulfill her *upāsikā*'s vows. The scene takes place in the king's palace of a

kingdom situated “in the Jambudvīpa”. The heroine, Jñānavatī, who gives her name to the chapter in the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, is a sixteen-year-old princess described in flowery terms in the Sanskrit text as well as in its Chinese version. In some respects, her father, King Jñānabala, plays a role analogous to but more active than that of the husband in the Vinayas. He has the same Buddhist preceptor as his daughter: a preacher of the Law (*dharmabhāṇaka*) called Bhūtamati, whose qualities are also the object of a lengthy description. This monk is afflicted with a big black tumor (*vaisarpa*) on his thigh that is life-threatening. We see here a mirror-image as the tumored thigh of the monk Bhūtamati will be healed by the blood and flesh of the thigh of Princess Jñānavatī.

Under such circumstances, the king, his harem of eighty-thousand women, the crown-prince, the princess and their attendants, as well as all the kingdom are immersed in distress. What happens then, a premonitory dream, can be compared to the intervention of the *yakṣa*, “deus ex machina”, telling of the healed *bhikṣu* and the pains of the benevolent lady, as was told in the *nidāna* of the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya. In the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, a goddess (feminine in the Sanskrit text), who was in a former existence related to the king’s family, appears in the king’s dream to report that there are two remedies able to save Bhūtamati. They are raw blood and cooked flesh. The tumor has to be washed and anointed with the fresh blood of a young virgin and the sick monk has to be fed with a broth of human meat carefully cooked.

In the Sanskrit text, the princess has the same dream as the king. In the Chinese version, it seems that her role is played down. She is only informed about the king’s dream when the king makes an unsuccessful plea to the ladies of his court to convince someone to consent to the sacrifice. The princess then offers herself as the sacrificial victim, insisting on the fact that she is the youngest at the palace.

In the self-sacrificial vow of the princess, as well as in the description of her self-mutilation (using a vocabulary similar to that of the Vinaya), emphasis is placed on the religious character of her act: “Through the purity of body, speech and mind, I look for unsullied wisdom”, “With a sharp knife and a heart deeply confident in the Dharma, she cut her thigh’s flesh.” It is made clear that the resolution

of the young girl is “Mahayanic” and no longer, as in the Vinayas, bound to the vow of an *upāsikā* to support the *bhikṣus*.

The anointing of Bhūtamati’s tumor and his partaking of the human flesh both occur in the presence of the king. The narrative insists on the point that the *bhikṣu* is unaware of the mutilation and untouched by any doubt about a possible infraction of a rule. He recovers his health, preaches to the harem and as a result thirteen thousand women vow to enter the Mahayanic bodhisattva’s way. There is no place in the narrative for the pain of the young princess. We are reassured about her fate when the narrative halts for a lengthy verse dialogue between her and her father.

In this dialogue, which is the mouthpiece of the chapter of Jñānavatī, the various moments of the sacrifice are reviewed. The princess has to certify that the remedy was made from her own body, that she did not order the killing of anybody or use the corpse of someone already dead. When finally the king asks her how she is feeling, she answers with a minimisation of the human body and of her own suffering, which is nothing compared to the pain one has to endure in the hells. She praises the monk. Among other metaphors, she calls him a “*Stūpa of the Dharma*” which must be maintained. If he had lost his life, the *samādhi* would have perished with him. Such a statement is close to the themes found in the apocalyptic sūtras. In the last stanzas, the dialogue between the king and his daughter is replaced by prophecies (*vyākāraṇa*) concerning the future existences of the protagonists. Following the familiar pattern of Buddhist *vyākāraṇa*, we are told that the princess Jñānavatī, in a non-feminine reincarnation will become a preacher of the Law (*dharmabhāṇaka*) under the Buddha Dīpaṇḍya, and thereafter the Buddha Śākyamuni himself. Her father King Jñānabala will become Maitreya, and the *bhikṣu* Bhūtamati will become the Buddha Dīpaṇḍya. The ordinary believers are enjoined to take refuge in the Buddha Akṣobhya. This feature shows that this text does not belong to the Amidist current. The last injunction is an appeal to avoid quarrelling.

We have seen that in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* the offering of the flesh occurs in a docetic context with the Buddha exercising his miraculous healing power from afar. In the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* also, the docetic context of the “Jñānavatī-parivarta” is better understood by

comparison with the two other tales with which this thirty-fourthth chapter is associated: “Kṣemadatta-parivarta” (Chapter 33) and the “Supuṣpacandra-parivarta” (Chapter 35). In the “Kṣemadatta-parivarta”, studied by Jean Filliozat,⁶¹⁾ the Bodhisattva Kṣemadatta burns his own hand in order to make it a torch honouring a *caitya*; in the “Supuṣpacandra-parivarta,” Supuṣpacandra is a bodhisattva who endures torture and dies in a period of declining *Dharma*. In these three tales, we find exaltation of bodhisattvas (among whom may be included Princess Jñānavatī) who make offering of their own body, but we find also the docetic doctrine of the body as illusion. In the three tales, the bodies have much to endure, but, as there is a general need for “happy endings” throughout the Buddhist edifying tales, these bodies are later restored to their previous states. These recoveries have only a marginal importance compared to the importance of the doctrine of the perfect body of the Buddha (*dharmakāya*).⁶²⁾

A complete version of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* was translated into Chinese by Narendrayaśas at the end of the sixth century with a title that can be reconstructed as *Candraprabha-samādhi-sūtra*. Under the same title *Yueteng sanmei jing* 月燈三昧經, at the beginning of the fifth century, some chapters of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* had already been translated by an unknown translator designated as Xiangong 先公.⁶³⁾ It seems that Narendrayaśas borrowed the title used by his predecessor in order to achieve a more complete translation. But there is supplementary evidence of the earlier presence in China of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* and especially of our thirty-fourth chapter on flesh offering. It is an autonomous sūtra that the modern editors of the Taishō Canon have included in the *Avadāna* literature. It is called *Yueming p’usa jing* 月明菩薩經⁶⁴⁾ and the translation is attributed to Zhi Qian 支謙, who died at age sixty between 252 and 257. It seems to be a genuine archaic translation. This autonomous sūtra received the consecration consisting in Chinese Buddhism in being included in the two early anthologies of edifying tales, *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相⁶⁵⁾ and *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林.⁶⁶⁾

The title of this autonomous sūtra may be reconstructed as “Candraprabha-bodhisattva-sūtra”⁶⁷⁾ with again a reference to a bodhisattva called Candraprabha. The scenario, which is described here very briefly, is analogous to that of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*. The names

of the protagonists (appearing here in archaic transcriptions) are almost the same as in the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*. An important difference lies in the fact that the heroic offering of flesh is not performed by a princess but by the first crown-prince. We may see here an adaptation to a Chinese audience of the third century that was perhaps less prone than the Indian public to accept a female bodhisattva. But we have also to remember that there was a Candraprabha bodhisattva, already mentioned as being “without hate”,⁶⁸⁾ who, according to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa*, offered his marrow and his blood. He was known under different names and the object of his solicitude was either a leper, his father, or his countrymen suffering from an epidemic. We have probably reached the intersection of different tales. The verse section at the end of the tale is very abbreviated in the present text. There is no contempt for the body as in the stanzas of the princess in “Jñānavatī-parivarta,” but at the end of the tale particular mention is made of the fact that the crown-prince’s body has been restored to its original state.

The question of the identity of the Bodhisattva Candraprabha who receives the teaching of the Buddha in the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* is probably not of overwhelming importance. We know that there is a Bodhisattva by this name, translated as Moonlight, who is the central figure in four sūtras⁶⁹⁾ that gained some popularity in China. The assimilation of Zhi Qian’s archaic version of “Jñānavatī-parivarta” to these four sūtras forming what could be called the “cycle of Prince Moonlight” has been made in several catalogues of the Chinese Buddhist Canon. More recently, Erik Zürcher had connected the *Yueming p’usa jing* to the cycle in his *Buddhist Conquest of China*,⁷⁰⁾ but later he detached it from this cycle in his article on Prince Moonlight.⁷¹⁾ The scenario of the Prince Moonlight cycle is as follows: A devoted son, called Yueguang 月光, and also Shenri 申日, sixteen years old, converts to Buddhism his father, the rich Dehou 德護 (Śrīgupta), after having protected the Buddha who was his father’s guest and whom his father wished to kill. This story has almost nothing in common with the sacrifice of the son or of the daughter of the good king Jñānabala. Beside the young age of the heroes, there is another common point between the two stories of the good son who converts his father and the good son / daughter who

fulfills the wish of the father, king: both stories are set in a period of respite just before the extinction of the Dharma. The Chinese tradition often attributes to that period a length of 50, 51 or 52 years.

In the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*, the reign of Jñānabala occurs at the end of a period of several myriads (*koṭi*) of years which was the period of the preaching of the Buddha Acintya-praṇidhāna-viśeṣa-samudgata-rāja. In the short account of the *Yueming p'usa jing*, this reign is located during the last fifty years of the decline of a Dharma which lasted twenty hundreds of millions of years, with a supplement of one thousand years. In the cycle of Candragarbha, the devoted son of Śrīgupta, two of the four Chinese translations announce that Yueguang 月光 will be born again as a bodhisattva king in China. According to one version,⁷²⁾ this reign will start one thousand years after the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha. According to the other version,⁷³⁾ made by the apocalyptical translator Narendrayaśas, there is no precise dating, but Candraprabha figures as a king Daxing 大行 of the Dynasty of the Great Sui 大隋. Associated with the worship of the Buddha's bowl and with the erection of a series of *stūpas*, this king Daxing may be identified as Emperor Wendi 文帝 of the Sui, who reigned from 589 to 604. For the numerous meanings of Bodhisattva Candraprabha in China, there is much to learn in the above-mentioned studies by Zürcher and in the works of Antonino Forte.⁷⁴⁾ It is possible that the prestige of the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* helped to make this bodhisattva a well-known figure.

More important perhaps than the speculation about the years of lull before the extinction of the Law, there is a theme highlighted in the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* and popularized by the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* that infiltrated the Chinese non-Buddhist tradition and paradoxically enough the most conservative part of that tradition, filial piety. It is well known that an important aspect of filial piety is the rule that one must keep intact the body one has received from one's parents and ancestors. *A contrario*, the intense horror toward mutilations resulting from punishment or execution demonstrates also the value of the integrity of the body. It has been often supposed that cremation was an obstacle to the spread of Buddhism among the Literati classes.⁷⁵⁾

Nevertheless, as many authors have pointed out, there is a well-

established custom that contradicts the respect for the integrity of the body. It has been considered an act of filial piety to cook a piece of one's own flesh in order to cure one's parents. Such a remedy has been considered a minor part of Chinese pharmacopea.⁷⁶⁾ Although it is difficult to know exactly when this "endophagical" treatment became accepted by Chinese families, we can guess that the Buddhist circles were eager to support such a development of filial piety.

In Chinese editions⁷⁷⁾ of the *Fanwang jing* 梵網經 on which is based J.J.M. de Groot's translation *Le code du Mahāyāna en Chine*,⁷⁸⁾ the prescription asking the cutting off one's own flesh and selling it appears in the regulations related to the duties toward guests. Interestingly, this sentence is omitted from the Korean edition which is the basis of the Taishō Canon.

It is in a later Buddhist text that we see the first connection between filial piety and offering one's own flesh. This Tang-period text, the *Sūtra of the Contemplation of the Thoughts and the Stages of the Birth in the Great Vehicle*, *Dashengpensheng Xindiguanjing* 大乘本生心地觀經, seems to be related to the *Fanwang jing*. They share the system of thought (心) and stages (地). In its chapter on the four obligations (四報恩), there is a lengthy description of the first obligation, to one's father and mother. The supreme act of filial piety is presented in prose and in verse as the offering of one's own flesh to one's parents.⁷⁹⁾ The Mahayanic exaggeration — "three times a day during hundreds of kalpas" — does not lessen the fact that this is virtually the only concrete act of filial piety enjoined on the Buddhist believer.

In most of the Chinese translations of Indian scriptures mentioned in this article, the recipient of the flesh-offering was a monk. In one version of the tale of the "Prince without hate", we found the gift of marrow and blood made to the king, his father. There is thus no Indian evidence of a general practice of giving a lump of one's flesh to save one's parents. The above-mentioned *Xindiguanjing*, although attributed to the Avatamsaka translator Prajña, seems to be a Chinese apocryph. Its rich and very eclectic doctrinal content argues also in favor of this hypothesis. We perhaps see in this text the adoption of a rather metaphorical and hyperbolic Buddhist motif, the Bodhisattva's offering of his own body, to the quintessentially Chinese and Confucian system of filial piety.⁸⁰⁾ As Michibata Ryōshū said, it was from the Tang period

that “filial piety by cutting off the thigh 割股孝子” became popular.⁸¹⁾

To conclude, let us go back to the starting point of our inquiry. We have seen the same act of self-mutilation first as viewed by mainstream Indian Buddhism, later underscored as Hīnayāna; second from a Mahāyāna perspective, and third, as a rather unexpected development in the most anti-Buddhist of the Chinese traditions. Given the general tone of moderation that characterizes the Vinayas, it is not surprising to see the rejection of the offering of human flesh or human blood. To view the piece of a woman’s thigh as a substitute remedy is derided as the misplaced generosity of a zealous matron. In the grandiloquent Mahayanic perspective, the offering of the body is a leitmotif, in contrapuntal harmony with another leitmotif, the contempt for the body. It allows us to relativise as metaphorical the sacrifice of the princess who has been promoted through her offering of flesh and blood (a gesture which has perhaps to be considered in the context of the Asian religious effervescence at the beginning of the common era) to the high status of a predecessor of the Buddha Śākyamuni. An unexpected development of that metaphor is to be found in the Buddhist doctrine of filial piety adopted for therapeutical reasons in the Chinese family system. We do not know what health benefits result from eating the cooked flesh of one’s offspring, but, in today’s medicine, it is proven that some of the most successful organ transplants are made from close relatives. It is therefore paradoxical that nowadays it is the Confucian principle of the preservation of the integrity of the human body that serves as the basis for some of the opposition to organ transplants.⁸²⁾

* Bibliographical abbreviations used in the notes

Hōbōgirin=*Hōbōgirin: Dictionnaire encyclopédique du bouddhisme d’après les sources chinoises et japonaises* (Tōkyō: Maison Franco-Japonaise - Paris: Librairie Jean Maisonneuve), vols. I (1929), II (1930), III (1937), IV (1967), V (1978), VI (1979), VII (1994). Annex : *Répertoire du Taishō* (1978).

Lamotte, *Traité*=Etienne Lamotte, *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra)*, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, Bibliothèque du Muséon 18 for vols. I (1944) and II (1949); Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste 2 and 12 for vols. III (1970) and IV (1976); Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste 24 for vol. V (1980).

PTS=Publications of the Pali Text Society, London.

Samādhirājasūtra Gilgit Manuscripts=Gilgit Manuscripts, edited by Nalinaksha Dutt, vol. II, Part I, Srinagar, 1941 and Part II, Calcutta, 1953.

T=Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō, edited by Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaigyoku, Tōkyō, 1924-1934.

- 1) L. Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 17.
- 2) See Edith Parlier, “La légende du roi des Śibi : du sacrifice brahmanique au don du corps bouddhique”, *Bulletin d’Etudes Indiennes* 9 (1991), pp. 133-160, especially pp. 138-139, where Parlier insists on the affinity between *ūru* (thigh) and *urvī* (earth). As happens often, various different offerings are attributed to the same hero. The King called Sivi in the Pāli *Jātaka* (n° 499) and Śibi in the *Jātakamālā* (n° 2) is famous for giving his eyes; in the Northern tradition, King Śibi is mostly celebrated for offering all his flesh, starting with a piece of his thigh. Numerous references in Lamotte, *Traité* I, pp. 255-260, 297; III, 1713; V, 2251.
- 3) On Prince Mahāsattva, see Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善, *Bukkyō koyu meishi jiten* 仏教個有名詞辞典 (Kyōto: Hōzōkan 法蔵館 [repr.], 1967), p. 329.
- 4) See as an example the Mahayanic *Prajñāparamitopadeśa*, T XII, n° 374, k. 14, p. 449a19-20; T XII, n° 375, k. 13, p. 691a13-14.
- 5) *Traité* II, pp. 715-716, based on the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (T XXV, n° 1509, k. 12, p. 146b11-19) and the *Ratnakūṭa* (T III, n° 310, k. 111, pp. 630c9-631a 22).
- 6) *Hōbōgirin* VI, s.v. Dabi 荼毘, pp. 576b-577a.
- 7) *Hōbōgirin* VI, s.v. Daijizaiten 大自在天, p. 736a.
- 8) For a bibliography on the *Samādhirājā*, including the editions of its Sanskrit text, see Luis O. Gomez and Jonathan A. Silk, eds. *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle : Three Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts* (Ann Arbor: Center for South and Southeast Studies and Collegiate Institute for the Study of Buddhist Literature, The University of Michigan, 1989), pp. 40-49.
- 9) On the mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, see the chapter “The Long and Short Nirvāṇa Sūtras” in Hubert Durt, *Problems of Chronology and Eschatology* (Kyōto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Scuola di Studi sull’Asia Orientale, 1994), pp. 60-66.
- 10) This is one of the main topics of the extensive study by Hara Minoru 原実: *Kugyō no kenkyū* 苦行の研究 [*Tapas in the Mahābhārata*] (Tōkyō: Shunjūsha 春秋社, 1979).
- 11) See *Hōbōgirin* V, s.v. Chūdō 中道 (by K. Mimaki and J. May), p. 457.
- 12) Hirakawa Akira 平川彰, *Buddhist Chinese-Sanskrit Dictionary* (Tōkyō:

- The Reiyukai, 1997), p. 550a.
- 13) Chapter 22: *Bhaiṣajyazāḥja-pūrvayoga-parivarta*.
 - 14) Chapter 33: *Kṣemadatta-parivarta*.
 - 15) “Les suicides par le feu chez les Bouddhistes chinois du v^e au x^e siècle”, *Mélanges publiés par l’Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises*, tome II, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), pp. 527-558.
 - 16) “La mort volontaire par le feu et la tradition bouddhique indienne”, *Journal Asiatique* 251 (1963) I, pp. 21-51.
 - 17) We can refer here to the numerous stories of offering one’s own flesh in exchange for a doctrinal *gāthā*. Famous is the story of the “Boy of the Snowy Mountain” 雪山童子 told in the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (T XII, n° 374, k. 14, pp.449b8-451b5; T. XII, n°375, k. 13, pp. 691b4-693b6).
 - 18) See below pp. 46 and 52.
 - 19) See Robert des Rotours, “Quelques notes sur l’anthropophagie en Chine”, *T’oung Pao* 50 (1963) 4-5, pp. 386-427; “Encore quelques notes sur l’anthropophagie en Chine”, *T’oung Pao* 54 (1968) 1-3, pp. 1-49, and several entries in Mircea Eliade ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, (New York: Macmillan, 1987 (“Blood”, “Cannibalism”, “Human Sacrifice”).
 - 20) Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, especially : “Buha ni okeru ‘yaku’ to shite nikushoku no shosō 部派に於ける薬として肉食の諸相” [On flesh as medicine in the *nikāya*-period] in *Ga no shisō: vol. Maeda Sengaku 我の思想 — 前田専学論集* (Tōkyō: Shunjūsha, 1991), pp. 543-554.
 - 21) See T XXIV, n° 1463, k. 7, p. 843a12-17 where the first six misdeeds are 1) 食人肉, 2) 畜人皮, 3) 剃陰上毛腋下毛, 4) 用藥灌大便道, 5) 畜人髮飲婆羅, 6) 裸形行.
 - 22) *Hōbōgirin* V (1979) s.v. Chūranja 偷蘭遮 (by H. Durt), p. 511.
 - 23) *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome: IsMEO, 1956), especially p. 93.
 - 24) *Ritsuzō no kenkyū* 律藏の研究 (Tōkyō: Sankibō Busshorin 山喜房仏書林, 1960).
 - 25) *Histoire du bouddhisme indien* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958), pp. 181-197; English translation by Sara Boin-Webb: *History of Indian Buddhism* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1988), pp. 165-179.
 - 26) Heinz Bechert ed., *Systematische Uebersicht über die Buddhistische Sanskrit Literatur, Teil I: Vinaya-Texte* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979).
 - 27) *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya analysiert auf Grund der Tibetischen Uebersetzung* (Tōkyō: The Reiyukai Library, 1981).
 - 28) T XXII, n° 1425, k. 32, p. 486a24-c1, Chinese translation dated before 429, made by Buddhahadra and Faxian 法顯. Faxian was also the translator of the first, short version of the Mahayanic *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (T

- XII, n° 376).
- 29) T XXII, n° 1421 [*Pañcavargika*], k. 22, p. 148b10-c11, Chinese translation dated 424.
 - 30) T XXII, n° 1428 [*Caturvargika*], k. 42, pp. 868c5-869a18, Chinese translation dated before the period 384-417.
 - 31) PTS Edition VI, p. 23,1-9.
 - 32) T XXIII, n° 1435 [*Daśabhāṇavāra*], k. 26, pp. 185c5 - 186b1, Chinese translation dated before 409/413.
 - 33) T XXIV, n° 1448, k. 1, pp. 3b26-4c11), Chinese translation made by Yi-jing 義淨 (635-713); the Gilgit manuscript (III,1, p. XIV.9sq) with this tale is incomplete and is reduced for the present tale to the first ten lines.
 - 34) T XXVII, n° 1545, k. 83, pp. 429c18-430a26.
 - 35) T IV, n° 202, k. 4, pp. 373a24-376b1.
 - 36) *Anguttara* PTS, I, p. 26, Comm. PTS, I, pp. 453-455.
 - 37) *Milindapañha* PTS, p. 291.14-17; see the French translation by Edith Nolot in the collection "Connaissance de l'Orient" (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), p. 230 and n. 312.
 - 38) T XXVII, n° 1545, k. 83, pp. 429c20.
 - 39) T IV, n° 202, k. 4, pp. 373a24, b16.
 - 40) T II, n° 126, p. 834b5-7.
 - 41) The cutting off of one's own flesh in order to nurse a close relative seems to have been well accepted in Chinese society, perhaps under Buddhist influence. Was it originally an Indian practice? It can be observed that, alone in the Vinaya tradition, the Mahāsāṃghika Vinaya (T XXII, n° 1425, k. 32, p. 486a24-c1) refers in what seem to be typical Indian prohibitions to another feature of Chinese anthropophagy: the drinking of the blood bursting forth from the decapitation of a death penalty victim.
 - 42) PTS edition, VI, 14,17.
 - 43) *Hōbōgirin*. V (1979) s.v. Chōsai 頂齋 (by A. Forte and J. May), p. 393.
 - 44) *Hōbōgirin* III (1937), s.v. Byō 病 (by P. Demiéville), *passim*.
 - 45) For that episode, see Lamotte, *Traité* I, p. 124, n. 1.
 - 46) P. Pradhan ed., *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya of Vasubandhu* (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1967), p.188.11=T XXIX, n° 1558, k. 12, p. 66a7-13. See notes 1 and 2 of the French translation by Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu* II (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises [repr.] 1971, p. 208.
 - 47) On this Jātaka, see *Traité* I, p. 713, n. 1, completed by *Traité* V, p. 2251, n. 1, 2. See also Margaret Cone and Richard F. Gombrich, *The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara: A Buddhist Epic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).
 - 48) We have seen above such an image of the bodhisattva in influential texts such as the Prologue of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

- 49) In the new "Avant-propos" of the reprint of *La Somme du Grand Véhicule (Mahāyāna-saṃgraha) d'Asanga* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1973). See also *Hōbōgirin* VII s.v. Daijō 大乘 (by H. Durt), p. 786.
- 50) T LI, n° 2085, p. 864b27 referring probably to T XII n° 376, dated 417-418; see above notes 9 and 27.
- 51) T XII n° 374, dated 414-421.
- 52) T XII n° 375, dated 430 or 436.
- 53) See *Hōbōgirin* VII, s.v. Daijuku 代受苦 (by H. Durt), p. 812.
- 54) T XII, n 374, k. 16, p. 458a24-b12; T XII, n 375, k. 14, p. 70012-c1. English translation in K. Yamamoto, *The Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* II (Ube: Karin Bunko, 1974), p. 385.
- 55) Ibid. p. 458a11-23 and 700a28-b11; Yamamoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 384-385.
- 56) See G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* II (London: John Murray, 1938) ss. vv., p. 112-114 and p. 862. I was prompted to draw this parallel with figures from the *Therīgāthā* by the French translation by Bénédictte Niogret of Susan Murcott, *Buddha et les femmes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997).
- 57) T XXVII, n° 1545, k. 83, 429b3-c7.
- 58) Gilgit Manuscripts, vol. II, Part III, pp. 468-486, T XV 639, k. 8, pp. 599c-602a7. A German translation of this chapter has been made by Friedrich Weller, "Der arme Heinrich in Indien", *OLZ* 68 (1973), pp. 437-448.
- 59) He is the subject of a well-known article by Erik Zürcher, "Prince Moonlight," *T'oung Pao*, 68 (1982) 1-3, pp. 1-75.
- 60) Although the *Répertoire du Taishō* of the *Hōbōgirin* (p.65, n° 639) has proposed Candrapradīpa instead of Candraprabha, the comparison with the Sanskrit text authorizes "Candraprabha".
- 61) See above, note 16.
- 62) On this point, see the observations on "Jñānavatī-parivarta" by Kamaleśvar Bhattacharya in the second part of the study by Robert des Rotours cited above in note 19: "Encore quelques notes sur l'anthropophagie en Chine", p. 47.
- 63) T XV, n° 640 and T XV, n° 641, each work in one roll. The first text contains only Chapter 6 of Narendrayaśas's translation. The second work includes also Chapter 5 and Chapters 7 - 10 of Narendrayaśas's translation.
- 64) T III, n° 169.
- 65) T LIII, n° 2121, k. 31.
- 66) T LIII, n° 2122, k. 64, p. 776.
- 67) The reconstruction "Jinaputrārthasiddha-sūtra" in the *Répertoire du Taishō* of the *Hōbōgirin* is erroneous. This title, reconstructed according

- to the Tibetan Canon, can be attributed only to T III, n° 171, which is one of the Chinese versions of the famous *Vessantara-Jātaka*. It has been translated by Edouard Chavannes as the last entry in the *Cinq-cents contes et apologues tirés du Canon bouddhique chinois* III (Paris : Ernest Leroux, 1911), pp. 362-395.
- 68) See above notes 5, 6 and 7.
- 69) T XIV, n° 534, 535, 536, 545.
- 70) (Leiden: Brill, 1958), p. 437, n. 130.
- 71) See “Prince Moonlight,” cited above in note 57, p. 23, n. 41. On the composition of the sūtra, see also Murakami Shinkan 村上真完, “Samādhirājasūtra no seiritsu[成立] ni tsuite”, *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 16 (1968).2, pp. 833-836.
- 72) T XIV, n° 535, p. 819b1-2.
- 73) T XIV, n° 545, k.2, p. 849b22-23.
- 74) *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Napoli: Istituto Universitario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, 1976), pp. 125-136.
- 75) *Hōbōgirin* VI, s.v. Dabi (by Anna Seidel), pp. 580-581.
- 76) The ingestion of human flesh among cognate people is not considered in the survey by William C. Cooper and Nathan Sivin, “Man as Medicine: Pharmacological and ritual aspects of traditional therapy using drugs derived from the human body”, in Nakayama / Sivin eds. *Chinese Science* (Cambridge Mass. : MIT Press, 1973), pp. 203-272. I wish to thank Dr Farzeen Baldrian-Hussein for directing me to this study and for information on eating human flesh in the Chinese filial piety context.
- 77) The critical apparatus of T XXIV, n° 1484, mentions the Kunaishō and Song, Yuan and Ming editions.
- 78) Reprint (Wiesbaden: Dr. Martin Sändig, 1967), p. 59.
- 79) T III, n° 159, k. 2, p. 297b14-15; k. 3, p. 302a3.
- 80) The studies of anthropophagy in China seem to have been boosted by the recent tragedies and excesses in China (famine during the “Great leap forward”, Cultural Revolution). A recent study of the phenomenon in a historical perspective has been made by Key Ray Chong, *Cannibalism in China* (Wakefield, New Hampshire : Longwood Academic, 1990). In his review article (*Monumenta Serica*, 44 (1996) : pp. 393-403), R. Th. Kolb mentions that the majority of the recorded cases are examples of filial piety.
- 81) Michibata Ryōshū 道端良秀, *Bukkyō to jukkyō rinri: Chūgoku bukkyō ni okeru kō no mondai* 仏教と儒教倫理：中国仏教における孝の問題 (Kyōto: Heirakuji shoten 平楽寺書店, 1968), p. 82. One should consult also his study, “Chūgoku Bukkyō to shokuninniku no mondai 中国佛教と食人肉の問題” [The problem of cannibalism and Chinese Buddhism], in Fukui

Kōjun 福井康順 ed. *Jikaku Daishi kenkyū* 慈覚大師研究 (Tōkyō: The Association of the Tendai Sect for Buddhist Studies, 1964), pp. 391-404.

- 82) The present study is a contribution to the research project on “Buddhism and Bio-ethics” proposed by the Japanese Ministry of Education to the International College of Advanced Buddhist Studies. A first draft has been presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association Française pour les Etudes Indiennes, Paris, March 13, 1997. I wish to thank Elizabeth Kenney for her revision of its English version.