Buddhism: a 'Mystery Religion'?

SCHOOL OF ORIENTAL AND AFRICAN STUDIES

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion

III

The Louis H. Jordan Bequest

The will of the Rev. Louis H. Jordan provided that the greater part of his estate should be paid over to the School of Oriental and African Studies to be employed for the furtherance of studies in Comparative Religion, to which his life had been devoted. Part of the funds which thus became available was to be used for the endowment of a Louis H. Jordan Lectureship in Comparative Religion. The lecturer is required to deliver a course of six or eight lectures for subsequent publication. The first series of lectures was delivered in 1951.

JORDAN LECTURES 1953

Buddhism: a 'Mystery Religion'?

by

PAUL LÉVY

Professeur à l'École pratique des hautes études, Paris

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

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PREFACE

It is now three years since these lectures were written, and in the intervening time a number of important works on Buddhism have been published, both in France and in other countries. I regret that the only reference that I can make to them here is to deplore the fact that these lectures were unable to profit from them. Nevertheless I hope to remedy this in the not too distant future, as I move forward along the path upon which I am setting out today.

It gives me great pleasure to express my gratitude to the Director and to the members of the Academic Board of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, who invited me to deliver these lectures. My thanks are due also to the translators, Dr. R. E. Asher and Dr. I. M. P. Raeside, assistant lecturers in Linguistics at the School of Oriental and African Studies, and to Mr. A. W. Macdonald of the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique de France*.

April 1956 P. L.

CONTENTS

I

Ordination and the Buddhist Hierarchy in *Theravadin* Communities: I

THE rather sensational general title of these lectures was not chosen simply for the sake of effect, nor yet solely in order to conform to the terms of the Jordan bequest. On the other hand, neither does it mean that it is my intention to make rash comparisons between Buddhism and mystery religions in general or between Buddhism and any one of these religions in particular. My aim is quite different, as a glance at the titles of the individual lectures will show. I shall in fact be dealing almost exclusively with Buddhism, but with Buddhism considered in a light and from a point of view that I believe to be unusual.

It is more than a century since the death in 1852 of the founder of Buddhist studies, Eugène Burnouf, who was himself indebted for the essential material for his work on Buddhism to that great pioneer in Nepalese studies, B. H. Hodgson. In these hundred years very considerable efforts have been made to extend our knowledge of the history of the religion of Sākyamuni, and the most recent contributions are by no means the least in bulk. However, the essential features of Burnouf's formulation, based as it was on the canonical literature of the Buddhists, are still generally accepted. If we except the work of M. Paul Mus, it seems to me that only Kern and Senart have really made any attempt to free themselves from the dogmas that are too much in evidence in accounts of the history of Buddhism. M. Mus has been able to move so far ahead of his predecessors because of his deeper insight into the present-day life of the peoples of Asia; and this in turn we might attribute to his being both a linguist and a sociologist. It is this which has enabled him to offer an authoritative reconstruction of some of the main features of the religious

composition of Asia and of the history of Buddhism. But it will be some time before M. Mus's discoveries really permeate works on Buddhology, official or otherwise.

When for my own part I came to study the life of certain present-day Indo-Chinese groups, knowing at the same time something of their history, I became convinced of the value of the ethnological approach in these studies. My conviction was strengthened by my observations of the Buddhist ritual of the Laotians.

The standard view of almost all specialists on Buddhism is that it is a universal religion with salvation as its object, and that it has been so from its earliest beginnings, by the will of a founder who was an ascetic moved by the noblest intentions. Nevertheless it is abundantly clear that the Buddha's successors have 'modified' the original doctrine. In particular, one might note the tendency, for which the monastic mind has been held responsible, to produce as the essence of Buddhist teaching something that is undeniably esoteric. These remarks apply at least to the works of sects which flourished chiefly in Central Asia and as far as China and Japan; for many consider that there is little doubt that *theravadin* Buddhism, which has official status in Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Indianised Indo-China, is for the most part free of this 'heresy'. In adopting this view Western writers have given support to *theravadin* purists and have even furthered their reconstitution of Buddhism 'in the form it was intended to take'.

It is of course true that many of the bas-reliefs of Barhut are quite touchingly simple, that admirable sentiments are expressed in the most ancient lines of the *sūtras* and in the well-known inscriptions of that king who was 'beloved of the gods'; that does not alter the fact that in the most solemn rites, in texts which by their antiquity are most sacred and venerable, there exists an array of facts which cannot be explained by customary theories. It is this crack in a noble edifice that I shall attempt to examine with you. As a clue to guide us through the maze into which this attempt will lead us, I shall make use of what we think we know of the secret societies of the classical mystery cults. In the course

of my examination this thread will at times be very conspicuous, and we shall be able at the end of this series of lectures to recall what we owe to it.

It is plain that in Buddhism ritual plays only a very small part. In contrast to the hypertrophies of Brahmanical rites, the sparseness of Buddhist ritual almost seems to anticipate *nirvāṇa*. Nevertheless, this sobriety has had an adverse effect on the study of these activities and on our knowledge of Buddhism as a whole. The fact that Buddhist ceremonial has not given rise to a large amount of theorising, does not make it any less important; what is left of it (for it is rapidly disappearing) bears witness to the part it formerly played. That this part was an important one is confirmed by the content of ancient texts.

Unfortunately, Buddhist ritual has more often than not been transmitted orally, and when it was written down, it suffered the well-meant emendations of the monks. Their most frequent mistake results from a failure to appreciate the value of ritual. If a certain feature distressed him, the pious editor either omitted it altogether or presented it in his own way, inserting anecdotes of which the least one can say is that they are completely lacking in imagination—the rules for the *prātimokṣa* provide a good example. A detailed study of a particular rite, or of a body of mythical themes connected with it, often enables us to go back a very long way, especially if we can cite ethnographic factors in support. It seems to me that the views we arrive at in this way will have a firm foundation.

Let me now turn to the subject of my research. Buddhist texts, as we shall see, have little to say concerning entry into the Order and the attainment of the various monastic ranks. For this reason little attention has been paid to them. Hocart, amateur though he was in the field of oriental studies, is exceptional in having set great store by the various rites of Sinhalese ordination, of which he had first-hand knowledge. His penetrating synthesis of *King-ship* owes much to his study of these factors. However limited this Sinhalese ritual may be, we shall touch on it again at the end of our investigation of the *theravadin* tradition of ordination.

In this tradition, the monastery does not play the same detached role as it can be seen to play, for example, in China and Vietnam. Among the Cambodians, the *vihāra*, in so far as it is materially dependent on its district or its village, plays an essential role in the social life of the community; for them the monastery is at one and the same time an inn, a communal meeting place, a centre for festivities and an educational establishment. Everywhere it is the *theravadin* monks who teach the children of the parish, and at about the age of twelve the boys even join the ecclesiastical body as novices. This novitiate, although short, is more or less obligatory, for it is looked upon as a token of gratitude to one's parents for the care they have bestowed. In Cambodia it is a matter of good form to enter upon a novitiate lasting for some months 'in recognition of one's mother's care.' On coming of age the young men will spend another period in the monastery, this time as monks; it generally lasts for a year and is 'in recognition of one's father's care.'[1] Living as an ordained monk has the effect of increasing the 'merit' of the young man's parents, and even those who are dead can benefit from it. Cremations or the translation of remains are frequently accompanied by an ordination ceremony, should the time be favourable.[2]

To be placed in a monastery by one's pious owner was also a way of being freed from slavery.[3] Finally, at the sunset of their life, men who wish to conclude it in an aura of enlightenment often end their days in monastic robes. But first they put their worldly affairs in order and divide their property among their heirs. In this last case it is strictly the personal interest of the ordained man which comes first.

We can thus reckon that among the monks of a present-day Buddhist monastery there is a large number of transitory elements—the very young and the very old—and a small number of

[1] Guy Porée and Evelyne Maspero, *Moeurs et coutumes des Khmèrs*, Paris, 1938, p. 179 (Guy Porée).

[2] e.g. in Laos.

[3] This was formerly the case in Siam, Cambodia, Laos, and in a general way in the whole region where the Hindu type of slavery was current; cf. Mgr J.-B. Pallegoix, *Description du Royaume Thai ou Siam*, Paris, 1854, tome ii, p. 44.

stable elements dedicated to the priesthood by solemn vows, which are nevertheless in no way irrevocable. It is always possible to leave the order, and this is far from involving any sort of discredit: for among laymen the former monk is looked upon as a spiritual leader, and as such takes an active part in numerous ceremonies, at times serving as an auxiliary to officiating monks, at others acting alone, as, for example, in domestic cults.

Those who become monks for life are thus both specialists and limited in number, although for obvious reasons the proportion is greater in urban areas.

The method of entering on a monastic career is the same for all, whether they wish to persist in it or not. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the novitiate and ordination—a distinction that some authorities fail to make. As one might suspect, the first period of training and the ceremony that begins it have not the importance of the definitive entry into the Order. In the preparatory stage of the novitiate the future bonze is initiated into the rudiments of the clerical state, but often in a thoroughly material fashion. Indeed these children, never less than seven years old, are little more than the diminutive servants of their elders. In addition, and somewhat unexpectedly, in certain countries (Siamese Laos, for example) the discipline to which the apprentice monks are subjected in the course of their studies is often very strict; the monks can beat them, tie them up, go after them if they try to run away. Such severity is surprising in the representatives of a religion which is in theory characterised by kind and gentle behaviour. It must also seem strange in a country where children are particularly free and very rarely illtreated. When the parents place them in the care of the monastery, they give up their paternal rights. They cannot go back on the authorisation they have granted their child to embark on a monastic life; and if he himself wishes to leave, a decision in the matter rests with the monks alone.

The reception of the novice into the monastic community resembles the full ordination itself, though it is much more simple in form. Few people are present. The chief officiant is the 'head of

the pagoda', the abbot, and not the *upādhyāya*, the preceptor, who will play a leading role in the life of the intending monk. The novice is, however, already 'cut off from the world'. It is no longer possible for any woman, even his mother or sister, to approach him. His head is shaved, and he very often wears part of the monastic dress, namely the clothing worn next to the skin. But assimilation to the status of a monk does not generally go beyond this. The novice does not officiate and is not present at the *prātimokṣa* ceremonies, which are normally held in secret; and if he goes with the monks on morning begging-rounds, it is in order to help them to carry the surplus of food they are given, for he will not himself receive any. Such at least are the rules observed in Cambodia, Siam and Laos.

In Cambodia full ordination can only be administered during quite a short period of three or four months beginning rather later than our spring. (It lasts from 15th April to 15th July or 15th August). The religious ceremony is preceded by a family festival of from three to nine days. It always lasts for an odd number of days, and is an opportunity for boys and girls to meet. The prospective monk takes hardly any part in it, for by his bearing he tries to show himself worthy of the lot awaiting him: he converses with older people, above all with his parents. These domestic celebrations are likened to the pleasures which were so strong an influence in leading Prince Siddhārtha towards monastic life. We shall see further on how this comparison with the Buddha's life is extended. On the eve of the ordination ceremony the monks, whose society the young man is to join, are invited to his home, where they recite a number of prayers, the purpose of which, in the words of a Siamo-Cambodian expression, is 'to invoke the spirits of the *nāga*'. Some Cambodian informants see in this an allusion to the story of the *nāga* who gained admission by fraud into the first Buddhist community, and was said to have been expelled by the Buddha who, by way of compensation, allowed that his memory should be celebrated before every new ordination. One writer, Madame Porée-Maspero, has recently given further details to the effect that, when the spirits of the *nāga*

have been invoked, 'the novice is identified with him', and the ordination of a bonze is called *bambuos nāk*, 'the ordination of the *nāga*'.[1]

This ceremony is followed by another known as 'the teeth festival': this is a puberty rite which, unless it has already taken place at an earlier date, occurs during the night preceding the day of ordination and at the dawn of this day. It is in fact a private ceremony organised by one of those laymen who have formerly been monks and of whom I have already spoken. The vital moment of this ceremony comes in the early morning, when the teeth of the young boy or girl are blackened—pre-eminently an initiation rite.[2]

At last the ordination day arrives. The novice is dressed in a white cotton garment, or in princely attire, and has a white sash over his left shoulder. This, in the words of Adhémard Leclère, is a sign that he is taking leave of 'the world of pleasure'.[3] Buddhist scholars would do well, I feel, to pay tribute to this keen and energetic worker. Belonging to the colonial administration of Cambodia, he noted, more than sixty years ago, a large number of facts generally passed over by more learned men. Even such a severe critic as Auguste Barth described one of Leclère's works on Buddhism in Cambodia as 'a veritable mine of information that one would look for in vain elsewhere'.[4]

In the eyes of the Cambodians and of several other peoples, as we shall see, the princely attire of the monk-to-be and his solemn ride through the town or village towards the monastery is clearly a direct allusion to the episode of Prince Siddhārtha's flight from the royal palace of his father. To intensify the action of the sacred

[1] E. Porée-Maspero, 'La cérémonie de l'appel des esprits vitaux chez les Cambodgiens', in *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, xlv, 1, 148.

Buat-nack is the name given by Carl Bock to the solemn procession which precedes the ordination proper in Siam. Bock specifies that 'the novice himself is called *Nack*.' (*Temples and Elephants: the narrative of a journey of exploration through upper Siam and Lao*, London, 1884, p. 100.)

[2] E. Porée-Maspéro, *op. cit.*, p. 149, and Adhémard Leclère, *Cambodge, Fêtes civiles et religieuses*, Paris, 1917, p. 518, where he describes this ceremony on the occasion of a woman's nubility.

[3] A. Leclère, *Le Buddhisme au Cambodge*, Paris, 1899, p. 406.

[4] Auguste Barth, *Quarante années d'Indianisme*, tome ii, Paris, 1914, p. 372.

drama, the novice rides, whenever possible, on a horse that is white, the same colour as Kaṇṭhaka. The bridle of his horse is held by an 'Indra', the parasol over his head by a 'Brahma'. The parents and friends who go with him bearing offerings and uttering cries, represent the gods praising the future Buddha. A friend will often mimic Chandaka, the faithful squire, by clinging to the horse's tail. At the head of the procession walks a group wearing fancy dress and masks and representing the army and daughters of Māra; grotesque and threatening, it will impede the progress of the new Siddhārtha. Arriving at last at the monastery, the whole band goes round it in a triple *pradakṣiṇā*. The novice dismounts and moves towards the entrance, which is blocked, but in vain, by Māra and his followers. With his suite the young man makes his way into the sacred enclosure.

The whole of this masquerade, however, is not indispensable, and the prospective monk can make his way to the monastery by palankeen or borne on the shoulders of his friends. The retinue of a Cambodian prince has a very different form, and if it varies according to rank, it is only in respect of its numerical strength. From the palatine law which describes it in detail one can see that it is, in short, a royal procession on a small scale; moreover, the presence of the King is symbolised by his elephant, which bears all his insignia. In front marches the 'army', then come the royal elephant, men bearing two preaching chairs and begging bowls, the brahmans and astrologers, and finally the prince on his palankeen, dressed in kingly attire and surrounded by the palace servants. Apart from the princely attributes, there is in this case no further allusion to the circumstances of the 'Great Departure'. One detail nevertheless appears to be the equivalent of the 'Māra' incident and the attacks of demons. The procession is headed by two lines of men carrying a rope made from a grass intended to represent the Kuśa grass on which the Buddha received enlightenment. A similar rope surrounds the royal palace of Phnom-Penh, which it protects against evil spirits at the time of their yearly expulsion which takes place in the spring.[1]

[1] A. Leclère, *Fêtes* . . . , pp. 135–9 and 61.

The man to be ordained, whom we left at the sanctuary gate, now enters it into the presence of the chapter of ordainers who number up to twenty-one. The figure varies according to the region and is generally less than this. The candidate moves forward to the middle of the temple and stands facing the statue of the Buddha and his *upādhyāya*, the master chosen as his ordinant. He bows deeply three times to each. He also bows to the abbot as 'head of the monastery' and to the assessor as 'one learned in the *sūtras*'. During the ceremony the abbot and the assessor are the first and second 'teacher' of the candidate. The role of the second is nowhere to be found in Leclère's description,[1] but we know from other sources that he does play this part. Turning towards his *upādhyāya* the disciple makes the declaration that he has chosen him as his ordinant and spiritual guide: 'so that you may rebuke me,' he says, 'every time I turn from the way shown by the Buddha.' In reply the ordinant enjoins him to adhere to 'the discipline of the recluse', not to long for things of this world, to be 'as humble as a little child', and as modest as a poor man, begging each day for his food. Finally he reminds him that life is sorrow, and that one can only escape it by observing the precepts of the Buddha and by following the way of *nirvāna*, a way that passes through the *Devaloka*, *Brahmaloka* and *Mahābrahmaloka*. To pray, to meditate, to guard against the passions, such are the final injunctions, after which the ordinant lays over the novice's arms a bundle of monastic garments. There follow prayers and final advice on the part of the *upādhyāya*, who then draws the sash from the bundle of clothing. He 'passes it round the neck' of the young man and 'knots it', separating his *joined hands* to put one end of the belt between them. He then joins them again and '*winds the sash round them*'. During this time the prospective monk has been 'in a squatting position, with his hands joined and his elbows resting on his knees'. His master next trims 'some of his nails with a razor so that he may know that he must no longer follow any worldly fashion'; then, setting the lower garment on the candidate's hand, he tells him to go and put it on. We might note

[1] *Le Buddhisme* . . . , pp. 408 ff.

here that when a man is admitted as a novice, the belt is simply set on his hands, and not tied in the way described.

The dressing of the candidate may take place outside the temple. If it takes place inside, the candidate is screened by a curtain hung across a corner. If it has not already been done, the beard and hair of the young man are shaved off. He then returns dressed as a monk, 'in travelling attire', with his begging bowl slung behind his left shoulder. Having made a deep bow to his *upādhyāya*, he squats before him with his elbows on his knees and his hands folded in front of his face. His master then gives him the ten essential rules for a monk to keep, and the young man promises to respect them; after this he goes to the far end of the sanctuary between the two rows formed by the twenty-one monks who are there to witness the ordination. When he gets there he *puts his bowl in its proper position*; that is to say, he hangs it from his right shoulder and holds it under his arm in the position it must have when the monk goes out to beg. The next part of the proceedings consists of questions asked by the abbot at the behest of the *upādhyāya*, who says: '*Bhikkhu*, go and question this young man, for he will soon be placed in your control.' *With his right hand* the abbot *takes the two joined hands* of the candidate and *presents* him [sic] to his *upādhyāya*. Then, turning towards the young man, *their hands being placed under a special mat*—the *prah krap*, 'for holy prostrations'—he puts a series of questions to him. The small mat made use of here is the same as that used by all monks on ceremonial occasions. During a ceremony in fact they must normally sit down on it, resting their arms there too. The same mat is often represented on altars dedicated to the Buddha. As a distinctive mark it bears the print of a hand or foot. This, Leclère tells us, is 'supposedly that of the first religious teacher, whose memory is cherished by the bonze.'[1] The questions, to which the young man must give clear and prompt replies, may be grouped under three headings, even though they are not always put in the same order. Following immediately on the enquiry concerning the candidate's age—it is a *sine qua non* of every

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 416–17.

ordination that he shall have reached the age of twenty—come the questions relating to material things. These questions appear to have the greatest importance, since, elsewhere just as here, they precede the others. They relate to the possession by the young man of his own personal begging bowl and monk's clothing. The questions which follow refer to certain diseases, chiefly of the skin. These diseases, together with haemorrhoids and epilepsy, are looked upon as major obstacles in the way of ordination. The interrogation ends with questions on the 'social' standing of the newcomer. In this category can be put the need to be a human being of the male sex, and not a *yakṣa* or *nāga*. The candidate must have received the consent of his parents or of his master, be free from royal service and any kind of bondage, and free from debt. The interrogation is in fact a complete check of identity. If the young bonze's replies are satisfactory he is directed by the abbot to stand in such a way that *his toes are covered by the mat* on which the abbot is himself standing with his back to the *upādhyāya*, who is sitting on the mat. In the position described the abbot gives voice to numerous recommendations and exhortations regarding the new duties of the prospective monk, who immediately replies with an assurance of his vigilance and a promise of respect for the precepts. After this the abbot turns round, sits down facing the *upādhyāya* and introduces him as a candidate for ordination, saying that he finds him worthy. The young man 'squats down, lays *his* carpet so that the edge covers the abbot's feet,' and bows to the *upādhyāya*, who at last quickly pronounces the words of admismission.[1] Immediately the two rows of monks present at the ceremony *close in* round the newly ordained monk 'in order to show by this act that the new member has found refuge in the Buddha, the Law and the Assembly'. After bowing three more times to the *upādhyāya* and the abbot the new monk goes and takes his place, which is the last, towards the end of the sanctuary-nave at the point where the circle of monks closed up. The others make room for him, whilst a very precise note is made in the monastery register of the date of the ceremony and in particular

[1] A. Leclère, *Fêtes* . . . , p. 131.

the time at which 'he put his feet on the mat and the time at which the circle of monks closed round him'; the closing of this circle is signalled by strokes on the monastery gong. To check the time a small sundial is consulted.

In Cambodia, and possibly elsewhere, the ceremony does not end there, but is continued by the reading of the *prātimokṣa*. Theoretically this meeting takes place in secret. All the monks sit on the ground, and even though it is broad daylight a torch or lamp is lit. In Leclère's time the reading, in Pali, was rarely understood; it was therefore translated, or the translation alone was read.[1] The procedure is well known: a listener will interrupt the reader if he has a confession to make on the subject of the article that is being read. Indeed the reader will have begun by saying, 'I shall conclude from your silence that you are pure.' After confession parents and friends of the new monk offer gifts to the *saṃgha*, and in particular to the *upādhyāya* and the abbot. All then unite in prayer, after which follows the sprinkling of lustral water. The sacred water used will have been prepared at the beginning of the vigil in the course of which the young man was subjected to certain initiatory rites. And it is he who will have his hands, arms and head sprinkled with it by the *upādhyāya* when prostrated before him. After further prayers the newly ordained monk, 'in order to call the earth to witness his undertaking to observe the rules and precepts of the religious discipline . . . takes a small flask of water and pours out its contents on the ground, in accordance with ancient custom.' Finally there is the offering of cooked rice to the bonzes. The Cambodians call this 'counting the bowls', for it consists of distributing to each of the monks, as they hold their bowls before them, a spoonful of rice taken from a vessel held in the left hand. This distribution, in which the rice offered by each person is shared among all the monks present, is the reverse of the normal daily distribution. For here it is the monks who remain still and the givers who go the rounds. The gifts are received in the pagoda itself, instead of being presented outside in the streets. It should also be noticed that *alone among the laymen and the first to*

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 132 ff.

give alms, is *the newly promoted monk*. This would also be so in the case of a newly accepted novice.

Once the rice has been distributed, choicer foodstuffs are brought, whilst the monks throw cooked rice to the animals which live unmolested within the monastery walls: 'alms for the birds, alms for the beasts'. After this they dine quickly between two prayers of thanksgiving, in honour of the givers, and then retire, while the new monk is accompanied to his cell.

As far as we can judge from the information available, the same procedure is followed at ordination ceremonies in the other *theravadin* communities of South-East Asia as in Cambodia. But a number of divergences and certain specific details that have been observed are nevertheless of special interest.

As we have said, elementary education is everywhere given to the children by the monks, and it is customary for boys to spend some time in the Order. They cannot properly attain adult status without this period of monastic training. It is also a universal rule for entry into the monastery to take place in the spring, during the months preceding the *varṣa*. In Siamese Laos, however, the period of entry would appear to stretch over a larger part of the year, since one writer[1] states that it comprises the second, fourth, sixth, eighth and tenth months, thus excluding the winter months but taking in the rainy months, or the months of the 'retreat'. The last part of this statement is open to question, and it would be worthwhile to verify it, for it is precisely over these rainy months of the *varṣa* that stays in the Order, now shorter than they used to be, are spread.

The ceremony of 'the invocation of the spirits of the *nāga*' does not appear to occur except in Cambodia, but one detail noticed in Laos would suggest that it has perhaps gone out of use there. The cloth covering the candidate's begging bowl is twisted and arranged to form a sort of effigy of the *nāga*.[2] To this fact must be added the evidence of tattoo marks. Throughout Burma and

[1] Carl Bock, *Temples and Elephants* . . . , p. 206.

[2] Noted before me by Mlle. S. Karpelès, in *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême Orient*, XXXV, 494.

Thailand it was formerly the custom to be tattooed during one's stay in the pagoda. An old type of tattooing consisted of covering a part of the body with scales.[1] Finally, the custom of blackening the teeth or scraping them, its modern substitute, which in Cambodia takes place at the end of the vigil preceding the ordination ceremony, was still practised quite recently in Siam and Laos. This is not the place to elaborate on these initiatory techniques, but simply to note their undoubtedly ancient connection with the Buddhist ordination ceremony, a connection effected by the peoples of southern Asia themselves. At all events, the ordination is preceded everywhere by festivities of varying length solemnly announced. The family of the man who is to be 'liberated', entertain in generous fashion relatives, friends and monks whom they invite to their home. All debts must be paid. In Laos, however brief the projected stay in the monastery, the eve of the departure is marked by the *lamentations* and even the *tears* of the women of the house, the future monk's mother and sisters. These manifestations seem out of proportion to the event that occasions them. For the separation is often very short and involves little hardship; the young man lives in the parish and can be seen every day. I did not have the impression that the departure of a Laotian schoolboy for some far-off Indo-Chinese *lycée* occasions any noticeable public expression of grief, in spite of the sorrow that is certainly felt. There would seem to be no doubt that these female lamentations are the remains of a very ancient ritual. Was this ritual incorporated into early Buddhist practice? From what I shall say later, this will appear to be the case.

In Siam, almost all writers note the pageantry surrounding the prospective monk. But the majority do not report the connection between this pageantry and the 'Great Departure'. On the other hand, in respect of some details Indra plays what may seem to be a surprisingly important part. In Siam proper, the novice on horseback is clothed in white, wears a crown and holds a lotus flower in his heavily jewelled hands. He is, moreover, completely

[1] P. Levy, 'Les tatouages laotiens', in *Bull. Institut Indochinois pour l'Etude de l'Homme*, Hanoï, 1941, pp. 113–18.

shaven even including his eyebrows. Carl Bock was told that this is in memory of the fact that Indra, when he visited the Buddha in his Himalayan retreat, shaved and dressed him.[1] It would have been more appropriate here to recall the 'cutting of the hair' which took place immediately after the 'Great Departure'. In Siamese Laos the novice puts on princely clothes and a crown which is intended to remind him of 'his princely state'. Dressed up in this way, he is *luk-kao*, 'the child in the crystal bottle', an epithet that is explained by the following legend. A noble couple were holding a celebration to mark their son's entry into the religious state. A theatrical production pleased the 'inhabitants of the other world' who were watching it so much, that Indra, who was told of it, came too. On leaving, he carried off the couple's three children so that they might help him to organise similar spectacles. When the heavenly troupes had been fully instructed in the art, Indra took the three boys back in crystal bottles and put them down 'just where he had found them'.[2]

In Laos the part of Māra's daughters is played by young people, and even by children. They are disguised and made up; and to stress and make clear their nature, the organs of the two sexes are drawn in charcoal on their thighs. This 'ambiguity' is perhaps a purely local feature. But, in view of the importance of androgynism in religious matters, it is necessary to draw attention to it.

On his arrival at the monastery the future monk puts off his fine clothing and hands it to his family.[3] At this point the Burmese then bathe the novice, since for them it corresponds to the occasion when the Buddha immersed himself in the River Anoma.[4] Elsewhere this part of the ritual is followed in a sporadic fashion. It is regularly practised in Laos in the case of promotion to the highest Buddhist rank, but only occasionally at simple ordination ceremonies. Raquez, who was an observant traveller, gave a detailed description of it at the beginning of the present century. What one sees today is no different. Above a temporary make-shift cabin two gutters are carved from wood in the form

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 100, note 1. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 205. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 207.
[4] G. Appleton, *Buddhism in Burma* (*Burma Pamphlets*, No. 3), 1943, p. 23.

of *makara* and from them flows the water poured in by monks and believers: under the shower 'the aspirants to monkhood execute truly magical movements. With each hand they gather up the mystical fluid from their bodies and, when their fingers reach their temples, cast it sharply into space. In the same way, when their heads are bent forward towards the ground, their hands collect the liquid or evil spirits and hurl them to the ground.'[1] Clothed in white the candidate is then ready to 'ask for the yellow robe', which is a sign of his entry into the *saṃgha*.

We have seen that the chief ordinant in Cambodia is assisted by two others, at least in theory; for Leclère notes only the part played by the first of them, the abbot. Mgr. Pallegoix mentions, for Siam, only the *upādhyāya* and a 'reader-monk'.[2] This title is an allusion to the title held by the second (silent?) assistant in Cambodia. Similarly Mgr. Bigandet notes only the *oupitze* (the *upādhyāya*) and one assistant, the *Çambhava-tsaia* (Sambhavācārya) whose duty is to read the *Sambhava* or book of ordination.[3] These players have roles identical with those in the Cambodian ordination. Carl Bock, however, states that the 'high-priest' has as assistants the *ku-suat*, 'the *guru* of the *sūtra*' and the *ku-packa*, 'the *guru* of the various (branches of knowledge)'. According to him, all three help in the dressing of the young *nack*.[4] Ernest Young, in his description of a Siamese ordination, tells how a superior presides at the ceremony, whilst 'one of the friends of the candidate who has already been ordained' takes the part played by the Cambodian abbot. Two other friends 'who are members of the chapter, fasten the begging bowl' around the candidate's neck and accompany him to the altar.[5] I have seen this same procedure in Laos, at Luang-Prabang, with this difference: Young gives to the President, the *upādhyāya*, the role taken by the abbot in the second part of the ordination ceremony in

[1] A. Raquez, *Pages laotiennes*, Hanoï, 1902, p. 193.
[2] Mgr. Pallegoix, *Description . . .*, ii, p. 24.
[3] Mgr. Bigandet, *The Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha of the Burmese . . . and notice on the Phongyies or Burmese monks*, 3rd edn, London, 1880, ii, p. 273.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 101. *Ku-packa* probably = Skt. *Guru-pratyeka*.
[5] Ernest Young, *The Kingdom of the yellow robe*, 3rd edn, London, 1907, p. 257.

Cambodia—the part where the candidate, shaved and dressed, goes to be fully ordained. In Laos it is the two assistants who question him and play the part which Leclère attributes to the abbot. One should notice the prevalent importance in all cases of the *upādhyāya*. Several of our authors refer to him as the 'president', for he does indeed preside at the ceremony, seated as he is on a special *sedia*, from which he dominates the assembly. Sometimes he has no helpers, or only voluntary ones from among monks who are friends or acquaintances of the candidate. It may even happen that a lay *ācārya* acts the part of the sponsors and warmly recommends the candidate's cause to the ordinant.[1] But the time when the *upādhyāya*'s role actively predominates is in the first part of the ceremony, when the monastic robes are given to the candidate. We have already seen the strange manner in which this is done in Cambodia. The same is true of Siam and Laos. Young notes briefly that 'the president fastens the bundle of robes round his neck.' Raquez says that the ordinant, after 'making the novice kneel before him : . . . passes round the neophyte's neck one of the ends [of the band which goes round the bundle] and knots it. . . . Then he holds the clasped hands of the candidate together, pressing one against the other.'[2] This is precisely what I have seen done in Laos. Another noteworthy feature already mentioned is the singular squatting posture (with the elbows resting on the knees and the hands joined together), that the candidate adopts at the end of the first act of the monastic ceremony. Raquez relates that earlier on, when the postulant solicits entry into the community, he is the subject of sarcastic remarks on the part of the *saṃgha*. ' "Stand straighter than that," one monk will shout. Another will cry, "Shut your eyes properly." A third, "Your hands are not where they should be." Finally a fourth will knock his feet to make him put them in the prescribed position, namely that of the footprints left on the ground by the Buddha himself. . . . In these prints the two feet are slightly apart and strictly parallel. The candidate perspires freely, while those into whose

[1] Raquez, *op. cit.*, p. 119.
[2] Young, *op. cit.*, p. 257; Raquez, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

fellowship he is to enter smoke cigarettes, and chew betel, lime and areca with scant respect for the divinities of the sanctuary. The abbot [the *upādhyāya*] alone retains a serious aspect.'[1] After this he ties the knot on the neophyte's neck, and the robing follows. In Siam and Laos this takes place in public. Once again, at Luang-Prabang for example, I have been struck by the way in which it is carried out. So too was Raquez, for he says: 'The "ragging" starts again. With a sharp blow one of the monks straightens his [the candidate's] skirt, another his cloak. . . . His fellows mock him.'[2] Young appears to believe that such incidents are normal. Speaking of the robing, he writes: 'This is not at all an easy matter, and he [the novice] is always assisted by some friend who has previously gone through the same ordeal. If the friend gets the robes entangled, as he frequently does, the congregation laughs immoderately at the uncomfortable dilemma in which the candidate is placed. The difficulty is solved by some kindly-disposed priest, who leaves his place and comes to assist in the robing.'[3]

I wish at this point merely to emphasise these points, noted without any preconceived ideas: I shall discuss their significance more fully further on. In the Cambodian ordination, the *upādhyāya* himself trims some of the candidate's nails in a rite which is the complement of the shaving and undressing of the candidate. In almost all parts these operations take place in public.

One detail which might pass unnoticed but which to me is of the greatest significance, has to do with the two ways in which the begging bowl is successively placed. In Cambodia, as we have seen, the candidate appears, as soon as he is dressed, with the bowl hanging from his left shoulder and swinging behind him. He is 'dressed for travelling'. It is only when moving off towards the exit from the nave and beyond the two lines of ordinant monks that he places it in its proper position. After that he is questioned. In Siam the bowl is hung from the candidate's neck as soon as the *upādhyāya* has tied the belt round his neck. But in this case the bowl has been hung on him initially by the two assistants near the

[1] Raquez, *op. cit.*, p. 121. [2] *Ibid.* [3] Young, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

sanctuary door, after the candidate has made a mock exit. It is in this state that he is questioned, admitted and enrolled; only then does he dress. Then, with a fan in his hand and the *bowl hung in the correct position*, the newly ordained monk 'takes refuge' and makes his vows, and the President, declaring him to be definitively admitted, instructs him in the precepts of monastic life.[1] In Laos the assistants hang the bowl from the candidate's neck once he has put on monastic robes and when he has 'moved away' and is standing near the entrance; then they question him. It is only at the time when he is definitively admitted that the candidate places his bowl in the correct position. It will be by no means unprofitable for us to focus our attention on the accessories of ordination, the clothes and the bowl. In fact the wording of the questions that are put invite us to do so, as I indicated when discussing the Cambodian ordination. Mgr. Bigandet has noted that in Burma, immediately after the presentation of the candidate and after his declaration that he takes the *upādhyāya* as master, the assistant asks him if he recognises the bowl and the robes that have been brought, as his own bowl and robes. And our informant explains this question by the story of the monk who, for want of these items, went out completely naked and received alms in his bare hands. When the Buddha heard of this, he ordered that in future no monk should be ordained unless he had previously been questioned about the bowl and robes: 'any disobedience to this injunction,' explains Mgr. Bigandet, 'would entail sin on the assembled fathers.'

In the same ordination ceremony stress is yet again laid on the need to have previously obtained a robe and a bowl; this is at the time when the questions are put to the candidate with regard to his 'identity'.

It is everywhere traditional for the candidate to be taken aside from the assembly before he is questioned. He is reminded that he must speak the *truth*, reply in a clear loud voice and keep to the point: 'This is no longer the time to remain silent and bow your head . . . each member of this assembly has the right to question

[1] *Ibid.*

you and it is your strict duty to give a reply to all questions,' the neophyte is told in Burma.

It would seem that we do not find elsewhere in *theravadin* ritual the Cambodian use of the sacred carpet which covers the hands of both questioner and questioned. We shall, however, see a corresponding rite in the Central-Asian Church.

Except for a few details the content of the set of questions is in all cases the same. In Laos, Siam and Burma the candidate is asked if he is in the power of demons or magicians, and if he is of a sound mind. In Burma the future bonze is asked his name: he replies, 'My name is *Wago*'. Mgr. Bigandet explains that 'Figuratively [a *Wago* is] a vile, unworthy being.'—'What is your master's name?'—'His name is Oupitze [*Upādhyāya*].' The anonymity in the latter case is particularly important, in that it makes it easier to understand the conventional value of the name the candidate assumes for himself. The only other place where this type of question is found is in Ceylon, and we know what close relations it has had with Burma in the past.

We can link to this rite the one reported by Leclère. I am referring, of course, to the part played by the mat or carpet which is placed successively on the tips of the candidate's feet and on those of the abbot who is putting the questions. The fact does not appear to have been commented on elsewhere, but I have seen a corresponding rite in Laos. When the *upādhyāya*'s two assistants question the neophyte, they step on to a very flat, rectangular cushion from which they look down on him. In other pagodas this was replaced by a low carved stand or some sort of bench specially decorated for the occasion.

You will probably remember that in Cambodia, after the robing and the ten cardinal precepts, the future monk, who had squatted at his *upādhyāya*'s feet, moved back towards the entrance, beyond the lines of *saṃgha* monks. It is there that he undergoes the questioning of which we have spoken; after it he comes forward again to be encircled by the monks as the president pronounces his admission. It is at that point that an exact record is made of the time of the ordination. The novice's withdrawal

towards the temple exit is certainly striking and it is faithfully reported by almost all observers. It is indeed of great importance. It is not only mentioned by all *theravadin* rituals, but one text at least, the basis of Mgr. Bigandet's work, specifies the distance to which the neophyte must withdraw, namely twelve cubits.[1] Elsewhere the same author points out that the sanctuary must be at least twelve cubits long.

The practice of noting the time by referring to the position of the sun's shadow is general. Except in Cambodia, however, it does not appear that two distinct 'moments' are taken into account when this calculation is made; it is probable that neither Leclère nor his informants have invented this detail, the significance of which I hope to demonstrate.

The return to the *saṃgha* and the meaningful encircling movement which follows is practised in Laos and Siam; the neophyte comes back among his fellows and is granted admission. Mgr. Bigandet's text is careful to say that the man who is being ordained must at this point move forward twelve cubits, that is to say return over exactly the same path as he has already taken; though we do not know from this description whether the *saṃgha* closes round him or not. Most of the texts are missing from Leclère's inquiries. This explains why he did not speak of the final set phrases by which the monk is everywhere ordained.

After the assistant questioner has declared the candidate to be worthy of admission to the *saṃgha*, he adds that if none of the monks present opposes this verbally he will conclude from the general silence that there is formal and unanimous consent to the ordination. The *upādhyāya* breaks his silence and gives confirmation. Except in Cambodia the new monk then reads or recites the duties that fall on the ordained monk and the essential 'prohibitions'. The first of all duties is, as Mgr. Bigandet tells us, that 'he must gain his subsistence by the labour of his feet'.[2]

The 'confession of sins' which follows immediately afterwards in Cambodia, has been pointed out for Laos by Raquez and for

[1] Mgr. Bigandet, *op. cit.*, ii, 275.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii, 278.

Burma by Appleton.[1] But there is no mention of gifts to the *saṃgha*, of lustration, of 'the water poured out, on the ground', of the offering of rice to the ordinants and of their concluding repast. Neither lustration nor the offering of rice appear to be found, in their Cambodian form, in Siam and Laos. On the other hand stress is laid in these countries on the good wishes that all present come and express to the new monk. In Siam at least, the members of the *saṇgha*, and therefore his seniors, go so far as to render him homage one by one.[2] After this in Laos, the newly made monk leaves the sanctuary and presides over the ceremony in which he is offered gifts. These consist essentially of all the things used by a monk, together with a certain number of specially arranged flowers and vegetables. It is the occasion for an abundance of gifts which often go beyond the recipient's needs. He hides his face behind his fan, whilst the laymen say prayers relating to their gifts. As they do this they touch the gifts with their hands or form a chain by holding on to one another's sash or clothes. The ordained man brings this ceremony to an end by pouring water from a vessel on to the ground, whilst he holds his left hand on his cheek. Some look upon this as a sign that he accepts the gifts, others as a symbol of the defeat of Māra and of the 'calling to witness of the Earth wherein the army of the Evil One was engulfed.' We can see here a final assimilation of the plan of the ordination ceremony to the life of the Buddha. But both explanations are difficult to support, at least in the form stated. In India, in fact, it is normally the giver who pours out water in order to set a seal on his gift. Bimbisara, when giving the *Veluvana* to the *saṃgha* poured water on to the Buddha's hand.[3] If an allusion to the 'invocation of the Earth' is assumed, it must be admitted that this is only approximate. It is true that the interpretations of the ritual in terms of the legend of the Founder that I have already given are also no more than approximations.

[1] Raquez, *op. cit.*, p. 118; Appleton, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

[2] Young, *op. cit.*, p. 260.

[3] Alfred Foucher, *La Vie du Bouddha, d'après les textes et les monuments*, Paris, 1949, p. 222.

Fundamentally it is there that the interest lies, for it is this very ambiguity which leads us towards a better understanding of the rites we are studying, in the light of doctrinal and legendary texts; this understanding will give us a glimpse of what primitive Buddhism may have been.

II

Ordination and the Buddhist Hierarchy in *Theravadin* Communities: II

IN Ceylon the ordination ceremony is divided into two quite distinct parts whose aim, it would seem, is to complement each other. The first part is not, as in Cambodia for example, a shortened version of the second, which in that country appears to be the only one of any consequence. It introduces the candidate into the novitiate by means of the ceremony with which the major ordination begins in almost the whole of the *theravadin* church. In Ceylon the prescriptions of the *Kamma-vācā* are followed. This is a work which, like the *Sambhāva* in Burma, is devoted to the Ordination. It is the text that Dickson followed in his description of the ordination ceremony in Ceylon.[1] The fixing of the time of year for entering the monastery is very precise; it begins with the full moon of *Visākha* (April–May) as in the Cambodian tradition. The ceremonies preceding this entry are ignored—as one might expect in the case of a text drafted by a monk.

The *upādhyāya* chosen by the future novice presides at the ceremony. The candidate 'in the dress of a layman, but having the yellow robes of a priest in his arms,' is accompanied by his 'tutor', Standing up he asks to be admitted. On his knees he begs to be received as a novice: 'Out of compassion for me, lord, take these yellow robes so that I may be ordained, and thus, overcoming all sorrow, attain *nirvāṇa*.' The 'President' takes the bundle of robes, and the candidate repeats his request. The President then gives him his bundle of robes, fastening round his neck the yellow cord which binds them and reciting at the same time the *tacapaṅcaka*.

[1] In *Journ. Roy. As. Soc.*, 1874: cited here after J. G. Jennings, *The Vedāntic Buddhism of the Buddha*, London, 1947, pp. 603 ff.

This 'formula of meditation on the perishable nature of the human body' is as follows: '*Kesā* ("hair of the head"), *lomā* ("hair of the body"), *nakhā* ("nails"), *dantā* ("teeth") *taco* ("skin"),—*taco*, *dantā*, *nakhā*, *lomā*, *kesā*.' The candidate rises and goes to change. As he dresses he says: ' "In wisdom I put on the robes, as a protection against cold, as a protection against heat, as a protection against gadflies and mosquitoes, wind and sun, and the touch of serpents, and to cover nakedness, . . . and not for ornament or show". He returns to the side of his tutor and says: "Lord, forgive me all my faults. Let the merit that I have gained be shared by my lord".' Then he asks him for the Three Refuges and the Precepts. . . . They kneel and the tutor gives him the Three Refuges and the Ten Precepts, which he repeats after him. He adds, ' "I have received these Ten Precepts, Allow me".'—and 'he rises up and makes obeisance to his tutor' saying, ' "Lord, I make obeisance. Forgive me all my faults. May the merit I have gained be shared by my lord. Give me to share in the merit of my lord. It is good, it is good. I share in it." ' So ends the first stage of the ordination ceremony, the *pabbajjā*, the *pravrajyā* (root *VRAJ*, 'to go'), which means, let me remind you, the 'departure'. (By this Buddhists understand 'departure' from the worldly condition).

The ordination is completed by the *upasaṃpadā* (root *PAD*, 'to walk') or 'the arrival at . . .', with a suggestion of subordination. Here it refers to admission to the order of monks. As a preamble to this ordination, of which it forms what seems to be 'an essential part',[1] comes the repetition of 'the whole of the *Pabbajjā* formula'. After this the candidate, 'being duly qualified, returns with his tutor, and goes up to the President of the chapter.' He presents him with an offering, and bows as he asks him for his 'sanction and support'. He kneels down saying: ' "Lord, be my superior." . . . The President says, "It is well." And the candidate replies, "I am content. . . . From this day forth, my lord is my charge. I am charge to my lord." ' Then he 'retires alone to the foot of the assembly, where his alms-bowl is strapped on his

[1] Jennings, *op. cit.*, p. 606, n. 15.

back. His tutor then goes down, takes him by the hand, and brings him back, placing him in front of the President. One of the assembled priests . . . places himself on the other side of the candidate. . . . The tutors say to the assembly, "With your permission", and then proceed to examine the candidate: "Your name is *Nāga*?"—"It is so, lord." "Your superior is the venerable *Tissa*?"—"It is so, lord." The two tutors together say, "Praise be to the Blessed One, the Holy One, to him who has arrived at the knowledge of all truth." Then they recite the following commands of the Buddha: "First it is right to appoint a superior. When the superior has been appointed, it is right to inquire whether the candidate has alms-bowl and robes."—which they do as follows. "Is this your alms-bowl?"—"It is so, lord." "Is this the stole? . . . the upper robe? . . . the under robe?" ' Each time the candidate replies in the affirmative, and is then sent by the tutors to 'the lower corner of the assembly', whilst they remain in front of the President. 'One of them says: "Priests, hear me. The candidate desires ordination under the venerable Tissa. Now is the time of the assembly of priests. I will instruct the candidate." ' After bowing to the President they will put to the candidate the questions we have already met on his physical and social status, and so on. They turn once more towards the assembly and one of them makes the declaration that the neophyte has been duly instructed by him: ' "Now is the time of the assembly of priests. If the candidate is here, it is right to tell him to approach." One of the tutors says, "Come hither." The candidate comes up, and stands between the tutors, makes obeisance to the assembly, and kneels down. "Priests, I ask the assembly for ordination. Priests, have compassion on me and lift me up." . . .' He rises and a tutor once more says to the monks that it is the time of the assembly and that he is going to 'examine the candidate respecting the disqualifications for the priestly office', and turning to address him, he says, ' "Listen, Nāga. This is the time for you to speak the truth, to state what has occurred." '[1] And the 'identity check' that we mentioned above begins again. One of the tutors reports to

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 607.

the assembly that the candidate has satisfied all conditions, that he has 'his alms-bowl and robes complete', and he asks that he be admitted. Three times he proposes to the assembly to accept this request by remaining silent, or to give voice to their objections. If there is silence, he proclaims the candidate ordained 'under his superior the venerable Tissa'. The name Tissa is cited by the tutors no less than nine times—without counting the repetitions of the triple final request—whilst they only pronounce the candidate's name, Nāga, twice, and each time it is when addressing him. The first time is when they ask for confirmation of his name, and the second when he is questioned in a rather peremptory fashion. We shall see later what may have been the intention behind these facts. The ordination ends with a final exhortation addressed by one of the tutors to the whole body of newly ordained men: ' "It is meet," ' he says, ' "to measure the shadow of the sun; . . . to tell the season and the division of the day; . . . to tell all these *together*. It is meet to tell the four requisites of a priest (to beg, to possess no private property, etc. . . .) . . . to tell the four sins forbidden to priests to commit" ' (the sexual act, theft, etc. . . .).

Our sources on Sinhalese ordination are unfortunately those of the *Kammavācā*. I have no doubt that further ethnographic research, or even a re-examination of observations that have already been made, would reveal a great deal more; for it must be admitted that the references to ritual in this text are slight and of less value than those noted elsewhere.[1] The *Kammavācā* is, how-

[1] Since this lecture was delivered, a work by a French traveller in Ceylon has provided me with the following important details. The candidate for ordination 'must be dressed in a special way: his turban must be high and pointed "to resemble a *nāga*'s head" . . . his breeches drawn in at the bottom with fluted lace as in the ceremonial costume of the Kandyan chiefs: there are golden rings on his fingers, precious necklaces of all shapes around his neck, and bracelets on his wrists, as worn by women in ceremonial dress.' (Emile Deschamps, *Au pays des Veddas, Ceylan*, Paris, 1892, p. 130.) A photograph taken by the author shows a Sinhalese dressed up in this way. The fact that the pointed turban is intended to represent a *nāga*'s head is confirmed by the manner in which the Siamese disguise themselves at the Swinging Festival, when they wear on their heads rough effigies of *nāgas*. This head-dress, in its general outline, is identical to the one worn by the

ever, of considerable interest. Like the *Sambhava* of the Burmese—to which it is closely related—it is devoted to Ritual, and like the *Sambhava* it is remarkable for its magnificent exterior, which has not failed to impress Western authors. And yet they know that many Burmese manuscripts, for example, look very valuable. This indicates, in fact, the deep interest felt by the Sinhalese and Burmese in the prescriptions that these works contain. The first chapter of the *Kammavācā* is devoted to the ordination ceremony. Kern affirms that we find in it 'with some insignificant additions . . . the formalities . . . that are described by the holy texts and that are consequently ancient.'[1] It is not possible to subscribe to this opinion after comparing the *Kammavācā* with the scraps of ritual contained in the Canon. It is most fortunate that the compilers of the Vinaya also took care to group the whole body of texts concerning ordination in the first chapter of the *Mahāvagga*. Indeed it is from there that the wrongly neglected Gogerly extracted them to form the matter of a long chapter in his *Ceylon Buddhism* (i, 101–60). It is from there, too, that Mr. Jennings has drawn the material for a discussion of ordination in his admirable and recent work, *The Vedāntic Buddhism of the Buddha*.

The *Mahāvagga* begins with the Enlightenment of the Buddha and the events which ensued. So we come to the first ordination in the Order of the Blessed One, namely that of the two merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika. These merchants were at the same time the first to give alms to him who had only just gained enlightenment. The giving of alms had been suggested to them by a divinity, who said to them: 'At the end of the week the fortunate *Bhagavān* will be at the foot of a tree called *Rājāyatana* at the beginning of his career as a Buddha. Go to him and worship him, offering him gifts of cooked rice and honey. It will be for both of you a source of great and everlasting happiness.' So that the

future bonze in Ceylon. (Cf. photographs in H. G. Quaritch Wales, *Siamese State Ceremonies*, London, 1931, pl. xxxvii, and in Raymond Plion, *Le Siam pittoresque et religieux*, i; *Fêtes et cérémonies siamoises*, Paris, 1935, pl. 25, 26, 27, 29.)

[1] H. Kern, *Histoire du Bouddhisme dans l'Inde*, French translation, Paris, 1903, tome ii, p. 31.

Buddha might receive these gifts, the gods who are guardians of the four cardinal points brought him four crystal bowls. The Blessed One accepted in one of these the offering of the two merchants. According to another version, the Buddha fused the four bowls into a single bowl. The ordination which followed the presentation was very simple. 'Lord,' they said, 'we take refuge in the Blessed One and in his Doctrine. Receive us, O Blessed One, as disciples; from now until the end of our lives we flee towards you, our refuge.' 'After this,' continues the *Mahāvagga*, 'the Buddha thought that, although he had attained to the perfection of wisdom, it would be so difficult for him to be understood that the others would not understand him.' And he held back from a profitless effort. Then the chief of the Brahma world 'kneeling three times, begged him to preach his doctrine,' which some would understand. . . . On the road to Benares, where the Buddha next went to preach, an ascetic, Upaka, asked him what doctrine he professed, in which order he had been a priest, and who was his master. The Buddha said that he had no master, that he was superior to the gods, the most noble and irrefutable, 'the unique and perfect Buddha.' At Benares he met again with the five monks, his former companions, and taught them his doctrine.

Finally, after declaring that he had attained to the state of an omniscient Buddha, superior to the heavenly worlds, he concluded with these words: 'My mind is free and at rest: this is my last birth; henceforward I shall have no other state of existence.' Immediately afterwards one of the five, *Kauṇḍinya*, managed to grasp the doctrine, and everything which caused him pain 'ceased to exist.' And as the Buddha repeated several times, 'Certainly *Kauṇḍinya* understands this . . .', Kauṇḍinya was Aññā Koṇḍañña, Kauṇḍinya 'whose knowledge is perfect.' He was the *first of the Buddha's priests*.

The five priests, 'having accepted Gotama as master', asked to be admitted as priests under his direction. The Buddha accepted saying: 'Come, Bhikkhus; the doctrine that has been revealed is clear. Walk in the path of purity by which all sorrow can be removed.' After this the Buddha explains at length the non-

existence of self and of anything that one might call a soul. By ceasing to be attached to these vain things, one becomes completely free. The five priests at once acted accordingly, and became *arhats*, with the intellectual and material capabilities that go with this state. There were then six arhats in the world.

Later conversions made by the Buddha only took place after sermons on the fundamental and graduated elements of his doctrine. When the Buddha had gathered sixty-one arhats, he sent them far afield to distant parts to bring about conversions in his stead, and authorised them to ordain converts on his behalf. Then he laid down that the candidate, when he had been duly shaved and dressed in yellow, must kneel and say thrice over that he takes the Three Refuges. As conversions took place, the disadvantages of inadequate instruction in the rules of monastic life became apparent, and the Buddha encouraged the grouping together of the spiritual directors and the priests, their disciples, with all the reciprocal rights and duties that this involves. The disciples, in accordance with a prescribed ceremonial, must choose the *upādhyāya* who will thenceforward be their spiritual father and with whom they will live (they are *saddhivihārikas*); then with the supplementary idea of an assembly of monks and the presentation of the man to be ordained by a 'reader', the *upasaṃpadā* replaces the Triple Refuge. Next come all the rules of the full ordination and among them a body of rules relating to the noviciate. These rules were established at the time when Rāhula entered the community of the Buddha, his father, and by order of the latter. On this occasion the Buddha prescribed the Triple Refuge, the Commandments, etc. . . . In the rules of the major ordination one might, among other details, draw attention to the reason given for not disclosing to the candidate until the last moment the four obligations of monastic life, the *nissaya*, the first of which is to beg for one's food. It is said that this is done in order not to discourage the candidate in advance and, in short, 'to take him by surprise' with this last-minute revelation.

From a summary analysis of the first chapter of the Mahāvagga it is therefore clear that its first paragraphs contain a 'historical

record' of the recruitment of the first disciples and of the formalities of their incorporation. This varies from the simple to the complex, from the layman to the priest. Are we dealing here with the work of a scholar or man of letters? Not fundamentally, for on the one hand there is the legendary biography, where in actual fact we find in proper order reference to the two merchants, the five priests, and so on . . . and on the other hand the standard gradations of any religious ordination, which, starting with the profane, lead its subjects by steps of ever increasing difficulty to the most sacred point of consecration. These have been illustrated as elsewhere in Buddhist literature, by anecdotes which, in spite of the poverty of their inspiration and style, are sometimes far from being devoid of interest. But in the venerable and canonical *Mahāvagga*, some of the ritual prescriptions of the *Kammavācā* or the *Sambhava* are often omitted. We shall see that these omissions are not negligible. Let us examine them in the order in which they occur in the ordination ceremony. No mention is made of a special season for entering the monastery; and yet we know that, in general, present-day *theravadin* communities hold their ordinations in the spring or thereabouts. The *Kammavācā* even fixes specific dates for them, namely the full moon of the *Visākha* and the three days of the *uposatha* which follow. This means that the ordination season is open for one month, beginning with the anniversary at one and the same time of the conception or the birth of the Buddha and of his death.[1] Have the communities made innovations on this very important point? If they have, then the change goes very far back; for even though generally confined to one or two seasons of the year, the days and months of the ordination ceremony in the various *theravadin* countries, as we already know, do not always correspond exactly.

Finally and most important, as we shall see, Chinese Buddhism, too, has adopted an ordination season which is more or less identical with that of Cambodia. No one can fail to appreciate the interest of this restriction placed by the churches on the times for

[1] *Ibid.*, ii, 232. The *Lalitavistara* (62) places the conception on the 15th of *Vaiśākha.*

ordination, a restriction so contrary to the generosity attibuted to the Founder, whose community was, in theory, to remain open in every season to all those 'desiring the refuges.' In my view we are concerned here with more than a question of fixing a date by scholarly investigations: we can see ancient links between our ritual and the socio-religious activities wherein Buddhism has its deepest roots. On this subject the rite of attaching the clothes to the neck and hands of the neophyte—a rite performed by his *upādhyāya*—is even more informative. The Buddhist canon does not dwell upon this detail, before which the theology of the pious editors must also have flinched, in spite of the fact that it was on occasion easily satisfied. However, we have seen that, taken as a whole, the various *theravadin* rituals have preserved an account of these rites. With this 'fettering' all our ordinations begin, and the accompanying circumstances complete our understanding of its significance, which we shall study later.

Similarly there is no mention in the Canon of the brutalities practised on the candidates by some of the ordinants. Yet they appeared very offensive to the non-Buddhist witnesses of the ordination, and I have mentioned their comments.

Furthermore, of the fact that ordinants and candidates stand on mats, carpets or stools, that the candidate withdraws during the course of the ceremony, that he returns and is then closely encircled by the *saṃgha*, or of the fact that in the course of the ceremony the begging bowl is hung in different positions; of all these rites, or their equivalents, which are also found in the Northern Churches, there is absolutely no mention in our text. This very multiplicity in the number of extra-canonical observances, whether they have come to us orally or in writing, makes clear the interest surrounding them. The *Kammavācā* has devoted some space to this neglected ritual, and it is plain why one cannot agree with Kern's superficial judgement of this work. To what extent are the oral traditions on ritual practices late, foreign additions, and to what extent do they represent the ceremonial of primitive Buddhism? These are questions to which it will be possible to give a comprehensive answer only after analysing the whole of the

ritual in terms of its mystic value. This value is more clearly apparent in the legendary 'representations' (in the sociological meaning of the term) than in purely doctrinal compositions; these latter often being considerably later in date than the former.

Until now we have been concerned only with entry into the monastic order, and we have seen that, in the *theravadin* communities, it takes the form of an ordination made up of two stages. The second has everywhere assumed greater importance, but the *Kammavācā*, and here it shows its special value, turns our attention to the consecration of the novices. It would be a mistake not to take particular note of this fact. We know that the novitiate is a very serious affair: it can only be entered if certain conditions relating to age and elementary religious knowledge are satisfied. But it is above all in its mystic effects that the novitiate reveals its full value. We may recall that in Cambodia, Siam and Laos the 'merit' attached to embarking on a religious career is transferable to relatives, living or dead. The young novice is kept strictly isolated from the lay community, and especially from women, no matter how closely they are related to him. Except for some details of his clothing, he has the appearance of a fully ordained monk. Moreover, he does not go through a dress rehearsal of his future state, for he is already living the first stage of it, even in the servile role in which he does the material tasks of the monastery, in particular those which concern his own 'master'. All these tasks are sanctified by the detailed approval of the Canon. *A fortiori* the same holds true in respect of the religious teaching and education which he is given. Thus the novice, while playing an important part in the economy of the monastery, is moving towards the superior religious state, that of *bhikṣu*, or 'mendicant'. The novice, in theory, has no right to the *pātra* and it is to his master that the gifts are directed during the morning begging-round. Nor does he possess the other attributes of the *bhikṣu*, such as teaching, and 'saying the law'. Finally, on the occasion of the *uposatha*, he is not allowed to join in the solemn meetings for confession.

The state of fully ordained monk begins with the solemn ceremony, the different phases of which we have examined. Let me

remind you that it consists of a repetition of the ritual in full, beginning with the ritual of the minor ordination in which the novice is consecrated. Once this stage has been completed, progress in the Order will depend primarily on the number of years that have passed since the major ordination: hence the importance, according to certain commentaries, of the precise fixing of the astronomically calculated date, and of the reading of the sundial with which, as you will remember, the central ceremony of the ordination ends. It is usual for every monastery to keep a record of ordinations, with a note of the dates on which they took place. At the end of ten years a monk generally acquires the requisite rank in order to figure among the ordinants, but the length of this period may vary. In the same way it is necessary to have been a monk for a certain number of years in order to have the right to be the master of a disciple. In Burma the rank of *thera* is reached at the end of ten years of seniority. Then one can direct a monastery or preside at an ordination. The functions of abbot and those of general superior are normally fulfilled by persons chosen by the laity. Mgr. Bigandet states that the abbot 'is, in most instances, the nominee of the individual who has built the monastery, and who is invested with a kind of right of patronage to appoint whom he likes to be the head of the house he has erected.'[1] I have noted similar customs in Laos, although up to a certain point the benefactor of the monastery takes into account in such cases the wishes of both the other laymen of the parish and those monks who would come under the direction of the new abbot. As in Laos, the Burmese King could nominate his own choice as general superior of the order. In Burma it was even a custom for each king, on his accession to the throne, to confer 'the highest dignity of the order [of monks] on his favourite Phongyie,' who had generally been 'the King's instructor when he was as yet a youth.'[2] In Laos the induction in the highest rank is marked by a solemn ceremony.[3] At Luangprabang, where it

[1] *The Life or Legend of Gaudama*, ii, 266. [2] *Ibid.*, ii, 268.

[3] According to an account which the author, Mlle. S. Karpelès, was kind enough to lend me in manuscript.

takes place by order of the King, it consists essentially of a solemn shower-bath for the new *săt'th'u* (Skt. *sādhu*) or 'saint'. Before the entrance of the sanctuary a bath cabin is erected. Above it is the customary gutter in the form of a *nāga-makara*. Inside, a bronze gong 'symbolises the renown enjoyed by the priest, and a pair of elephant tusks the perfection of the priest's conduct, flawless as the ivory of the tusks.' He will sit on them during his shower. Along the path joining the cabin and the sanctuary a 'dozen little boys stand guard: some hold in their hands screens on which are depicted Brahmā, Indra, the four guardians of the universe, and other divinities who travelled to be present at the *abhiṣeka* of Śāriputra; the others brandish sacred daggers called *mit kut*, which have flame-shaped blades and are identical with the Javanese kris[1] . . . which symbolises the knowledge acquired by the venerable one and has the power of destroying vices and warding off evil spirits.' On the path itself 'the faithful, in order to obtain merit, make a carpet with their white sashes . . . which in this case represent their bodies.' Presently the new *săt'th'u* will walk on them, and in so doing will recall the action of the Buddha who, when he was Sumedha, asked the Buddha *Dīpankara* to step on his body.

Before his baptism the priest 'cleans his teeth and has himself shaved.' Then the perfumed water is poured on him, first by his fellow monks and then by the laymen. Three trays of offerings are presented to him. On one are displayed the 'celestial screens' and a *mit kut* dagger; the second bears the customary ritual offerings (trumpets, candles, etc. . . .); and on the third are carried the monk's three garments into which he changes, whilst an *ačar* (*ācārya*) takes off his soaked clothing. The new *săt'th'u* will then tread the path covered with sashes, but as a 'blind man', letting himself be led to the sanctuary while holding the sash or bamboo-cane held out to him by the abbot. 'In thought he (thus) goes over the eight-fold sacred road in order to follow the same sacred

[1] Laot. *mit*, 'knife, dagger'; Laot. *kut*, 'diamond, precious' by assimilation to the *vajra*; or perhaps Laot. *k'ut*, 'Garuḍa', by allusion to the handle of the *kris*, generally in the form of a Garuḍa?

path as his elders.' Relations, friends, believers throw small coins to the children in the courtyard of the pagoda, and then lay their offerings before the newly elevated man. There follows the proclamation of his new title and the merit solicited for him.

At Xiang Khoang (Laos) Raquez witnessed an ordination which, though far less solemn, certainly conferred quite a high rank in the religious hierarchy. He begins by describing the solemn procession of senior bonzes with which the ceremony opens. This procession goes with great pomp to fetch the monk who is to be promoted. 'The chief consecrator' is borne on a sort of wooden chair, then come the musicians, the singers, the local dignitaries, the men of the village and, distinctly apart from the others, the women. The man is bathed and then dressed while the crowd hastens to collect the liquid that has been poured down, even 'by wringing out the clothes left behind by the neophyte.' 'The women,' says Raquez, 'go down on their knees in a row. They lay their silken sashes on the path the priests will tread. Prostrate, they now offer the flowers and candles which the bonzes collect as they pass by.'[1] Then, in the sanctuary begins the 'colloquy' between the consecrator and the monk. The ceremony took place at the beginning of June, that is to say a little before the season of the *varṣa*.

It is easy to see what distinguishes these two Laotian ceremonies from the others already described. They take place almost exclusively within the *saṃgha*. In one, the tumultuous lay procession of Siddhārtha has given way to the more majestic and calm procession of the ordinant monks. In the other the abbot becomes the guide of the 'blind man' and leads him to the highest destiny a monk can hope to attain to in his lifetime. In each of the ceremonies the member elect walks on a cloth-covered way. He and his are then at the highest point of their deification, for the greatest spiritual good of the secular audience which has participated materially in the ceremony. By their sashes on which the holy feet tread on the way towards the apotheosis, by touching the water charged with the effluvium of the holy man, by their

[1] Raquez, *op. cit.*, p. 392.

generous gifts, the laymen try their best to profit from the immeasurable 'merit' that the newly promoted man is in the process of acquiring.

Nevertheless, all of this would be quite commonplace, and redeemed only by the picturesqueness of the ceremonial, if we did not have to take into consideration the symbolism of certain rites, and if this symbolism were not strangely at odds with the Buddhist doctrine when stripped of inessentials—that is to say, the Buddhist doctrine as it is assumed to have been in its beginnings. The legacy of Aryan or non-Aryan influence, popular trends, the growth of a monastic system: all this does not explain how the Buddhist community could so soon become unfaithful to what are thought to be the principles of the Buddha; for this happened even in the lifetime of some of the first disciples, as my fourth lecture will show. Before this we shall examine the rites and ceremonies connected with entry into and progression through the monastic order as they are found in the traditions of the Buddhist communities which have so greatly prospered north of the Himalayas.

III

'The March towards the light' among the Northern Buddhists

ACCORDING to the Sarvāstivāda *Vinaya* which was translated into Chinese in the fifth century, a layman could enter the Order not simply in a non-permanent fashion—which would take us back to southern practices—but also in a thoroughly and intentionally temporary fashion. In fact a layman could for half a day or a night in each month belong to the community of the monks, and would in this case observe eight of the ten essential precepts. The precepts omitted concerned fasting and the wearing of jewels. The ceremony consisted of 'giving one's faith to the Buddha, to the law and to the community three times over. Sins were confessed in accordance with a stereotyped model, and pardon was asked of the Buddha, the saints, and one's master. After forgiveness had been granted, one promised to stay in the monastery and respect the Eight Precepts, to which one spontaneously added the ninth. This one did three times over and concluded by indicating the aim one had in view: 'I offer this merit, not so that I may be reborn as king on earth or *deva* in the heavens of Indra or Brahmā, but in order to be delivered from suffering (*saṃsāra*), to move forwards into the way of the Four Degrees of Deliverance, to achieve the aim of Buddhist observance (the state of arhat, which at death is followed by *nirvāṇa*).'[1]

The classic rules for the reception of novices and monks of the vinaya of the Dharmaguptas, which is related to the *Theravada*, closely resemble the rules of the Mahāvagga. Nevertheless, some details are of great value to us. The master of ceremonies presents

[1] Léon Wieger, *Vinaya, monachisme et discipline, Hînayâna, Véhicule inférieur*, Reprint, Paris, 1951, pp. 149 ff. *Saṃsāra* is, properly, the 'current (of existences)' the source of the troubles of mankind.

the candidate to the *saṃgha* so that the sponsor chosen may shave off his hair. When this is done and the chapter has given its consent for the novice to 'leave his family,' 'the master picked to instruct the novice makes him bare his right arm and shoulder, take off his shoes, bend his right knee and raise his joined hands.' The novice 'gives his faith' to the Buddha, the Law and the Community. 'At the Buddha's behest, I acknowledge so-and-so as my sponsor. I hold in veneration He who came, the True One, and all those who have received enlightenment.' He pronounces these words three times and then, when the words have 'had their effect', he repeats them three more times, but in the past tense: ' . . . I have given my faith . . . I have left . . .'

Then one by one the Ten Precepts are proposed to him by the master and accepted. '. . . Henceforward your duty is to honour the Three Treasures (the Buddha, etc. . . .) and to cause them to be honoured. You must apply yourself to . . . controlling your thoughts, your words, your actions. You must meditate, study and do your share of the communal tasks.'

When he is received *as a monk*,[1] the novice speaks directly to his sponsor, asking him to fulfil this function. After being accepted the candidate is 'taken out of sight and hearing.' The instructor is then chosen by the chapter, and goes to question the candidate. Even before putting to the candidate the usual questions, in answer to which he must reply frankly 'Yes' or 'No' and 'speak the truth openly', the instructor asks if he possesses the three garments and the begging bowl. 'When the novice has displayed these four articles that must be in the possession of every monk,' the real questioning begins. When it is over, the instructor enjoins him to reply in the same way to the community 'and not otherwise.'

After this the instructor returns to the community and asks if it will allow the candidate to make his request. He calls out to the candidate, 'Come,' and the candidate comes and hands his clothes and bowl to the master of ceremonies, who 'makes him bow down respectfully before the chapter. Then, accompanied by the

[1] Wieger, *op. cit.*, pp. 195 ff.

master of ceremonies and the instructor, and with his right knee on the ground, his right shoulder bare, his two arms stretched out towards the monks,' the candidate addresses the *saṃgha* three times in this way: '. . . I "so-and-so" have asked of my sponsor "so-and-so" to be admitted as a monk. I now ask the Order to consent to my withdrawal from the world, in deference to the wish of my sponsor "so-and-so" and as an act of charity towards me.'

The master of ceremonies asks the *saṃgha* to give its authorisation for the candidate to be questioned again, this time in the presence of the assembly. When this has been done, he puts to the community, three times, the question of the candidate's admission and concludes from the general silence that they approve.

The ordination ceremony ends with the 'four prohibitions', the 'four foundation stones' or obligations of the *bhikṣu*'s life. The master of ceremonies reminds the new monk of these and adds 'if you behave well, it will be to your advantage. Render to your sponsor, your master, and the community all that you owe them according to the Rule. Be obedient to their instructions. . . .' Then in a few words he outlines the future tasks of the monk. In case of doubt or difficulty, 'turn to your sponsor and your master,' he says, as he tells him to withdraw.

The roles of the three principal ordinants, the *upādhyāya*, the *ācārya* and the master of ceremonies (who is the equivalent of the abbot in lands further to the south), is clearer here than in the *theravadin* canon. The first one is chosen by the candidate, whom he shaves. After this he presides at the ceremony, in which he plays an almost silent part. The second (the *ācārya*), who is chosen by the *saṃgha*, questions the candidate at length and apart from the others. This is when the candidate has moved away from the circle of ordinants, and it is the *ācārya* who leads him back to them. The master of ceremonies plays the same part when the candidate is in the midst of the ordinants; in addition he will have him admitted to the *saṃgha* and acquaint him with the major prohibitions and obligations of monastic life. The first of these three ordinants is a person from outside the *saṃgha* who vouches for

the candidate. The second is the specially appointed representative of the community, and he interviews the candidate in order to ascertain whether he is properly prepared. The third, who is an administrator of the *saṃgha*, speaks only on behalf of the assembly and in its presence. As a proof that he has no special significance as an individual we may note what he says to the candidate when he urges him to behave well: '. . . Render to your sponsor, your master, and the community what you owe them according to the Rule. . . .' In this way he undoubtedly indicates clearly the three main functional organs of the ordination. The text that we have just examined was translated into Chinese in the middle of the third century of our era. This comparative antiquity, along with its clear presentation of some details of the ritual give it exceptional value, even though it contains much that is dull. It allows us, moreover, to examine *mahāyāna* ritual and gives us a clearer picture of its distinctive features and general arrangement. But we should remember that we are concerned here with a text, whilst in other cases we have been dealing with oral traditions current in our own time; in this way we shall be on our guard against *a silentio* arguments.

In every Mongolian or Tibetan family it is expected that at least one son will be a *lama*, even though this state may not be permanent. In Eastern and Western Tibet it is customary for this to be the eldest son.[1] The hierarchy of the Yellow Church is complex, as many as eleven grades being recognised. The first is attained during a ceremony of an intimate sort which is often held in a tent.[2] If a man does not progress beyond this point, his status is that of *upāsaka*, or lay Buddhist, and from time to time he will renew his vows, for the passage of time limits their effect. However, with the help of the *baksi*, or preceptor, and after ordination, it is possible to acquire the status of minor priest. In order to move beyond this, one must begin as a novice and work one's way up. No child of less than eight years of age can

[1] Emil Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, Leipzig, 1863, p. 161.

[2] The details which follow on the Mongolian Church are taken from R. Bleichsteiner's *L'Eglise Jaune*, Paris, 1937, pp. 167 ff.

become a novice. Forty questions are put to him (as compared with thirteen in Ceylon) on his physical state, etc. . . . and on this occasion he receives his brown-coloured monk's robes and his begging bowl, his bedding, his filter and a new name. Then he is bathed, his hair is cut, and the assembly of monks offers him its congratulations. The Mongolian family afterwards take back their son and make a special fuss of him. If he is rich, he lives in his own personal tent, and has a master of his own when he returns to the monastery. A poor man becomes his master's servant and is often ill-treated by him to the point of cruelty. The course of instruction, which lasts for some years, is itself very rigorous, and inhuman punishments are meted out for serious faults. At the end of these preliminary studies, and after an examination, the novice joins in the normal daily life and can take part in its customary rites. If the novice perseveres with his religious studies, he can attain the next rank, corresponding to that of 'deacon'. For this promotion the minimum age is fifteen, but the necessary amount of study is so great that this rank can not be acquired before the age of twenty-five or even thirty. The *upādhyāya* must vouch for the standard reached by his pupil, who will then have to repeat the thirty-six rules of his new vows.[1] He will be consecrated by the president of the ceremony after proclaiming his faith in the Buddha, the 'most exalted of men; in the holy Doctrine . . . the highest of virtues'; in the Community, 'the most exalted of assemblies'. The consecrator then flicks his fingers in the air and says: 'Ha'; the *lamas reply*: 'The image of consecration in the rank of *getsoul* (deacon) is true,' whilst an astronomer lama 'measures the sun's shadow' in order to determine the precise moment of the solemn act. Finally the newcomer affirms that he will submit to the monastic discipline and that he will perfect himself under his master's guidance. From this time onwards the colour of his clothing will be red.

From the age of twenty or twenty-five, the deacon can, if he has the required qualifications, be ordained *gelong*, which corre-

[1] Sixty rules in I. P. Minayeff, *Recherches sur le Bouddhisme*, French translation by Assier de Pompignan, Paris, 1894, p. 315.

sponds to *bhikṣu*. On this occasion he is given new clothes, begging bowl and rug. He takes his place as the most junior of the *gelongs* after bowing to the Buddha and the *lamas* present, and strewing flowers. After he has been robed, a lama makes him sit beside him and puts to him the usual questions; this interrogation is repeated publicly, and is followed by the same ceremony of consecration as for the preceding grade, with the flick of the fingers, the sun-dial, etc. . . . In conclusion the choir of *lamas* says, 'He has now become a *gelong*.' From now on he must observe two hundred and fifty-three rules.

In the past, for forty-nine days and forty-nine nights, the new monk had to 'give himself up to meditation, *wearing all his ornaments*, either in the temple or in a place of solitude.' Today, almost immediately after being ordained, the *gelong* goes to his home, changes his yellow-coloured clothes and, after a few hours, receives anyone who wishes to offer his congratulations and 'commend himself to him.'

Minayeff, basing his remarks on Mgr. Nil's work, gives the following details concerning these three degrees of ordination among the Mongolians.[1] The novitiate is conferred by an abbot assisted by one or two more *gelongs*. The ordinant passes over his shoulder a kind of long stole and reads '*a sort of creed*'. Led by his *upādhyāya* the postulant brings him 'a propitiatory offering'. The ordinant takes from it a few grains and 'throws them in the air as a token offering to the gods.' The candidate bows down before the statues, the books and the ordinant, and then kneels. He is given a bowl, a string of beads and a belt, 'the usual accessories' of *upāsaka* and novices. As soon as he has touched these objects, the presiding abbot covers the outstretched hand of the novice with his stole and listens to the vows made by the postulant. 'Then the holy belt is put on him' and the hair that was left in the earlier tonsures, during his preparatory period of training, is shaved off. The ceremony for the consecration of an *upāsaka* differs in one respect only: the hair is simply shortened, and not shaved.

The higher grade is acquired in the same way, but in a different

[1] Minayeff, *op. cit.*, pp. 313 ff.

setting, for it takes place in the sanctuary itself and necessitates the presence of at least five *gelongs* and an abbot.

Before being ordained *gelong*, the candidate must *confess his sins* to the *upādhyāya*.[1] This ordination is presided over by a *person of higher rank than the abbot*, who is surrounded by a 'crowd of *lamas*' in full dress. Before the President are a small bell, a bowl, a staff, a drum, etc. . . . , and hanging nearby the religious robes for the postulants, who are all introduced together, 'even if there are several dozens of them.' After bowing down, listening to 'the teaching of the faith,' making propitiatory offerings, 'they *undress completely*.' Naked, they are *led by the upādhyāya* to bow before the statues, books and president. They *take the first article of clothing* and *bow again*, repeating this every time they take up a fresh object. At the same time they are 'instructed concerning the *secret significance* of each object.' Whilst the vows are being pronounced, 'a *thank-offering*' is made. As they go out, in line and carrying their books, the new gelongs *give their blessing to everyone they meet*.

Ranks higher than those of the *gelongs* (*bhikṣu*) are conferred by the higher political authorities, but, as in southern Asia, they must take the advice or at least acquaint themselves with the wishes of the monks and parishioners directly concerned. In the majority of cases the preponderant influence of the public authorities is exerted directly and by the usual means. The highest and also the most carefully supervised position in the sacerdotal hierarchy of lamaism is the one whose holder is popularly referred to as the 'living Buddha'. It is generally thought to be of relatively recent date (fifteenth century) and inspired by the technique of the shamans, but it is truly indicative of a state of mind that one can trace without difficulty in India from the time of Primitive Buddhism onwards. It can also be seen in brahmanical ideas on royalty. Between this supreme position and that of the ordinary monk, there are at least three intermediate ranks, including those who are 'subject to the vow of the bodhisattvas' and the 'masters of the Tantras'. 'The vows of the latter are kept strictly secret from

[1] Cf. Ceylon, where confession also precedes the major ordination.

those who are not initiated.'[1] In China, too, we shall find the rites by which it is possible to reach the category of being 'subject to the vow of the bodhisattvas.'

The vows that Buddhists of the four castes must take between their seventh and twelfth year are also a feature of Nepalese Buddhism. Both men and women are in theory bound by this rule. This entry into the state of catechumen proceeds in the same way as elsewhere: the candidate takes refuge in the Three Jewels and in his preceptor, at whose feet he falls and makes offerings; crouching on his heels or with one knee on the ground, he asks him for the Three Refuges and the Ten Commandments. In honour of the Triratna and of his master he has previously traced a *maṇḍala* and made the 'five offerings' to the Buddha. The preceptor then tells him the words he must say three times over and which are simply a request addressed to his master that he may gain the Triple Refuge.[2] I have nevertheless picked out from the normal type of request two sets of details which are of interest to us: 'I, so-and-so,' says the layman, 'from this day until the *moment when I shall sit on the seat that is beneath the Bodhi Tree*, shall take refuge in the Buddha, the lord who knows all and sees all, who fears no enemy, the great being whose body is invulnerable and exalted, the greatest among men; I shall take refuge in the Law, . . . in the *Saṃgha* . . .' The two latter 'Jewels' are only described in a very ordinary fashion in comparison with the precise titles bestowed on the Buddha, the *Mahāpuruṣa*.

After the Ten Commandments, the layman receives the Five Abstentions, which, with the single exception of drunkenness, had been mentioned in the commandments. The hair of the layman is not shaved at that juncture, but later on in the ordination. The sequence of events is as follows: 1) the candidate, in the midst of the assembled *saṃgha*, worships the *caitya* and traces a *maṇḍala* in front of his preceptor; 2) sitting on his heels and with his hands together, he promises to observe the Five Abstentions; 3) he asks for an *ācārya* and an *upādhyāya*; 4) his head is shaved except for a tuft of hair which the master shaves off only

[1] Bleichsteiner, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

[2] Minayeff, *op. cit.*, pp. 296 ff.

after he has clearly declared his intention of 'renouncing the world'; 5) the master washes him with the 'water of the Four Seas' and dresses him in yellow; 6) the neophyte must say that he renounces 'the marks of this world' and accepts the marks of one who has renounced the world; 7) his lay name is replaced by a religious name; 8) he repeats three times the 'Three Refuges' and the Ten Commandments; 9) he must ask for a *pātra*, monastic dress, a master and a preceptor. Just as in Lamaism, Nepalese Buddhism has novices, deacons and monks.

We have already described the Chinese ordination ceremony, basing our remarks on the study of a ritual closely related to the *theravada* ritual. Let us now see what we can learn from the rules followed by the *Mahāyāna* sects. The observations made more than a century ago by the 'Russian Religious Mission' in Peking provide us with the following account of the subject under discussion.[1] Buddhist society is made up of consecrated laymen and monks. The degree of solemnity of a layman's vows depends on the number of candles burnt, the number of brethren invited and on the banquet. The layman is instructed in a cell by a *heshan*, an *upādhyāya*, without whose help it is not possible for him to reach successively 'the Three States of Perfection,' that is to say the states of *arhat*, bodhisattva and Buddha, 'whose meaning he has understood.' The layman goes to the temple with two supervisors and under their guidance puts the candles in position and bows three times before each image of the Buddha and bodhisattvas. Then he kneels before the central Buddha where, at the command of the *heshan*, he makes a 'vow to carry out certain duties on certain days (generally those of the *uposatha*) and asks the Buddha to hear his vow. After this, relations between *upādhyāya* and layman are almost completely severed.' The layman, may or may not keep his vows; he has been warned once and for all of the consequences of breaking them, and no one can remind him of them.

The members of the religious community are grouped into five classes, of which three are made up of women. These may be

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 299 ff.

young girls, widows and spinsters who are novices 'engaged in study', or nuns. The other two classes are made up of the young male novices and the monks.

Except for the previous consent of the parents, without which no one can be ordained, there are none of the social qualifications of an Indian ordination. The season for taking vows lasts four months, from the fifteenth day of the fourth moon to the fifteenth day of the eighth moon (between the end of spring and the early summer). There is a large number of candidates, often more than a hundred, and all are lodged by the temple, along with monks who have come from neighbouring temples. As a result preparations take a long time, 'sometimes as much as ten years,' and even this may be with the help of other temples. Then comes the announcement of the taking of vows, 'the feast to the glory of the Doctrine, as Buddhists call it.'

When they come to be ordained, novices have as a rule already lived in the temple since their early childhood. They are the 'sons' of the master who has adopted or bought them, and these monastic 'families' keep a careful record of their genealogy. From their 'fathers' the sons learn to read and write, and also receive from them the 'rudiments' of religious knowledge. They also act as servants, and as in the old Chinese system of education, the 'fathers' are by no means gentle. The head of the monastery presides over the admission of novices. The whole assembly bows to him, and the leader of the novices, kneeling in front of his fellows, asks that they may be taken into protection and delivered 'from bonds, passions, darkness of the soul, and that they may receive the teaching of true holiness.' There follows an address by the superior, who ends by calling for a promise to act in accordance with the doctrine; this promise is made. The superior then gives notice to the candidates that a preceptor will inspect their robes and begging bowls, and that a secretary will examine their past life. If everything is in order, they will then pronounce their ten vows, the first step towards ordination as a *bhikṣu*. Everyone then withdraws. The superior himself inspects the clothing and bowls, and shortly afterwards the postulants return, 'each carrying his

robe and his bowl.' These they place on large tables which have been made ready for this purpose and near which the candidates now line up. When the whole assembly is in position, the preceptor comes in, sits down and delivers a speech. After this he gets up saying that he is going to 'inspect each man's robe and bowl.' Having done this he sits down once more, saying that he is satisfied. He then promises his good will, but reminds the candidates that the secretary 'intends, this night, to scrutinise your past life.' The assembly again breaks up, they all accompany the preceptor to his lodging, and it is not until night-fall that they return. By then the appearance of the hall has 'completely changed.' The principal seat is at the far end; behind a small table and a chair 'hundreds of candles give forth a blinding light, and clouds of perfumed smoke' rise before the Buddha. 'Buddhists claim,' says Minayeff, 'that the splendour of the hall has a great influence on the sincerity of the conversions.' They do not, however, delude themselves as to the effectiveness of this method, since 'the ceremony hardly ever ends without the help of the *explanatory stick*, a yard and a half in length. This stick, which is flat and made of hard wood, is inscribed with two characters, meaning 'explanation' and 'return to the order of the law'.[1] When all others are present, the secretary in his turn arrives. He sits down and makes a speech in which he enumerates among other things the 'Seven Crimes', the 'Ten Vices', and the 'Four Deadly Sins'. He concludes by adjuring the candidates to think deeply, to call to mind all their past life, and reveal to him even their smallest failings, lest they pronounce their vows in vain.

The neophytes go out and come back in two or three files—led by the supervisors. The secretary questions the whole group at length, after which they go to the temple to do the penance prescribed. On their return the secretary recommends that they 'concentrate on the Three Jewels' and that they sing with him some 'purifying verses'. These words refer to a quatrain in which repentance is expressed 'before the face of the Buddha for all past mistakes including those made even before one's present rebirth.'

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

Then the secretary adjourns the assembly, recommending to the future novices the study of the catechism which concerns them. The vows referring to the 'Ten Observances or Abstentions' are made in the month which follows. If, meanwhile, it is discovered that a candidate is guilty of a sin, he must purify himself. The meeting is a solemn one. The postulants take an oath to belong body and soul to the Three Jewels. After this the *heshan* repeats the Ten Observances three times. Each novice is then dressed in one robe made up of five separate pieces and another of seven. There follows a speech given by the *heshan*, and all join in singing. When all have bowed to the *heshan*, he is escorted to his lodging and the meeting breaks up.

The novice now prepares himself for the next rank. He learns once again with 'further ramifications' what he has already learned. To the manner of behaviour is now added *instruction in the purpose and meaning* 'of all these things.' The novices are divided 'into squads, into companies,' with special supervisors who make the novices repeat what concerns 'outer behaviour and the ways of conforming to Buddhist prescriptions.' These repetitions last at least three days, and much longer if necessary. A report of these proceedings is made to the *heshan*, whom the novices ask to instruct them so that they may take their vows as *bhikṣu*. After the *heshan* has given his consent, the supervisors and novices go to the secretary, and then to the preceptor for confession and examination of progress made 'in knowledge of external behaviour.' The preceptor takes his seat in the ceremonial hall and explains 'the colour, name and meaning of the robes; the shape, capacity and substance of the *pātra*, and the origin and customary use of these objects.'

After sunset, on the same day and in the same place, the novices confess their sins to the secretary, who asks questions on the rules for novices only and also imposes penances. In the case of sins of a serious nature, the matter is referred to the *heshan*.

The vows are pronounced in a *special hall*, *detached* from the rest; in it there is only a *dais* or *platform* of wood or stone: there must be no other object in the hall, which is *never opened except for this ceremony*.

On the appointed day, the novices, under the guidance of the supervisors, ask the *heshan*, the secretary, the preceptor and seven other monks, who are there as 'witnesses', to mount the platform and accept their vows. This total of ten people may be reduced to four. Whatever the number fixed upon, it must be 'complete' at the time of the ceremony. In all Buddhist ritual, stress is laid on the need for this. The request is made three times to each of these persons and is accompanied with bows 'and even with tears'. Then the *heshan* gets up and all intone after him, 'I worship the Buddha Śākya-Muni,' while the bells of the temple ring and the drums resound. Continuing their singing, they walk solemnly towards the platform. When they reach it, everything stops, while the song of the supervisors rises in honour of Āryadeva, the protector of Buddhism.

Next the ten ordinants and one of the supervisors do three *pradakṣiṇā* round the platform. Then the *heshan* makes a speech which ends with these words: 'In accordance with custom, we must above all address our prayers to the Three Jewels and to the countless throng of spirits; let each one of you say his name and sing after me.' The names are spoken, while the *heshan* gets up from his seat, takes some artificial flowers and, on a sign from the supervisor,[1] sings four verses, which are 'invocations to the four perfect things' and which must be carefully pronounced. These verses are sung when the vows for the novitiate are taken. Each verse is repeated three times, and each time all bow down. The atmosphere becomes tense, and all present are gripped by it. Then the *heshan*, who directs the whole ceremony, gives a sign to all those who are not on the platform to leave. The ordinants then choose the preceptors 'with the approval of the seven venerable "witnesses", who represent the community of monks.'

A preceptor 'withdraws into a *secret room* near the hall.' The novices are taken there in groups of three by their supervisors, who then leave.

[1] This supervisor, *Wei-na*, is the same as the one who directs the young novices in such a rough manner.

'The questions and explanations of the preceptors are like those described in the Pali canon.' The interrogation is therefore the one that we have already discussed in some detail. A report is made to the ordinants by the preceptor who then makes a sign to the postulants to return to the hall. The preceptor leads them up on to the platform, where they kneel down and three times humbly beg the ordinants to have the kindness and compassion to let them take their vows as *bhikṣu*. The secretary then submits the novices publicly to the same interrogation which has taken place in private. The *heshan* makes a speech to help prepare the novices for their vows; and the secretary, *turning 'towards the representatives of the community*,' asks them: 'Do you consent to such and such persons pronouncing their vows at the hands of such and such a *heshan*?' After the question has been put three times the members of the community at last reply: 'It is done.' The secretary then concludes that ordination has been received. 'Meanwhile, a supervisor concentrates his attention on the clock and notes the minute, the very second, when the sound of the secretary's last word dies away. It is at this vital moment that Buddhists are required each year to bring a candle to their *heshan* and to come and pay their respects to his assistants; it is from this moment that they count the years of their lives, or rather of their monastic lives.'

Before stepping down from the platform the newly ordained men hear one of the ordinants recommend them to follow the Four Great Observances and the rules of monastic life. After making obeisance *the ordained men then leave* for the sanctuary where they will worship the Buddha and repeat to him the oaths and vows they have taken, *until such time as they are summoned back to the hall. They again mount the platform* and sing the praises of the Buddha. This is an indication that they are now full members of the *saṃgha*. They may go where they please. These vows lead to the state of *arhat*, 'almost to *nirvāṇa*'. *Nirvāṇa* itself 'is attained only by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.'

For a description of the 'consecration of the bodhisattvas' we shall turn to a distinguished observer of Chinese Buddhism, Karl

Reichelt.[1] But first of all we must consider a number of important facts given by this writer on features of the ordination ceremony in China. Certain Chinese monasteries have made a name for themselves as 'platforms of ordination.' The expenses of the ordination, which are considerable, are sometimes met by the temple, sometimes by the novices' masters, more often by both at once. The preliminary course of instruction is very severe; not only is the programme of work very heavy and planned, so to speak, down to the last minute, but, Reichelt tells us, numerous blows form a part of this teaching. In some monasteries, and they are among the most famous, 'it is a definite rule . . . that *everybody has to be disciplined*, for only in this way is it possible to attain to that calm of heart, discipline, and submission which are so important for Buddhist monks.' Not only is this harsh treatment meted out to the lazy and the dull, but the best also receive their share of blows. Many children are unable to endure the pain and hardship their studies involve, and they run away.

For Reichelt the chief roles in the ordination ceremony are limited to those of the 'confessor', the 'examiner' and seven monks acting as 'witnesses'.

Nowadays the three degrees of ordination are attained within the space of two or three weeks, and the date is widely publicised in advance. The entry into the body of the Buddhist Church, which is sought by future novices and laymen alike, is a ceremony which takes place not in the temple, but in the reception room of the abbot of the monastery. The novices arrive in procession, led by the two ablest, who will throughout the ceremonies play the part taken elsewhere, as we have already seen, by the supervisors. The candidates ask permission to enter the community and promise to keep the five great commandments, which are concerned with the Prohibitions. The abbot presides, with the 'confessor' and the 'examiner' as assessors and the other seven monks as witnesses. The novitiate, which is the true entry into the *saṃgha* is conferred on the threshold of the temple. The abbot,

[1] K. L. Reichelt, *Truth and tradition in Chinese Buddhism: a study of Chinese Mahâyâna Buddhism*, English translation, Shanghai, 1927, pp. 228 ff.

with his assistants, the 'elders' and the 'witnesses', sits at the entrance of the sanctuary, whilst the neophytes stand facing them in the open courtyard. Reichelt notes that the ceremony is 'extremely lengthy'. It includes what he describes as 'an enormously long mass-litany' and various questions; and to the Five Great Prohibitions previously pronounced are added the remaining five.

The novices reply in unison to the abbot's questions and remain on their knees for as long as four hours even in cold weather, while the two hundred and fifty rules of the *prātimokṣa* are read and assented to. Then the 'assistants' walk round the neophytes and shave off the small tuft of hair which was left on their heads. Bundles of clothing and accessories are carried in. Among them are the 'kneeling rug which is to be used on solemn occasions, and the begging bowl, which symbolizes the complete break with the world.' Everything is touched by the abbot and his assistants and a sort of 'benediction' is then chanted. 'One of the assistants then goes round the circle of those kneeling, lightly touching the new begging gown, the long folded rug, and the little brown bowl of each one, and pronounces the last blessing over them. . . . The whole closes with a feast.'

Six to ten days later the novices will become *bhikṣu* or *arhat*, 'which means,' Reichelt explains, 'one who is completely holy.' 'Clothes have to be changed from top to toe and all must bathe. Furthermore, all must go to confession and be absolved. In a *quiet, secluded room a high platform* is erected.' The three or four 'famous places of ordination have imposing granite platforms of enormous size and with fine decorations. Even in the common monasteries, care is taken to give solemnity and dignity to the act, and to all arrangements which are connected with these platforms. One feels,' Reichelt adds, 'that here one is standing at the entrance to the real sanctuary of Buddhism.' Reichelt was allowed, as a special privilege, to be present for a few moments at this ceremony which, according to him, *no spectator is normally allowed to witness*. He tells us that its 'quiet solemnity . . . has no parallel in the usual Buddhist worship.'[1]

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

'The platform was covered with the finest carpets and beautiful draperies hung round it. The three elders, dressed in their best garments, sat like living Buddhas, with their feet drawn up under them, on cushions right in front of the entrance. Along the sides the seven witnesses sat in the same manner. The oldest legitimate head of the monastery sat with the elders in the seat of the abbot. The abbot himself was meanwhile conducting the novices, three at a time, for the solemn ordination. While the novices knelt,' the Ten Prohibitions and the Forty-eight Observances of the *Brahma-Jāla* 'were read and assented to with a loud "Yes".' The ordination was then conferred 'in a *low impressive voice*.'[1] The monks with whom Reichelt talked assured him that this was the greatest moment of their lives and that in it they 'experienced something indescribable.' This stage of the ordination, like the preceding one, is closed with a feast. Later the two leaders of the ordained novices, on behalf of the whole group, 'invite the three elders and the seven witnesses to a *feast of gratitude*.'

The 'great consecration to bodhisattva' begins some days later. This time the ceremony is enacted in the sanctuary itself. The three elders occupy raised seats, whilst the seven witnesses sit round a table. The main part of the ceremony 'begins at noon. . . . Previously there has been a special ceremony of confession with absolution, a bath, and a change of clothing.' When the candidates ask to be ordained, they 'pledge themselves to live and work as bodhisattvas . . . as those who have entered the higher Buddhism with sympathy and love for all living things. They pledge themselves to look down upon all other stages to which they have been ordained as of less value and solemnly pronounce the following bodhisattva vows:

1. To lead all beings without exception to salvation.
2. To make an end to all pain and suffering.
3. To study the works of the countless teachers.
4. To perfect themselves in such a way that they can attain the highest glory of the Buddhas.'

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 243–4. My italics.

We should note here that these are the first *positive* vows of the *Mahāyāna* ordination; the earlier ones were formularies of sins that should not be committed or of actions that should be performed to avoid sinning.

In the evening of the same day begins the ordeal by which the candidates must 'give proof that they are willing "*to suffer*" for the sake of others.' It is then that they receive the 'Buddha's marks on their foreheads by branding.' At nightfall small rings are drawn in ink on the shaven heads of the candidates. These rings number three or a multiple of three, depending on the wishes of the candidate. They next kneel down in front of long tables, where the different articles necessary for the ordeal are laid out. Monks hold the candidates' heads 'with a firm grasp and pressing their thumbs against the temples. . . . Everybody sings, "I take my refuge in thee, thou original master Śākyamuni Buddha." At the same time . . . cone-shaped pieces of charcoal' covered with combustible plant pollen 'are firmly fixed with plant-wax on the heads of the candidates just where the ink rings have been marked. While the candidates and the monks sing . . ., the charcoal burns down into the wax and deep into the scalp. The men are marked for life,' but all try hard not to show any sign of pain. The ashes are brushed off and pieces of turnip placed on the wounds. The candidates are then ordered 'to go with lifted heads into the cool walks outside,' and as they go out monks give them oranges. The next day the newly ordained man 'can come and worship in his own right before the face of the Buddha.' After a final ceremonial meeting, those who have been ordained disperse. 'Now they wear for the first time the big gown, outside the regular monks' dress.'

The new monk, bearing his certificate of ordination, can either return to the monastery from which he came or follow the common and highly esteemed practice of wandering across China and even into neighbouring countries to visit Buddhist monasteries, where he will be 'registered'. In this way a monk may obtain a good position, especially if he has 'spent at least six months in a hall of meditation.' This 'meditation' is called *yung-*

kung, 'doing the real work', and is a preliminary to full membership of a monastery. Each monastery, therefore, has a department for guests, the 'hall of the clouds and the water', where visitors can meditate and sleep. Reichelt thinks that it gets its name from the fact that the guests, like clouds and water, are always coming and going. It is also permissible to see in this name an allusion to the weather conditions which in India fix the season which is most conducive to retreat, namely the *varṣa* in which rain drives the monks to shelter. We should remember, too, that entry into the Order takes place just before this season of withdrawal which is devoted to meditation. In Tibet, if a lama shuts himself up, away from any ray of sunlight, for twelve years, he automatically acquires a rank corresponding to that of abbot. To achieve recognition in this new rank he climbs on to the monastery roof and blows a low-pitched horn.[1]

To return to our 'bodhisattva vows': we shall do well to note the personal observations of De Groot.[2] In general they confirm Reichelt's findings, but contain nevertheless some variants that might usefully be mentioned, since they would appear to derive from older traditions with rites that were still more primitive.

Let us begin by noting in De Groot's description the statement that during the ceremony the abbot sits facing the Buddha and that he himself takes part in the proceedings, fixing the pieces of incense on the head of the senior member of the group of candidates; his assistants light it. By this action 'the abbot is supposed to have marked the whole company, and each initiate prostrated himself before him at the end of the ceremony, in order to thank him.' The crowd of onlookers is present throughout the ceremony, while the invocations to Śākyamuni are punctuated with the sound of a hollow wooden sphere and small metal bells, and

[1] Bleichsteiner, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

[2] J. J. M. de Groot, in *Verhandelingen des Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeeling letterkunde*, Deel I, no. 2, 1893, cited after L. Wieger, *A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China*, Hsien-hsien, 1927, pp. 436–7. (Translation of Wieger's *Histoire des Croyances religieuses . . . en Chine*, Hien-hien, 1927. Same pagination.)

the beginning of each invocation is marked by the beat of a large drum and the ringing of a large bell.

The costume of the sufferers is the yellow robe—a fact not mentioned by Reichelt. Now we know that the usual colours of the Sino-Japanese clergy are brown, red-brown and grey. Among differences of technique we might note that the charcoal cones are in this case not stuck on with wax, but with the pulp of a fruit rather like the medlar. The crust that is formed stays there until it falls off on its own, leaving an indelible scar. De Groot also mentions that the monk who holds the candidate's head 'presses his thumbs heavily on his temples' in order, it is said, to lessen the pain. We have seen comparable actions in Reichelt's account, where, with the same end in view, slices of turnip were placed on the bare wounds. It is possible that this rubbing of the temples while the top of the skull appears to be in flames has some mystical meaning. Indeed we saw in the first lecture that in Laos the future monks, whilst they were being bathed 'gathered up the mystical fluid from their bodies' and cast it sharply into space 'when their fingers reach their temples.' There can in fact be no doubt that the suffering endured is both a test and a means of lustration, of liberation: a '*mokṣa*' as it is called in Kumārajīva's translation of the *Brahmajāla*.[1] In Vietnam, where some years ago the same rite was practised, it was the idea of a test which predominated. It appears that it was necessary to show a complete indifference to pain in order to 'give satisfaction'. Moreover, the test was repeated three times, for on each occasion only a single bead of sweet-smelling resin was fixed 'on one precise point of the scalp.' After the ceremony the supreme head of the Buddhist communities, who presided, handed to the ordained man 'a document certifying that, having been able to endure the burn of the three pieces of incense, he was accepted for holy office.'[2] The conservatism apparent in Vietnamese customs when compared with the Chinese customs which have often inspired them is well-

[1] Wieger, *op. cit.*, p. 431.

[2] Dr. Sallet, 'Les Montagnes de Marbre' in *Bull. Association des Amis du Vieux Hué*, no. 1, January–March 1924, pp. 114–15.

known: so one might think that the 'one precise point of the scalp' on which only one piece of resin was placed had some connection with the fontanelle. This plainly brings us back to the esoteric value of the test.

Kumārajīva's translation dates from the year 406. Since that time it has served as a code for all Chinese Mahāyānists, and we have seen that it is its forty-eight prescriptions which are solemnly read out and assented to at the culminating point of the ordination ceremony we described. The sixteenth prescription states that 'Whoever, teaching a disciple, conceals from him the difficult practices, such as cauterizations and moxas, will have sinned. For these burns are obligatory, to *ensure perseverance*. Every monk ought to be willing to give his body as food to tigers or hungry *pretas*. *A fortiori*, he ought to be willing to let himself be marked by fire, *for his own good*.'[1] It would be difficult to express in clearer terms the double sense of this rite, although today it is its value as a test which subsists. We should not however exclude the possibility that a secret teaching on the subject still exists, as we saw to be the case with regard to the clothes and articles necessary to a *bhikṣu*. One solid fact is clear, namely that this rite is characteristic of *Mahāyāna* ritual, in which it is closely connected with the bodhisattva doctrine. For it is by this rite that one passes from the state of arhat, deemed inferior, to that of deliverer-delivered, the end for which all long.

Without going any further with the examination of doctrinal views on a rite which at first sight appears so strange, I shall study it by trying to group together a certain number of facts which seem to be similarly inspired. In Ceylon, at the beginning of the *varṣa* season, great public preaching ceremonies are held, of which the most striking feature is the abundance of lamps and lanterns. During the pious readings it is considered meritorious for those who are listening to carry a lamp in their hand or *on their head*. From the head of famous Hindu ascetics such as Agastya, Paraśurāma, etc. . . . a flame always rises.[2] Buddhist iconography

[1] Wieger, *History* . . . , p. 431.

[2] Kern, *Histoire* . . . , ii, 236, and E. Senart, *Essai sur la légende du Buddha*, 2nd edn, Paris, 1882, p. 243, n. 3.

frequently portrays the Buddha with a flame or a ray of light coming out of the crown of his head. This type of Buddha even had a considerable vogue in the *theravadin* schools of South-East Asia. In the most famous *samādhi* of Lamaism either coloured flames must rise above the enraptured one's head, or the vision of his own body, reduced to its skeleton, ends in a huge devouring flame.[1] Even today Chinese monks have not been afraid to translate these phantasmagorias into the realm of reality. An English missionary living in China at the end of the last century has reported the following facts, of which I give a brief summary. The decision taken by some monks to be burned alive was announced throughout the area, *as would have happened in the case of solemn ordinations*. It would seem that the event was an *annual* one, at least in some monasteries, which thereby increased their reputations and their resources. Moreover, the missionary assures us that the martyrs were not always volunteers, and that some monks had recourse to drugs in order to succeed in getting them to act as victims. However this may be, one prepared oneself by fasting and ablutions; after this one took one's place on a seat inside a chest, which was then stood upright and closed, and placed in the heart of a fire. Before being shut in, the suicides were keenly solicited by the spectators, who requested them, after their death, to become 'spiritual guardians' of their village, to protect them, to make their affairs, harvests, etc. prosper. The victim promised all that was asked of him and when his ashes were gathered up they became relics worshipped on the same level as the Buddha's.[2]

[1] Bleichsteiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 183 and 181.

[2] A note in M. Paul Demiéville's *Concile de Lhasa* (Paris, 1952, p. 38, n. 2) provides the historical facts concerning China which follow. In their *History of Chinese society*: '*The Liao*' (Philadelphia, 1949, p. 303 and n. 24), Wittfogel-Feng state that the government of the Liao, in 1020, was forced to prohibit Buddhist monks in Northern China from burning their bodies and gashing their fingers. In the same way mere pilgrims to the Buddhist temple of the *Yun-Kiu sseu*, near Peking, according to an inscription contemporary with the above facts, inflicted tortures on themselves by burning their fingers or their heads, and even committed suicide. M. Demiéville has referred to these examples in connection with the trials undergone by a neophyte in the course of *dhyāna*; trials which, he says,

Although it would seem that, in spite of their regularity, these dreadful cases of suicide were rare extremes in the Buddhist world, this does not alter the fact that the custom was sufficiently strong to allow it to last through the centuries up to our own time; the very fact of its excessive nature makes it easier for us to appreciate the concrete value, probably materialised in the ritual of the time, of a whole set of dogmas and myths, where all too often we tend to see no more than monastic exegesis, symbolism or historical narrative. There is no doubt that the religion of the Enlightened One did not disdain worldly lights to rouse and maintain the zeal of its followers; and we shall see that the ritual practices cannot be dissociated from the earliest Buddhist traditions.

If in these first three lectures I seem to have repeated too often accounts of rites which in their development appear to follow identical patterns, it is because I had to bring out from their sequences and repetitions some ritual details, whose importance would not have been apparent if I had not followed this course. Moreover, one cannot discuss Buddhism without taking precautions, and too many are better than too few.

'are perhaps not mere literature,' and he recalls that the Bodhisattva, if he is properly to engage in *dhyāna*, must not allow himself to be distracted from his contemplative state, even though his body were to be torn to pieces (Based on the *Sāgaramati-sūtra* of the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, ed. Bendall, 187).

Celebrated cases of Indians committing suicide by fire have been reported by several writers of antiquity. As late as the end of the twelfth century Benjamin de Tudèle (E. Charton, *Voyageurs anciens et modernes*, ii, 206–7) speaks of their occurrence in Southern India. The area in question consists of islands which are called *Cinrag* by Benjamin and which correspond to Ceylon or some nearby region. There, our traveller assures us, 'Some from among the leading men of the country make a vow to be burnt alive. When a man who has decided on this course tells his children, and other relatives: "I have made a vow to throw myself into fire!" all reply saying: "Oh! How fortunate you are! How happy is your lot!" When the day for carrying out the vow arrives, a great feast is prepared for the man who has made it. This man then makes his way, on horseback if he is a rich man, on foot if he is poor, to the edge of the pit, and hurls himself into the middle fire whilst the whole of the family sings and dances and plays the flute, until he is entirely consumed by the fire.'

IV

The First Council, the Corpus of the Law, and Ānanda, prototype of the candidate for ordination

WE have now reviewed in detail the types of ordination practised by the Buddhists of Southern and Northern Asia. We owe our knowledge of most of these facts to contemporary observations, and these display a much greater variety of detail than do the few texts which are devoted to ordination, where the ritual receives only incidental mention. Should one conclude from this state of affairs that the rites, however interesting and however widespread they appear to be amongst the different sects of Buddhism, yet do not derive from the oldest Buddhist traditions and so in any historical study do not merit as much consideration as the dogma? We know that the Pali texts which are devoted in part to the ordination ceremony are relatively ancient. If proof were needed one could cite the third-century translation into Chinese of a *vinaya* closely akin to that of the *theravada* school. The most characteristic part of *Mahāyāna* ordination, 'ordeal by fire', dates at the latest from A.D. 406 when the monastic regulations which clearly refer to it were translated into Chinese. We know also what can be retained from the historical reconstruction of the *Mahāvagga*, which attributes to the Buddha himself the creation of the different degrees of ordination, from the most elementary to the most complex. This reconstruction, though most valuable to the student of religion, is, it would seem, useless to the historian. Western exegesis has felt obliged to contest the historical background of this process, and, adapting it to its own sense of history, has assigned it to a considerably longer period subsequent to the death of the Buddha.

According to this view, dogma and ritual have become progressively overlaid by accretions foreign to the teaching of the Master. This too facile solution wilfully ignores the essentially, even unavoidably artificial element in any religious ideology's conception of history.

Is there any need for me to remind you that Buddhism is a religion like any other? We have seen some of its rites. It also has its myths. They have been called legends through a failure to grasp their connection with ritual and to understand their functional value; for whatever their origins or their relations, Buddhist history or legend bears witness to the system of religious representations of the earliest Buddhists.

Let us examine this statement in a series of texts whose antiquity or that of the bulk of them at least, is not in doubt. From the point of view of our research these texts have the advantage of revealing what was understood by the oldest Buddhist communities on the subject of full ordination. We shall be concerned with the different narratives of the first Buddhist council, that of Rājagṛha. It will be remembered that the circumstances which led to the meeting of this council, the first of a series of which several are of a definitely historical character, were as follows. The Buddha had just passed into the state of *nirvāṇa*, and immediately his life work was threatened with ruin. Many of the disciples who followed him had attained the highest degree of the religious hierarchy, the state of *arhat*. Some of the disciples, the lowliest it seems, rejected the burden of monastic discipline, so that the laity were in danger of losing their chances of initiation. Enlightenment would henceforth be denied to mankind. One of our oldest texts, —we shall meet it again later—describes the situation thus: 'all at once the darkness of ignorance deepened, the light of the Law was extinguished . . ., the time has come to protect the world more fully.' But how? 'Let us recall the merits of the Father,' continues our text. 'We must construct the works of the Father and celebrate his destiny so that his deeds may be brought to fruition'.[1] The primary aim of the First Council seems therefore

[1] Jean Przyluski, *Le Concile de Rājagṛha*, Paris, 1927, p. 4.

to be an immense memorial act to codify the various lessons of the departed Master and to seal them with stamp of its authority. This is the 'historicised' prologue of the Buddhist canon. The facts reduced to this formalised pattern are eminently credible, especially if the life of the Buddha, itself formalised, is held to be true.

This explanation is no longer so satisfactory when it comes to the detail of the events which characterise the First Council. Western scholars rapidly decided that, mixed with relatively credible facts, the different versions of this council contained details and especially extraneous matter the meaning of which was far from clear. Minayeff, while believing in the basic truth of this first gathering after the death of the Master, saw at the root of the legend of this council the theme of the Buddhist community transforming itself into a 'tribunal' to judge lapses of discipline. Minayeff then compares his 'tribunal' with the *pañcayats* which at this time were already trying infractions of the rules of caste. The comparison is illuminating, but at that time its author could not elaborate it further. In particular he still believed in the historical nature of the 'judgement' of Ānanda.[1]

According to him, to this earliest version of the First Council was added the conception of the council 'engaged in establishing the sacred writings of Buddhism'.[2] Oldenberg, who attacked the views of Minayeff, thinks that 'this narrative of the Council at Rājagaha is to all appearance quite unhistorical', and that 'the deliberations of this so-called council are in fact only the proceedings of one specially prominent diocese'.[3]

Kern was even more sceptical of the historical character of the First Council, and summed up his opinions thus: 'into an ancient mythical tale have been inserted a few theories whose aim was to give an inviolable character to some monastic regulations and to some previously accepted dogmas'.[4] Kern belonged to the school

[1] Minayeff, *Recherches* . . . , p. 19. [2] *Ibid. loc.*

[3] H. Oldenberg, *Buddha: his life, his doctrine, his order*, English translation by W. Hocy, London, 1882, pp. 343–4. Previously Oldenberg supported only the antiquity of the Vinaya: cf. Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. ii.

[4] Kern, *Histoire* . . . , ii, 268.

of Max Müller. Mythical biography and astral symbolism alone were important for him and prevented him from seeing the essentially functional character of the First Council, even though he did recognise in it an image of 'the great *daily* reunion of the Arhats, presided over by Kāśyapa, during the first hour following the Nirvāṇa'. 'There is also', he adds, 'an *annual* synod of the saints, held at the beginning of the year'.[1] By italicising the words 'daily' and 'annual' in this quotation, Kern stresses the way these monastic gatherings were distributed in time, rather than their complex religious significance.

La Vallée Poussin, who also studied the question of the Buddhist councils, maintains on the whole an attitude of caution. He does indeed agree with Minayeff, but only with respect to the tritest part of Minayeff's interpretation: legendary embellishments upon a kernel of historical fact. In any case La Vallée Poussin considers that 'it is not necessary to decide whether these data (those of the accounts of the First Council) are true or false'.[2] The research of this Belgian scholar was based on a much wider documentation than that of his predecessors, for, besides Pali sources, he had used Tibetan and Chinese documents.

Przyluski was to make the greatest contribution towards resolving the problem by translating from Chinese or from Pali most of the essential texts in which the First Council is described. His work on 'The Council of Rājagṛha, Introduction to the History of the Buddhist Sects and Canons'[3] is in fact, as its title and subtitle indicate, a compendium which contributed significantly towards a clarification of the nebulous beginnings of Buddhism. More than half of this work is devoted to the texts, which are classified according to whether they are *sūtras*, or commentaries thereon, or whether they form part of the *vinaya*, the texts in the first category being older than those in the second.

The overall opinion of Przyluski is close to that of Minayeff. The primitive 'pattern' is the capitulary assembly of the type of

[1] *Ibid. loc.*
[2] In J. Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 4, 182, b.
[3] Tome ii of the *Mémoires de la collection Buddhica*, Paris, 1927.

those which gathered annually at the beginning of the rainy season.[1] Besides their 'disciplinary functions', Przyluski detects in these gatherings the celebration of a religious feast to commemorate a seasonal myth, that of Gavāmpati, studied by him in detail in the second part of his work and which we shall ourselves examine later. Przyluski considers this combination of myth and ritual to be 'of capital importance', and for him the whole story of the First Council 'from a mythical origin became gradually pseudo-historical'.[2] From all this we must isolate the principle of the method employed by the author. He undoubtedly caught a glimpse of the true nature of the accounts of the First Council, and was able to classify the different recensions chronologically. However his error lay in assuming, unwittingly, the historicity of the origins of Buddhism. He took as his starting point the episode of Gavāmpati, considering it to be the primitive nucleus which originated from beliefs that were exclusively popular and thus foreign to the preoccupations of the high-minded Reformer. This basis was far too narrow, and failed to explain convincingly how the theme of Gavāmpati had been fused at an early date with a series of different themes which were more specifically Buddhist and which included the story of Ānanda. Nevertheless Przyluski was moved to broaden the conceptions that he had set out in his Introduction, for in his Conclusion he considers the whole story of the Council to be 'an account of the first *varṣa* . . .' This story, 'destined', he goes on, 'to explain the origin of the two great feasts of the beginning and the end of the rains . . . is based in the last analysis on a pre-Buddhist myth: the death of the god of drought (Gavāmpati), and on a ceremony which was also anterior to Śākyamuni: the feast of collective purification by excommunication (of Ānanda)'.[3] It is apparent how skilfully this theory combines the different mythical themes one with another. Since the essential link is the time of year, Przyluski explains ingeniously that 'the rainy season being the most suitable for preaching the Law to householders', it was then that the *Dharma* was expounded, and Ānanda, an intimate of the departed Master,

[1] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. iv. [2] *Ibid.*, p. v. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 374.

was the obvious choice for this office. 'The need for codifying the Scriptures' could only be felt subsequently when the texts had multiplied enormously.[1] I omit the remainder of Przyluski's explanations, all of which presuppose a historical evolution of Buddhism in its early stages. We have noticed the 'ethnographic' merits of Przyluski's hypotheses. Let us now look at the faults. On a minute grain, inherited from the prehistoric folk-lore of South-East Asia, have been superposed the historical layers of the Buddhist periods such as we understand them, each school having finally given its own superficial colour and lustre to the pearl that it has secreted in the shape of the First Council. There is no doubt about the existence of such a string of pearls; the texts collected by Przyluski are there to prove it. There is no doubt also that the individual pearls are of varying size and orient. But we do *deny* that they take their origin from a *foreign* body, and we *claim* that the *underlying texture of them all is essentially identical and homogeneous*. In less metaphorical terms we assert that the narratives of the First Council are entirely Buddhist and that it is our own misconceptions of the origins and of the early growth of Buddhism which have distorted everything. Of course I must go on to demonstrate this and support it with proofs, but first you are entitled to a fairly detailed examination of the accounts of the First Council, of their principal themes and of their interrelationships.

First a few remarks about the form of the texts we are going to deal with. Considered as a whole they are literary texts which are distinguished by the greater or lesser amount of verse passages which they contain, and by the predominance of a direct or an indirect style. It is worth noting, although it is hardly surprising, that *the amount of direct style* is in proportion to *the amount of verse present*. The same applies to the imagery. It is abundant in the verse, but dwindles and disappears with the increasing use of prose. It also appears that the more chanted stanzas are included, the more incongruities there are between the meaning of the prose and the verse, which frequently overlap. Finally I should point out

[1] *Ibid. loc.*

that those texts which come from the *vinayas* display the greatest aridity of style, as well as having the smallest amount of verse passages and imagery. Must one say, as one is tempted to do, that the *vinayas* have provided us with only the minimum of credible mythical details? On the other hand these texts, which are at the furthest remove from popular inspiration, are those in which one finds a marked influence of monastic ritual. Indeed it is in the *vinayas* that there are undisputed connections between the different phases of the Council and the rites: the ritual terminology of the *uposatha*, the *prātimokṣa* and the ordination ceremony. This is hardly surprising, given the purpose for which the *vinayas* were written; one that lent itself to revision more readily than that of the *sūtras*, whose sacred origin made them more authoritative.

The *sūtra* which appears to be the oldest by all its internal characteristics is equally so by the date of its translation into Chinese; the end of the second century. We will therefore take it as our source for the principal features of the First Council. This *sūtra* 'appears to be independent', instead of being combined, like the others, with accounts dealing with events which took place before or after the main subject of the narrative. It is called, according to the translation adopted by Przyluski, 'The sūtra of the compilation (of the scriptures) under Kāśyapa' (Kia ye Kie King), but the word *Kie*, translated by Przyluski as 'compilation', really means 'to bind'. Przyluski also tells us that in the same text this word, or another *tsi* 'to compile', or the two together, all mean 'the act of collecting the scriptures into a canon'. A western lexicographer interprets the phrase *kie tsi* by reference to the Sanskrit *saṃgīti*, 'song', which in the Buddhist texts of India indicates recitation (of the Scriptures). This is O. Rosenberg who is here following the Japanese lexicographers. Przyluski thinks that there has been a confusion with *saṃgaha* (Skt. *saṃgraha*), which 'also often means the formulation of the Canon and hence the Council itself' (with a reference to the Dīpavaṃsa, IV, v. 6 ff.). Thus *saṃgraha* would be the word rendered by *kie* and *tsi*, and not *saṃgīti*.[1]

[1] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

All the same we should reserve judgement. On the one hand we know from other sources how common it was among Chinese Buddhists to use the word 'singing' for 'reciting' religious texts. Even nowadays it is a matter of real 'chanting'. On the other hand we know precisely that in the most ancient form of Indian Buddhism it was highly important to recite the Scriptures with a 'proper intonation', which amounted to a true chant.[1]

It is normal for Chinese translators to strive to convey the maximum amount of meaning with the minimum number of characters, so that it is quite possible that while rendering the *gīti* of *saṃgīti* phonetically as *kie tsi*, they also intended to give it the meaning of 'gathering' and 'compilation'. Of course the single word *kie* in the title of the *sūtra* has only the latter collocation. All this discussion is not out of place here. It has enabled us to determine that for the early Buddhists the actions of meeting together, chanting the Scriptures and compiling them, could all be evoked by the same expression, for the Sinhalese *Dīpavaṃsa* uses the word *saṃgaha* in the sense of 'construction of the canon' and of 'council'.[2]

We have now summarised the circumstances which led to the reunion of the *arhats*, 'the sons of the Buddha', and to the necessity of 'composing the supreme meaning (artha)', as our text says of the Scriptures.

Having crossed 'the mountain of defilements', 'the abyss in which the unenlightened are plunged', and being deprived of the sight of the Buddha, 'the sun of omniscience', the *arhats* were weary of the burden of the flesh which is 'like the serpent's skin'. Thereupon they abandoned 'all those places in which they took pleasure; mountain tops, streams, springs and valleys, and went down to seek obliteration, quenching all mortal affections like a lamp which is suddenly put out'. The *devas* sound the alarm and counsel them to 'spread the word of the Venerable One'. Kāśyapa, wishing to prevent the world from sinking back into darkness,

[1] Cf. Sylvain Lévi, 'La récitation primitive des textes bouddhiques' in *Journal Asiatique*, May–June 1915, pp. 401 ff.

[2] *Dīpavaṃsa*, IV, ll, 6 ff.

assembles five hundred *arhats* and goes with them to Rājagṛha where the council is to be held.[1] It was then 'the last month of the year', and Ānanda 'also' was making his preparations for 'the end of the year'. Since he was a 'younger brother' of the Buddha and had constantly 'served him in great intimacy', he is reputed to have heard and preserved the supreme knowledge (mahāprajñā).[2] 'He can expound the Law in its entirety'. The *arhats* announce that the Buddha himself has praised him, saying, 'He upholds the knowledge in its purity'.[3] The assembly of the five hundred is complete, and on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon (May–June) it begins its work. Kāśyapa asks Anuruddha to 'contemplate' the earth to see whether any *arhat* is missing from the assembly. In fact there is one missing, whom Anuruddha detects, by virtue of his 'divine eye', in the palace of the *deva* Śirīṣa. It is Gavāmpati. To go and fetch him they elect 'a young *bhikṣu* ordained three years before and who had just received the great prohibitions'. Pūrṇa was his name, and the text stresses the fact that he had 'abolished the three defilements', attained the threefold knowledge (of the past, the future and the present), and learned the three *sūtras* of the 'miscellaneous' *piṭaka* (devoted predominantly to previous lives of the Buddha and their causes). Pūrṇa had also acquired 'the three types of knowledge (vidyā)', had liberated himself from 'the three worlds' and had 'obtained the masteries' (*vaśitā*). Gavāmpati is invited by Pūrṇa to take his place in the *saṃgha*, and at the same time he learns that the Buddha has passed into *nirvāṇa*. However Gavāmpati finds that, without the Buddha, the world has no attraction for him, and he himself enters *nirvāṇa* after having entrusted his bowl and his mantle to Pūrṇa, telling him to present them to the assembly. Immediately after the *nirvāṇa* of Gavāmpati, flames start to issue from his body and he is self-cremated. Four fountains spring up to sing *gāthas* as they water his ashes. Three of them sing of impermanence and the solution provided by the Buddha's *nirvāṇa*. The fourth praises at greater length the example of Gavāmpati who, denying his presence to the *saṃgha*, has obliterated himself in the steps of the

[1] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–5. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 5. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Buddha. Pūrṇa describes the scene to the *saṃgha* which has reassembled. Kāśyapa then àsks Anuruddha to 'descry' whether there is still anyone in the Assembly who 'is one of the society of common men'. It is Ānanda himself who is discovered, for 'he is still studying to complete (his instruction). . . .'[1]

Ānanda denies any shortcomings, but Kāśyapa reveals in him a series of sins which we will not particularise at the moment, after which he expels him. The following night, 'having been instructed by Vṛjiputra he broke all his bonds; he attained the stage of *arhat*' (cf. Pūrṇa).[2] The innumerable host of the *arhats* then assembles and Kāśyapa exhorts Ānanda, 'having accomplished what he had to do', to establish 'the Eye of Law preached by the Buddha Bhagavān, since thou, O Śākya', he tells him, 'hast obtained that favour of being he who has heard all and who maintains the Law'. The *arhats* then make a similar demand to Ānanda, remarking that their 'multitude, . . ., deprived of the Buddha's merits, has lost all renown and glory even as the place which is deprived of the light of the sun'. At this moment the *saṃgha* 'surrounded on every side' the lion throne, the Siṃhāsana (of the Buddha). Ānanda takes his seat 'like the king of lions amongst the host of lions' and Kāśyapa asks him, in verse, in what place the Buddha pronounced the first *sūtra*. It was at this moment that Ānanda gained 'the illumination of a Buddha and . . . turned towards the place where the Bhagavān entered into *parinirvāṇa*'. He afterwards pronounces the *sūtra* of the 'Wheel of the Law', that of Ṛṣipattana at Benares.[3]

Here the prose text seems to repeat the verse, for it says that after 'the venerable ones in great number' had exhorted Ānanda, the latter mounted 'the seat of the lion', 'he who had the bearing of a lion', and recited the text of the first *sūtra*. However one can hold that this is no reduplication of the previous scene, for this time it is not Kāśyapa but the *arhats* who question Ānanda, and we have already met a similarly repeated ritual in the ordination ceremony at the time when the candidate is *questioned*. The first time, outside the *saṃgha*, a preceptor puts the questions. The

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 12. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 16. [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

second time the candidate is interrogated *in the midst of the saṃgha* by another venerable monk who often comes from the ranks of the *saṃgha* itself. We will examine this matter further at the end of this lecture. As Ānanda pronounces the First Sermon, all the *arhats* descend from their seats and lament the power of impermanence. 'The end of the Buddha was inevitable', they say, and then they marvel: 'The *Tathāgata* whom we have seen . . . preaching the Law, suddenly he is come amongst us. How can it have come to pass that we hear him thus?' And in the verse passage they exclaim in the same way: '. . . of a sudden, O wondrous thing, like the wind he arose.' Then Kāśyapa returns to the inevitability of death, after which he questions the five first disciples of the Buddha, including *Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya*, on the accuracy of the First Sermon as it has been recited by Ānanda. In this way are compiled the Baskets of the *Sūtras*, of the *Vinaya* and of the 'Precepts' (*Dharma*). Meanwhile the *Devas* were proclaiming Ānanda 'the first of the assembly', saying that he acted thus 'out of compassion for the human race' and affirming that in this compilation Ānanda was indeed 'guided' by Śākyamuni. 'For the future as for the present', they declare in their song, '(Śākyamuni) reserves for him the first of the *samādhis*'.

And in a *gāthā* Kāśyapa ends by re-affirming that compassion was the motive of the *arhats* and that 'the perverse opinions which were in the world' are dispelled and 'the light (of the Law) shines afar like a great lamp burning in the night'.[1]

We have mentioned the relative profusion of versions of the First Council, and that they belong to two major groups of texts, the *Sūtras* and the *Vinaya*, the former being the oldest. Their content confirms this classification, which is that of Przyluski, with this reservation, however, that in spite of the work of expurgation performed by scribes there is a possibility of very archaic elements having persisted into the most recent texts, for, since the schools were divergent, their interpretation of orthodoxy must have been equally so. Nevertheless, within each of the two major categories of texts under review several main features are shared.

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 18–20.

1. *The Sūtras.* With one exception these alone mention the episode of Gavāmpati. In the *Vinaya* of the *Mahāsāṃghikas* (translated into Chinese in 416 A.D.) Gavāmpati is among several other *arhats* who are requested to come down to the Assembly. This *vinaya* differs profoundly from all the others in numerous details, as Przyluski himself noted. On the other hand two *sūtras* do not include the Gavāmpati affair. One is fragmentary and should therefore be left out of the discussion, but the other, or rather the others for we are here concerned with two parallel versions of the *parinirvāṇa*, appears to have omitted the passage on Gavāmpati. We know that these are very ancient texts, but since they describe the First Council only in an appendix and in a very compressed fashion, too much weight cannot be given to the omission, especially when by other details they must clearly be classed with the remainder of the *sūtras*.

In all of the *sūtras* except those of the *Aśokāvadāna*, Ānanda is accused and receives 'enlightenment' *before* 'expounding the Law'. In three of the *sūtras* which give the most detailed accounts Ānanda is expelled after having first been accused. Similarly in all the *sūtras* Ānanda is the first to pronounce the Law, and in all but two sub-groups he is alone in establishing the 'Baskets' of the Law by his own orations. In order to do this all the *sūtras* make him ascend to a raised seat or to the very throne of the Buddha, and all insist on the nostalgic character of this 'enthronement' which arouses lamentations on the force of impermanence from which even the Master himself could not escape, while at the same time his disciples are amazed to hear him speak by the voice of Ānanda. Ānanda is even compared physically to the 'king of lions', the Buddha.

2. *The Vinayas.* With one exception which has already been noted none of these mentions the episode of Gavāmpati. In all of them Ānanda is accused but not expelled; he merely repents and confesses to a number of sins with which he is reproached. With one exception the accusation of Ānanda occurs after the 'pronouncing of the Law', and not before it as in the *sūtras*, and it is usually Ānanda himself who 'bells the cat' by referring to the

'minor prohibitions' upon which it seems that the Buddha had not explained himself clearly. As a result it is Ānanda who is blamed and himself accused of sinning. The raised seat of the Law-giving is found in only one *vinaya*, while there is no longer any trace of the 'realism' of the evocation of the departed Buddha. In the compilation of the 'Baskets' the disciple Upāli takes the lead with the Basket of the *Vinaya*. Ānanda comes second, reciting that of the *Dharma*. Finally in four of the *vinayas* the Council does not end with the compilation of the Baskets, but with an episode that is unknown to the *sūtras*, namely that of Purāṇa. Purāṇa arrives with his disciples too late to take part in the Council, and consequently claims the right to follow another version of the Scriptures. This affects only one specific point; the source of the monks' food. Purāṇa is prepared to accept the whole of the Canon save for seven or eight articles in which the Buddha authorised food that had been prepared or cooked in the monastery, and the eating of fruit in addition to or in place of the food that was received daily as alms. One should also stress the fact that Purāṇa expresses doubts on certain rules which he claims were prescribed but later abandoned by the Buddha.

This 'doubting Thomas' of Buddhism has further interesting characteristics. He comes from the mountains of the South (*dakṣiṇagirī*) where he had been wandering with his five hundred monks, but several Chinese versions have him living at Rājagṛha with five hundred monks at the same time as the Council was meeting. The essential is that Purāṇa acts as the opposition during the meeting of the First Council.[1]

Finally the story of Channa or Caṇḍa has been added by two *vinayas* to the episode of Purāṇa. In the name of the Buddha and of the Assembly Ānanda lays this *bhikṣu* under interdict, but the sentence is not a long one for in his emotion Channa *falls to the ground* and soon after obtains the condition of *arhat*. Channa lived at Kausambi, and going to this place with five hundred monks Ānanda meets King Udena (Udayāna) with his wives—that is according to the version of the *Cullavagga* which alone contains

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 195.

this episode. Having heard the preaching of Ānanda, the king's wives present him with five hundred garments. The king finds this excessive and interrogates Ānanda about the destination of these old clothes. The monk replies to the king's most searching questions and, once satisfied, Udena gives him enough to make five hundred more garments. 'And so at the very outset of his quest for garments', says the *Cullavagga*, 'the venerable Ānanda obtained a thousand'.[1]

It is after this gift episode that Channa is laid under interdict by the *brahmadaṇḍa* and that he becomes an *arhat*. This gift of robes which follows the confinement of the Council must undoubtedly be associated with the *Kathina* feast, celebrated at the end of the *varṣa*. Although this argument did not occur to Przyluski, his theory of the origins of the Council of Rājagṛha might have received considerable support from it. However, apart from the fact that this episode is only mentioned by a single text, the text itself is a late recension in which the influence of the ritual is apparent at numerous points. It is therefore likely that the *Kaṭhina* theme was only added to the story of the Council at a relatively recent date. Let us now draw a parallel between the successive mythical elements of the Council and the various rites of ordination.

Acceptance into the Buddhist orders takes place from the close of winter to the beginning of summer, and even, in many countries, from the anniversary of the birth and death of the Buddha. The Council met after the *parinirvāṇa*. It is essential that the normal number of monks must all be present at the time of the ordination ceremony, as well as on the days of *uposatha* and *prātimokṣa*. We have seen the efforts of the Assembly, assisted by Anuruddha, to obtain the usual total of five hundred *arhats*.

The monk who presides over the ordination does so with the aid of two assistants: one to scrutinise the past life of the neophyte, discover his sins and hear confession of them; the other, with a specialised knowledge of the *Dharma*, to make sure that the candidate is fit to receive ordination. This second interrogation,

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 161.

unlike the first, is held in public and witnessed by all the members of the *saṃgha*, the 'interrogator' being actually chosen from amongst this body. In all the stories of the Council Kāśyapa presides. In the oldest versions he asks the help of Anuruddha to determine if there is anyone missing from the assembly, to say who is missing and to scrutinise all the monks present in order to 'see' whether they are sufficienty adlvanced in the path of enlightenment to take part in compiling the Canon. It will be remembered that the imperfection of Ānanda is at this juncture 'seen' by Anu- or Aniruddha—that is according to the *sūtras* only, for the *vinayas* do not mention Anuruddha in this role. Later, after Ānanda's *return* into *the body of the saṃgha*, his enthronement and his 'giving of the Law', it is Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya and his monks, the first five disciples, who witness to the accuracy of the divine words recalled by Ānanda.

In the Chinese ordination of novices, before going on to question them about their 'past lives' and their minutest shortcomings, the officiating monk enumerates the 'Seven Crimes', the 'Ten Vices' and the 'Four Deadly Sins'. The whole company then retire to brood over their past faults.

In describing the principal ordination of the *Hīnayāna* it will be recalled that I laid stress on the way in which the candidate is 'driven away' towards the door of the temple after the first stages of the ceremony have been carried out at the feet of the *upādhyāya*. The *Dharmagupta Vinaya* stated in more detail that after the first stage the candidate must be kept 'out of sight and out of earshot'.

When Ānanda has not yet completely attained the grade of *arhat*, he is accused of sins and banished from the meeting-place of the Council. Once fully enlightened he returns, is enthroned, surrounded by the *arhats* on every side, and then pronounces the Law as he has understood it. In Cambodia, after having been interrogated outside the *saṃgha*, the would-be monk returns and places his mat over the feet of his preceptor. Then follow the last formalities of his reception into the order. In China we have seen that the 'raising up' of the candidate is even more clearly

expressed, but the future monk does not 'dominate' the others. Similarly in certain *sūtras* three or four thrones are prepared for Ānanda and those who preside or who declare the Law after him. We should remember too that at the end of the ordination the new monk often becomes an object of veneration to all those present, and even to his fellows. Ānanda, from the very first words of his 'Law-giving', is revered by all the *arhats* who come down from their seats to do so. The oldest *sūtra* even makes them sit on the ground.

The Gavāmpati episode will come up for discussion a little further on, but one fact seems to be already established. The ritual process of entering into the *saṃgha* reproduces in its main lines the different mythical themes of the First Council, as it is related in the oldest texts. However it is difficult to imagine what constitutes the connection between these two groups of facts. There is no doubt that the success of the Council of Rājagṛha depends in the first instance on what happens to Ānanda. If he can become a perfect *arhat* the Law of the Buddha will be retransmitted and preserved for posterity. I ignore the explanation of the later *vinayas*. They give only a nominal pre-eminence to Upāli and provide Ānanda with a major role in which the recitation of the *sūtras* is significantly still included. However it would not take us far if we considered the facts only within the restricted category of ritual, unless at the same time we broaden our concept of the latter.

The Buddha's departure breaks up the Community. To consolidate itself the circle must be re-formed, the vacuum must be filled. The *arhats* gather in a place that can be shut off, most frequently in a cave. In order to carry out their business all the members must be present. Several ancient texts inform us that King Bimbisara had provided in advance for all the material needs of the monks, and that is why his capital had been chosen for their meeting. Even the most distant *arhat*, Gavāmpati, is summoned to this gathering, and this task falls to the youngest of the group. But the *arhat* does not come and, according to the oldest versions, Pūrṇa brings back the bowl and the mantle of him who has now

placed himself beyond call. The assembly now must purify itself. Ānanda is the unclean element, the 'mangy jackal' as some of the relatively recent texts call him. Even he who was most intimate with the Buddha, and who served him, had not attained the summit of saintliness. It seems that he 'remembered' the Law, having heard it so often, but he was still attached to the things of this world and thus his knowledge was of no avail either to him or to others. And so he had to be made to shed 'his old self' so that his knowledge and the fruit of his long contact with the Blessed One could be utilised. In this connection Przyluski has recalled the well-known rituals of driving out the 'scapegoat'. This is justifiable,[1] but an over-hasty generalisation must not prevent us from seeing in what way Ānanda's expulsion is different. Ānanda's exclusion is not final, but is rather a test during which he finds, in the wilderness at the foot of a tree, the way that his kinsman and master had found before him. After having long served him, Ānanda, like the Buddha except that his action is not voluntary, accomplishes his time of retreat and mortification. Remember that as a result of his asceticism the Buddha nearly died of starvation before his enlightenment. Usually Ānanda obtains complete deliverance *lying* at the foot of his tree, *shoulder to the ground*, and only after his *feet are raised*; in fact the position in which the Buddha attained *nirvāṇa*. Another detail which is worth stressing at this point and which occurs in several texts, concerns a certain Vṛjiputra who, we are told, was *his disciple* and who aided him in 'stopping the outflows' (*āsrava*). At once he who was until then the most backward of the community became the first amongst them. His perfection is enhanced by his former virtues and by the recency of his initiation. A kinsman and a close disciple of the Buddha, no sooner has he reached the master's level than he mounts his throne and proclaims his Law to rekindle it, to prolong

[1] A writer who has spoken of the sacrificing of scapegoats in Tibet, a current practice, it seems, among peasants, asserts that the *lamas* themselves released one of their number every three years, and that this man also played the part of scapegoat (cf. W. Asboe, 'The Scape-goat in Western Tibet' in *Man*, xxxvi, May 1936, pp. 74–5. Noted by Mme. Esther Lévy in *Bibliographie Bouddhique*, vii–viii, no. 552). Is this local influence or a revival of an earlier practice?

its beneficent effects. The entire corpus of the Law is reconstituted, but not by Ānanda alone, for the whole Assembly, including the president and his assistants, supervises this task with more deliberation. The active element, Ānanda, has become so only by the work of correction, interrogation and instigation of the principal leaders. If Ānanda's origins belong to the Buddha whom he will succeed, the completion of his mystic evolution is the deed of the Council. Fullness, stability and gravity have brought an insufficiently 'mature' spirit to the point of fermentation. For the group of *arhats* the 'Corpus of the Law' is before all else a communion in collective action. It is this which has created in the heart of the Assembly its major element, the super-*arhat*, this second Buddha that Ānanda represents. A deified victim offered up to the spiritual appetite of the Community, he is at the same time both cause and object of the communion which gives rise to works. These are the traditional beginnings of the Buddhist church and of its *dharmakāya*. For the Northern schools Ānanda is the undisputed head, the first successor of the Buddha, while this position is held by Upāli in the traditions of the Southern schools where the *Vinaya*, much favoured by the monks, seems to carry the most weight.

The importance for our ordination ceremonies of these mythical concepts can now be summed up, leaving a more thorough demonstration for the next lecture.

We have indicated the parallelism between the principal rites of ordination and the succession of theines of the First Council. Here and there we have found identical temporal conditions coupled with similar functions given to individuals who will be studied in detail later. However, the roles of a Kāśyapa, an Anuruddha and a Kauṇḍinya are obviously those of the president, investigator and witness necessary in every ordination. Ānanda is the typical candidate. He has served the Buddha and received the most thorough instruction, but that is not enough. To be finally 'liberated' he must first undergo a time of testing. Loaded with indignities he must suffer until he is in danger of death. This done he will be the worthiest of them all, and this is signified to him by

a unanimous veneration, at which time he is able to revivify the core of the Buddhist 'message'. Remember the hardships of the life of a novice undergoing instruction, the mockery, even rough-handling, of the neophyte at the time of his ordination. We have already mentioned what is suggested by his temporary banishment during the course of the ceremony. Finally, the essential point about the Body of the Law is that the neophyte and preceptors should invoke it together. In the absence of detailed accounts of ancient ritual, the narratives of the First Council provide us with texts of unquestioned antiquity and unsurpassed as documents on the system of religious representations which is actively portrayed in our ordination rites.

Before ending this lecture I should like to add one valuable piece of information to the discussion. It originates from Hsüan-tsang.[1] Having traced the career of Harṣa Śīlāditya, the great monarch of Kanauj who received him so magnificently, the Chinese pilgrim describes the king's religious relations with the Buddhist community. Among other things Harṣa 'once a year summoned all the Buddhist monks together, and for twenty-one days supplied them with the regulation requisites. He furnished the chapels and liberally adorned the common halls of the monasteries. He brought the Brethren together for examination and discussion, giving rewards and punishments according to merit and demerit'.

'Those Brethren who kept the rules of their Order strictly and were thoroughly sound in theory and practice he "advanced to the Lion's throne" (that is, promoted to the highest place), and from these he received religious instruction; those who, though perfect in the observance of the ceremonial code, were not learned in the past he merely honoured with formal reverence; those who neglected the ceremonial observances of the Order, and whose immoral conduct was notorious, were banished from his presence and from the country'. This is just a secularised version of the essence of the Council of Rājagṛha. Harṣa's desire to be a king

[1] T. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's travels in India*, vol. i, London, 1904, pp. 343–4.

according to the Buddhist *dharma* is manifest in it, as in many other details that Hiuan-tsang relates. For example, he gave alms to the communities, built rest-houses for pilgrims along the roads, fed a thousand bonzes and five hundred brahmans from the royal palaces, 'caused the use of animal food to cease throughout the five Indias, prohibited the taking of life under severe penalties' and so on. 'The king also made visits of inspection throughout his dominion', says Hsüan-tsang, 'not residing long at any place, (but) he did not go abroad during the three months of the Rain-season Retreat'.[1] The main interest of this whole account lies in the fact that promotion to the highest rank is controlled by the king himself. The 'lion throne' of which Hsüan-tsang speaks could just as well be the royal throne itself, and we should then be involved in one of those cases of deposition and temporary enthronement which are well known in other contexts: civil power giving way to monastic power, the city of Lhasa being invaded by monks during the ephemeral reign of Jalno, etc.[2] Hsüan-tsang's account would confirm the theory, advanced separately by Przyluski, of Ānanda's having played the role of scapegoat. The difficulty is that the oldest of the *sūtras* place the accusation and expulsion of Ānanda before his enthronement and his 'pronouncement of the Law', while in these transitory monarchies the opposite occurs. However there is one detail which enables us to tackle this problem. The retreat in the course of which Harṣa elevates the good monks and receives instruction from them, is accompanied by punishment of the wicked ones who are expelled and banished from the country. Two more or less simultaneous events may have been separated in time in the corresponding myth. Nevertheless Harṣa's ritual does not explain why Ānanda's expulsion should have been given greater prominence than his subsequent elevation. Besides, we are here a long way from the origins of Buddhism, and the supervisors of ritual in the Indian courts had by then had plenty of time to adapt themselves by bringing royal customs ever closer to the rites of a powerful

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 344.
[2] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

church, provided of course that the two were not fundamentally incompatible. Indeed it is a truism to say that both civil and religious powers have common sources, but there are also confluences when the divided streams might have followed different courses.

V

Saints' Lives or Initiation Themes

SOME episodes in the lives of the early Buddhist saints have given us a glimpse of their mythical import. Even if Kāśyapa and Ānanda once really existed, their personalities have been used primarily for a historical dramatisation of the great annual reunion of the *varṣa*. Of this there seems to be no doubt as far as concerns the character of Gavāmpati. His physical characteristics, the place where he lives, even his end, smack of the supernatural, of the incredible, as does the way in which Pūrna goes to invite him to take part in the Council. It is only fair to say that some scholars, including Kern and Senart, have already indicated the highly mythological nature of the main protagonists of early Buddhist history. But their attempts seemed feeble, constructed as they were on clouds, on a shaft of moonlight or a ray of sunshine. I can still remember the elegant irony with which Alfred Foucher spoke to us of these meteorological hypotheses, comparing them with those that could be constructed around the life of Napoleon: a star born in the East in a sea-girt isle, dying on an island in the Western ocean with the Twelve Marshals grouped around him like the signs of the zodiac, and so on. Between systematic doubt and blind faith there is room for the employment of proven methods of investigation. Let us try them out first on an easy subject.

On the personality of Gavāmpati Przyluski has collected a selection of material which we shall now review briefly.[1] The name Gavāmpati can mean in Sanskrit 'cattle master, cowherd, bull', or 'the Radiant One', an appellation of Agni or the sun (*go* in the sense of 'ray'). This compound word first appears, it seems, as far back as the Epics. As early as the *Ṛg-Veda* however *Gopati*

[1] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, pp. 239–47.

exists in the meaning of 'master of the flocks', or simply 'lord' or 'master', but Przyluski thinks that these forms and meanings in the *Ṛg-Veda* differed from those in the epics. In a Chinese translation of a Buddhist commentary Przyluski found the following details on Gavāmpati. The 'cloven-footed' *bhikṣu* could not dwell in this world for two reasons; his feet were like the hooves of an ox, and after he had eaten he chewed his cud. Seeing him the brahmans might have thought that the followers of the Buddha did not keep to the regulations and ate outside the appointed times, and so the Buddha made him ascend to the great hall of the palace of the gods, the one called 'Good Law' (*Sudharma*) by allusion to the preaching of that Law. There Gavāmpati entered into *samādhi*. He was aroused from this state by the messenger sent by the Council to summon him. We know his reply and the way in which he was consumed by his own fires.

This Chinese text suggests that the original contained a compound form *Gavāmpadi*, and Przyluski considers with justification that the Chinese commentators did not invent the story of the 'cloven hooves' merely to support an etymology of *Gavāmpadi* as a 'middle-Indian' form of Gavāmpati. Przyluski has found a confirmation of this form in a certain *Gavompade* whose cult is widespread among the Mons of Burma, and whose image is used by sorcerers as a talisman. From a very early date Gavompade is generally depicted back to back with Gaṇeśa, the son of Śiva, and Przyluski thinks that this is due to his being equated with the bull Nandin, Gaṇeśa's usual companion. He sees this hypothesis confirmed in the name of Paśupati, 'the cattle master', borne by Rudra-Śiva from the time of the *Atharva-Veda*. In the *Mahābhārata* one of Śiva's names is in fact Gavāmpati.

On the other hand there is no difficulty about the high and distant abode of this person. Our oldest texts speak of a palace, of the heavens or of a park of the Śirīṣa, which is a tree the leaves of which provide him with grazing. Those *vinayas* which mention it, place Gavāmpati's home in a mountainous region, the Hill of Perfumes, which is located by other texts in the sub-Himalayan zone. According to one *vinaya* the Buddha himself declared that

Gavāmpati was the foremost 'amongst all those who dwell in the border lands'.[1] In the Chinese translation of the *Aśokāvadāna* the cavern of the Śirīṣa is referred to as being between Lake Anavatapta and the Hill of Perfumes, which still takes us into the Himalayan region. The vegetation is one of the details stressed by several of the texts in connection with Gavāmpati's home. It is known that the mountains are the favourite abode of Rudra-Śiva as well, and that storm and tempest are at the command of this fearsome god. In Przyluski's opinion it is not surprising that a bovine deity should have affinities with such a god. He adduces the strength and bellowing of a bull, and then mentions another item from the legend of this extraordinary *bhikṣu*. Once when a river had overflowed its banks, the Buddha asked him to stop the flood and the holy man complied by holding back the waters so that they piled up like a mountain. In the same way he parted the waters of the Ganges so that the Buddha and his train could cross dry-shod. Przyluski interprets these last feats as a mythical transposition of the struggle between the wind and the water which is so striking in the monsoon countries of Asia. He discounts any Indo-European influence and invokes the contemporary and ancient folk-lore of Eastern Asia. Here can in fact be found a contest between the rain, the wind and the waters, which, for the aborigines of the Malay peninsula, is represented by a struggle between two pythons, one of which, the Land python, is overcome by the Sea python. In ancient Chinese folk-lore there is a similar contest between figures whose respectively bovine and aquatic natures are fairly obvious. Przyluski might have added to these parallels all the data assembled by Rolf Stein on the connection felt by the ancient Chinese peoples between the ox and the art of controlling the floods by means of earthen dykes, etc.[2]

Przyluski had no doubt about the non-Aryan origins of the myth of Gavāmpati and of its seasonal character, but he might

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 243.

[2] Rolf Stein, 'A propos de sculptures de boeufs en métal,' in *Bull. Ecole Fse. d'Ex. Orient*, xlii, 135 ff.

This contribution was published at Hanoï during the late war and was of necessity unknown to Przyluski, who died before the end of hostilities.

also have taken into consideration the sacrifice of the 'spitted ox', the Brahmanic *śūlagava*. It happens like this. The victim, a bull, is led out of the village at night, and is sacrificed either after midnight or after sunrise. A portion of it is then offered to Rudra, and the blood, which has drained on to a bed of grass or leaves, is offered to the serpents. The flesh is presented to the gods. Next the women sacrifice to the female deities and the remains of the victim is divided among the kinsmen of the female branch. Nothing is taken back to the village, for the god is a cruel one.[1] Przyluski thought that this relatively modern rite represented an archaic popular festival that had been adopted and modified by Vedic ritual. The *śūlagava* could take place in spring or in autumn. Przyluski only takes account of the first of these seasons, and compares the offering of blood to the serpents with the bathing of the serpents which was the core of a ceremony held in honour of snakes. The bull, god of drought, is slaughtered, and the makers of rain, the serpents, are sprinkled with its blood, and so the proper functioning of the vital season, the rains, is assured. In support of his thesis Przyluski refers to the sacrifice of the buffalo as practised in Cambodia in order to obtain rain. I have mentioned this practice in a study of buffalo sacrifice in South-East Asia.[2] However, it should be noticed that the sacrifice is only made so that a spirit dwelling within a stone shall cause the rain to fall. Water is poured upon a man who personifies the spirit and the buffalo is spitted above the stone on to which the blood pours. Similarly in China, according to Granet, the 'earth ox' was driven out, the 'goddess of drought' was drowned at the end of the dry winter season and Keng-fu, 'the Ploughman' who hates water, was cast into a pit. Among the Indian Khonds the buffalo is slaughtered outside the village in a sacred grove and near a trench full of pig's blood in which the head and carcase of the buffalo are buried after it has been dismembered alive.[3]

[1] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

[2] 'Le sacrifice du buffle et la prédiction du temps à Vientiane (avec études sur le sacrifice du buffle en Indochine)', in *Bull. Inst. Indochinois pour l'Etude de l'Homme*, tome vi (Hanoï, 1944), pp. 301–31.

[3] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 254.

'In Buddhism', writes Przyluski, 'there is no sacrifice. Beneath the habit of Gavāmpati may be glimpsed an ancient god of Drought and of Wind. Since the Council of Rājagṛha took place during the rainy season, its opening session coincides naturally with the end of the dry season, or, in mythical terms, with the end of Gavāmpati'.[1] As Buddhism cannot tolerate blood sacrifice there is nothing in its ritual to convey this idea. This is how Przyluski explains the Gavāmpati episode, and he is indubitably right on several points. The weakness of his research lies, as I have said before, in the fact that it deals with only a portion of the relevant details and that the connection between these is purely one of time.

It is undeniable that ox-gods are associated with storms and tempests in Asian myths, but on the other hand in India at least they are not specifically connected with drought. In Indian mythology one can find plenty of bulls and cows who represent storm clouds and life-giving rain. The Vedas have such a deity in Parjanya, addressed by the *Ṛg-Veda* in the following terms: 'Thou has rained thy rain; now cease . . .'.[2] Gavāmpati, while having the power to arrest the water of the rivers, is also able to bring down rain from the heavens at will. His make-up does not quite correspond to the description given by Przyluski, who was too prompt to deny the Indo-European elements in his subject of research.

Gavāmpati is obviously the most faithful of the Buddha's disciples, as is proved by the nature of his death. By his self-cremation he achieves the equivalent of *satī* with an additional miraculous element. Gavāmpati is said to follow the Buddha as an elephant-calf follows its mother. Lest his inhuman attributes should offend, however, he must remain far from the haunts of men, living in the border lands with the other gods and monsters. The ox predominates both in his nature and in his name, whatever the form that has come down to us. Now the Buddha also is sometimes compared with a Gavāmpati, as is shown in this

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 255.
[2] H. Oldenberg, *La religion du Véda*, trans. V. Henry, Paris, 1903, p. 190.

passage from one of the Chinese translations of the Aśoka legend, the one in fact in which the First Council is narrated. At the moment of attaining *nirvāṇa* the Buddha recites *gāthās* in which he compares transmigration to a bottomless ocean ruffled by waves and tempests. 'Now that I have managed to cross it', he goes on, 'I would enter into the Realm of peace and abandon the raft of my body'. The lines which immediately follow are supposed to be uttered by the Buddha, but they are more likely to be said by some other person, for they begin by repeating almost the same image of the ocean of transmigration and refer to the Buddha in the third person saying: '*The muni is the king of the oxen*; he crosses this sea of transmigration . . .', and so on.[1] Naturally this is only one aspect of the Buddha's personality. We have just seen him compared to an elephant (which he in fact was in a previous existence, and indeed at the time when he was conceived) and he is also the lion of the Śākya, so that Ānanda echoes the roaring of the lion when he repeats the Buddha's words. If further examples were needed, the physical appearance of the Great Leader would witness to this zoomorphism.

Once the Buddha has gone, it is this mythological entity that is summoned with the aim of 'completing' the Council or giving the Law, according to the different texts. This is the essence of Gavāmpati's role. He is the understudy, but on a supernatural plane. An ancient Iranian myth displays this relationship. The first of all living creatures was the Bull which was divided into 'Body of the Bull' and 'Soul of the Bull'. Ahriman came and killed it, but from its body sprang the seeds and the plants. The essence of its sperm was carried to the moon and was there purified, giving birth to all the animal species. After its death the 'Soul of the Bull' ascended to the heavenly court where it took its place among the gods.[2] Parsee legend makes the fiery prototype of Man issue from the belly of the dead Bull.[3] We might recall here the part played by the bull in Mithraism, where the sacrifice of this

[1] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
[2] Victor Henry, *Le Parsisme*, Paris, 1905, p. 88. (Based on the *Bûndahiŝn*).
[3] Senart, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

animal was the essential act of initiation, a baptism in which the initiate was completely drenched with the bull's blood. I am aware that the origin of the taurobolium is held to be quite independent of Iranian rites, but one cannot deny the 'considerable part' played in Zoroastrianism by the 'mythical Bull, giver of life and means of resurrection'.[1] We should not forget that the 'Soul of the Bull' is enthroned in the heavenly court on the right hand of Mithras, and that after the general resurrection, the ambrosia of the chosen ones will be a mixture of white Hōm (the Vedic Soma) and fat from the bull Hadhayaosh, 'the ever pure', a counterpart of the primordial bull of the creation. He dwells in Ērān-vēž, the 'Cradle of the Aryans', a land usually located in the extreme *North* not far from the Sea of Vourukasha. There he is guarded by 'a holy sacrificer named Gōpatshāh'. The latter is a hybrid creature, for the upper part of his body is that of a man, while the rest, including therefore his feet, is in the shape of a bull.[2] It seems quite reasonable to set the name of this 'benevolent Minotaur' beside that of the Buḍdhist monk Gavāmpati. The connection between him and Pūrṇa, the 'junior' *arhat* in the Council, can be explained if one interprets Gavāmpati as representing an initiation theme. The fact that Pūrṇa is the 'last of the Assembly', and the youngest, is enough in itself to suggest that his mission before Gavāmpati is a kind of task or test. According to one *sūtra* Kāśyapa says to him: 'Although holding the lowest place, you may become the ornament of the whole Assembly',[3] and while thanking him for his prompt acceptance of the task, Kāśyapa pays Pūrṇa the following compliment: 'Among the multitude of the Saints this *young bhikṣu* is exceeding gracious'.[4] In fact the 'accomplished' Pūrṇa is the type of young hero who was successful in everything even before he became a monk. He even acted as a mascot for the 'merchant adventurers' who took him with them on their distant voyages. Nevertheless he had to suffer calumnies from the women of his family and was thereby forced to flee from his country, to risk his

[1] V. Henry, *op. cit.*, p. 253.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 212, n. 2.
[3] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 29.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

life and finally to enter a religious order and so lose the world. Gāyomert or 'Living Mortal', who was for the Iranians the fiery prototype from whom all humanity was to be born, and whose connection with the primordial bull we have already mentioned, is a tall radiant youth, fifteen years old.[1] One of the stories of the Council credits Revata with the mission to summon Gavāmpati, and *Revata* is a name which may very plausibly be connected with the form found in the *Ṛg-Veda: revat* (*rāyivat?*) or *raivata*, meaning 'rich, prosperous, abundant, *brilliant*, *radiant*, *splendid*'. Without venturing into astral mythology I should point out the solar and lunar implications of the name Pūrṇa ('the full') itself, suggesting as it does the orb of the sun and the new and full moon. In one *sūtra* Gavāmpati attains *nirvāṇa* by grasping the sun and moon with either hand, while his body is consumed by fire,[2] a fitting end for a cosmic hero.

Together with the earthly Buddha, Gavāmpati also represents the prototype of the ascetic who has reached the summit of *tapas*. His asceticism has ripened during the long *samādhi* in which he has been immersed until now. When he is aroused, the news of the Buddha's *nirvāṇa* decides him on self-cremation 'without residue'. Springs burst from the ground—a magic counterpart of the noble 'burnt offering'. Here we can see how Przyluski's theory skims over the complex reality of religious symbolism. In the oldest of the *sūtras* Pūrṇa says: 'O Gavāmpati, the Buddha's ship is broken; the mountain of wisdom has crumbled away; those who maintain the Law, they too are about to *embrace extinction* and go down into the world (of *nirvāṇa*)'.[3] But Gavāmpati himself is one of those *arhats* who 'disappear' in the Buddha's wake. When he learns of the end of his master he is in a way exhorted to do his duty, and so obliterates himself. Before doing so he entrusts his bowl and his mantle to Pūrṇa, a detail which is found in other versions of the tale. 'Present them to the Assembly of the Saints', he says to Pūrṇa, and he recommends 'the *whole* Assembly' to 'compile the most excellent Meaning of the word'

[1] V. Henry, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[2] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 66.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

and to venerate it. This is where the other and more ritual semantic value of the name Pūrṇa appears. He is supposed to have come to seek Gavāmpati to '*complete*' the Assembly, and has discharged his duty unskilfully to say the least. The venerable *arhat* takes his departure, but not before he has handed over the essential attributes of his rank to Pūrna. Pūrna takes the mantle and bowl of the departed sage and we hear no more about them, but we may quite justifiably suppose that Pūrṇa inherits them, just as Ānanda inherited the mantle and the bowl that once belonged to the Buddha. We may also suppose that his allusion to the *whole* Assembly indicates that Gavāmpati was investing his successor with his own bowl and mantle. The name of Pūrṇa, 'the full, the accomplished one', is perhaps an indication of his role in the First Council. I might here recall the *arhat* Purāṇa who appears in the Vinaya texts, which, on the other hand, make no mention of Gavāmpati and Pūrṇa. This Purāṇa acts as an opposition speaker with his reservations on seven items of the discipline concerning food. Previously Kāśyapa had ordered the recitation of the Scriptures to be recommenced for his benefit. With Purāṇa were associated the five hundred *arhats* who normally followed him. Now the name Purāṇa means 'the completer,' and one *sūtra* credits the First Council with a thousand *arhats* instead of the usual five hundred, without giving any explanation of this variant.

It will be understood then that a certain number of 'mythical representations' correspond to the ritual preoccupations of the *complete* religious Assembly. I hope that I have also conveyed that within these 'representations' there were also cosmogonic preoccupations whose prime aim was to 'locate' the holding of the Great Assembly in time, as an event which in some measure started off the cosmic cycle again from the beginning. That is the explanation that I offer of the Gavāmpati episode, although I am well aware of the fragmentary nature of this conception. In any case the scribes have in general failed to understand this introductory episode, and it has disappeared from most of the descriptions of the Council.

In the later texts Mahākāśyapa is taken to be the first patriarch to succeed the Buddha, though according to older traditions he does not come into prominence until after the death of the Blessed One. He was not present at the latter event, but he presided over the obsequies and, of course, over the First Council. Here his role is primarily that of interrogator. He questions Ānanda, Anuruddha and Kauṇḍinya. He sends Pūrṇa off on his mission and accuses Ānanda. In one of the *sūtra*-texts he 'pronounces' the third 'Basket' of the Law, that of the *Abhidharma*. Everywhere he is represented as the most venerable of the Assembly of *arhats* and he holds himself above the throng, maintaining a chilly silence whenever he is not engaged in expediting the Council's business. To sum up, he is the faithful administrator of Buddhism. Nevertheless his most active role in the Council is when he accuses the unfortunate Ānanda and even ejects him personally, according to several texts. When the latter returns 'liberated' it is Kāśyapa who authorises him to rejoin the flock. I have already mentioned that some texts assert that Ānanda was made at this point to come in through the key-hole in order to demonstrate his new powers, and it was Kāśyapa himself who insisted on this. For Ānanda, before he is fully ordained, Kāśyapa is therefore both public prosecutor and executioner. Within the Council he also plays the part of the *upādhyāya* who presides over the ordination ceremony. The connection is even closer if one remembers the details of the *upādhyāya*'s role. He is usually not connected with the day-to-day administration of the temple in which he officiates, and is only called upon to act in the major ordinations. Here he presides, receives the candidate's request, binds his neck and hands and then commands another official to interrogate him. He himself *does not confer* the ordination which is pronounced in the name of the whole Assembly by yet a third person, the one who, it will be remembered, asks the second set of questions. In Cambodia and elsewhere at the very beginning of the ceremony the *upādhyāya* dwells on the bitterness of suffering and of existence, and suggests how it can be avoided. Having 'bound' the candidate, the *upādhyāya* himself often cuts off his nails and even shaves his

head. Finally he acquaints him with the Ten Major Prohibitions. There does seem to be something of the executioner in this function, as I claimed with reference to Kāśyapa, or at the least the suggestion of an executioner's assistant.

Passing in review the main features of Kāśyapa's religious career, we can see that he was worthy of his hour of greatness when he governed the interregnum between the Buddha's death and Ānanda's accession as patriarch. Kāśyapa 'the great'[1] lived a hermit's life in the forest together with his wife who was also an ascetic. His father was Nyagrodhaketu, 'the comet of the banyan'. Kāśyapa was converted to Buddhism, exchanged robes with the Buddha and after nine days attained the grade of 'master'. His 'sojourn in the wilderness' had stood him in good stead. His zeal earned him the title of 'great', and, say the chronicles, he was 'the most perfect of those who combine indifference to the world with a purifying contentment of mind'. So far this is perfectly credible, but Kāśyapa's end is strange none the less, in that he neither dies nor enters into *nirvāṇa*. The Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien tells us that Kāśyapa lives in the centre of the 'Hill of the Cock's Leg', near Rājagṛha, and there in the darkness he awaits the coming of the future Buddha, Maitreya. According to Fa-hsien, every evening, as soon as the sun has set, you can see the *arhats* gathering in the cavern where Kāśyapa lives.[2] Another version describes Kāśyapa as circling the horizon before, wrapping himself in the dusty robe of the Buddha, he vows to await the coming of the future messiah. Kern was convinced that here the Buddha represents the sun, and Kāśyapa the twilight with its sombre hues, while around him rise the stars, the *arhats*. For, according to Fa-hsien, the *arhats* can be seen every evening, and there used to be an annual pilgrimage to visit Kāśyapa. Obviously dusk and an interregnum make a good pair, but this does not explain everything. In addition, it is quite conceivable that the Chinese pilgrim's legends are of a later date and arise from purely local influences. Indeed Kāśyapa is the name of Viṣṇu's father during his avatar as the Dwarf, and the characteristic of Kāśyapa

[1] Kern, *Histoire* . . ., i, pp. 102 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, tome ii, p. 266.

'beneath the mountain' is precisely that he has become quite small before regaining his former stature. The very name Kāśyapa is revealing. *Kāśyapa* or *Kacchapa* means 'he of the black teeth', which is one of the names of the tortoise and of several particular kinds of animal. Kāśyapa is the name of a celebrated *ṛṣi*, the father of the Ādityas, those heroes of solar mythology, and of all kinds of living creatures, whence his designation of Prajāpati, the 'Creator'. In the plural the name means 'a class of divine beings connected with or controlling the course of the sun', or secondly 'the constellation of the Crab'. An analysis of the word Kāśyapa is also significant. The root KĀŚ (*kāśate*) means 'to be visible, to appear, to shine'. *Kāśa* is that which becomes visible: 'appearance' and also a type of grass used for matting, roofing and so on. Like the plant *Kuśa*, this grass has been personified as one of the judges of Yama, the first man, and the judge of the dead. The adjective *Kaśya* signifies someone 'who deserves to be whipped', for *kaśā* is 'a whip, rein, strap or thong', the root KAŚ (short 'a') meaning 'move, strike, punish'. The name of the plant may well be semantically connected with this root, for the grass *Kāśa* is like the *Kuśa*, a long sharp-bladed plant of the Saccharum family. The suffix *-pa* means either 'the action of drinking', or 'protecting, guarding, directing'.

'The protector or guardian of him who deserves the whip or the thong' would seem to be a suitable name for an *upādhyāya*, and in fact the Pali *Mahāvagga*[1] describes a typical ordination in which Mahākāśyapa plays such a part, together with Ānanda who puts the questions. It was in this connection that the Buddha laid down that the ordinant should be named only by his family name, and not by his patronimic which must remain secret. The *Mahāvagga* tells us that Kāśyapa was also called Pipili, 'the ant'.[2] In my opinion the legend of Kāśyapa should not be kept apart from that of the Kāśyapa brothers, whose infinitely fuller biography is worthy of the person who was to have so great an influence on the Buddha's succession. By comparison with his important role the life of Kāśyapa the great is incredibly lacking

[1] M.V., i, 74. [2] *Ibid. loc.*

in substance, while the conversion of the three brothers, whose subsequent role was quite insignificant, has been handed down to us with a wealth of detail. One might say that, instead of a single individual Kāśyapa, we are confronted with a whole family of Kāśyapides, whose varying characteristics combine to form a very considerable mythical entity. It would take me too long to go into this fully here, but all the same I should like to offer the following summary which throws some light on our main subject.[1] The first to be converted of the three Kāśyapa brothers was a *jaṭilaka* brahman, that is a fire-worshipper. The Buddha, who took great trouble to convert the brothers, came to him at dusk in a cave. Kāśyapa warned him that a very dangerous serpent lived in this place, but the Buddha took no notice and entered into a state of *samādhi*. The *nāga* then began to breathe out a thick smoke, but the Buddha, plunged in meditation, gave out an even thicker one. The *nāga* then started to belch out flames, but the Buddha replied with even larger flames until the whole cavern caught fire and Kāśyapa began prematurely to lament the Buddha's death. To his great astonishment, however, the Buddha emerged in the morning to show him the *nāga tamed and coiled up in his bowl*. This exploit provides us with the key to the Laotian rite in which a *nāga* made of cloth is draped round the bowl of the candidate for ordination. Not only is it clear that this is not a local innovation, foreign to the oldest Buddhist traditions, but the myth makes the rite more comprehensible. This ordination ceremony is identical with the self-imposed ordeal of the Buddha on his mission, since, as in every authentic initiation, the future monk is obliged to go through a series of actions analogous to those performed by the founder hero. It should be remembered that the neophyte is regularly assimilated to Siddhārtha.

The connection would be even more striking if my opinion that the *upādhyāya* is the ritual equivalent of a mythical Kāśyapa were accepted. It will be recalled too that, like the Śākya, the *jaṭilaka* fire-worshippers were exempted from the formalities of

[1] These facts are cited after the Chinese version of *āgamas*, translated into French by L. Wieger, *Histoire* . . . , pp. 461 ff.

the novice stage when entering the Buddhist community. They appear to have been accepted into it directly, as a body. After this first miracle, just described, the Buddha had to perform several more before he could break down the resistance of the Kāśyapas and convert them. After the fire comes the ordeal by water. The Buddha crosses the Nairañjana dry-shod, then disappearing beneath the waves he emerges through the bottom of Kāśyapa's boat. Such mastery convinces the brahman and his brothers (there are *two* of them), and even their nephew is won over later, although he had at first accused them of being converted 'as a serpent changes its skin'. The Buddha ends this important chapter of his career by going up a mountain and there pronouncing the so-called 'Fire Sermon', in which he demonstrates that if the whole Universe is nothing but flames, it is because the eye, the perception etc. are themselves only flames.[1] This is an extremely suitable sermon for an audience of ex-fire-worshippers, but it also leads us inescapably to the ultimate stage of Chinese ordination by fire and to all those fiery apotheoses by cremation which precede *nirvāṇa*. Remember too how at the First Council Ānanda was in need of being tested before he could attain that topmost position in which he replaced the Buddha and 'pronounced the Law'. Ānanda's life ends like Gavāmpati's as well, for he bursts into spontaneous combustion and attains *nirvāṇa*.[2] He has earned his reward. Even the name of Ānanda is significant. Formed on the root NAND 'to be joyful', it is a reinforced substantive which from the time of the *Ṛg-Veda* has meant 'joy, sensual pleasure'. A near relation of the Buddha, Ānanda became a monk only because of the trickery and empty promises of the latter. When Ānanda wanted to return to his bride, the Buddha gave him a glimpse of the joys of paradise, filled with beautiful *apsarasas*, provided he would stay in the monastery.[3] Here he became an object of mockery for the other monks, and so he sought in solitude to conquer his weakness for the lusts of the

[1] Kern, *Histoire* . . . , i, 95.
[2] Cf., for example, Kern, *op. cit.*, ii, 295.
[3] Kern, *op. cit.*, i, 128 ff.

flesh. As a companion of the Buddha his primary role was as a servant, and sometimes even a butt. 'Ānanda weeps . . ., the Buddha smiles and rebukes him for various things', says a very old text.[1] Only on the Buddha's death will his value be appreciated. He is *bahuśruta*, for he has 'heard much' and he knows the thoughts of the Buddha better than anyone else. Then follows the scene of his accusation and expulsion. Przyluski stresses the oddness of this expulsion, and explains it as a later development of the Buddhist Church, whose monks professed a greater admiration for the strict observances of the brahman Kāśyapa. Thanks to ordination practices that are still current, we are now better able to reconcile these disparities. The aged novice Ānanda is made indirectly responsible for his master's death and for having given a shorter life to the Buddhist Law by letting women enter the Order. Ānanda, Buddha's retentive listener, must submit to the anguish of expulsion and to the kind of agony in which he 'frees himself from the outflows', before he can attain at last the supreme dignity.

By their exaggerated elements the biographies that we have just examined have an exemplary or didactic function. Their excesses bring the lesson to our notice by underlining what is most characteristic. Are they merely Lives of the Saints constructed to display worthy or unworthy traits, vices to be shunned and virtues to be emulated? I think that their function was more dynamic and that they had an evocative force that was increased by ritual at a time when the myths of the First Council were acted and sung—a conjecture that is supported by the oldest *sūtras*. Without these interrelations one would have to interpret as flights of artistic fancy this corpus of legendary material, which expresses collective beliefs with considerable strength and vividness, provided that one takes into consideration the age-old ritual that is connected with it.

[1] Several texts state this, among them the *Suttavibhanga*, *Pācittiya*, lxxxiii, translated by E. Huber in 'Etudes de littérature bouddhique, v, Les sources du Divyāvadāna (suite),' *Bull. Ecole Fse. Extr. Orient*, vi, p. 7.

VI

Primitive Buddhism and 'Mystery Religions'

AT the beginning of this series of lectures I warned you that I intended to seek a support for my studies in mystery religions, those which lay stress on the initiation factor. At the same time I wanted to take from those religions only such information as would help me to set up a line of enquiry and to comprehend those rites which might otherwise resist all efforts at interpretation. But perhaps you have not all been able to descry the guiding clue of which I spoke to you then, and, if I may express it thus, perhaps you now stand dumbfounded before the new minotaur that I have tried to show you piece by piece. In any case you now undoubtedly have the right to expect a summing up and a somewhat clearer view of the terrain.

I will begin by reminding you of the essential features of what are called 'mystery religions'. They owe their generic name to the fact that their principal rites and revelations are intended to be kept secret. Primarily in fact they create at least two classes within the societies in which they flourish: the initiated and the uninitiated. The former are promised eternal bliss and, even on earth, certain advantages which are not always of a spiritual kind. For the latter an unknown and terrifying future follows an earthly life that is darkened by ignorance and unrelieved by the moral support of any faith; a life that consists only of burdens made yet more heavy by the demands of the initiates to whom the better part of existence is naturally due, and who are able, if need be, to enforce their rights by virtue of their organisation. This strong and crassly materialistic aspect of secret societies may have become diminished in so-called civilised society, but it has still not quite disappeared. Those who know such associations directly or indirectly will bear me out. However, during the course of time

one notes a certain refinement of the rites and the material motives which characterise these religious societies, while in the mythical and legendary sphere the ideology becomes less gross and symbolism gains in importance; the allegorical replaces the concrete. Many a religious system, starting as a mystery confined to a few initiates, has opened its gates wider and wider under the pressure of those social and economic forces of which history provides such striking examples.

Our information on mystery religions comes largely from ancient writers and from modern ethnographers. The two sources supplement each other, but of course the richest is that which is derived from observation of present-day 'archaic' societies. Scholars who have specialized in the history of Antiquity have often struggled mightily—and some are still carrying on the struggle by means of their silent disapproval—to contain the advances of ethnology into their domain, one that is already rendered perilous enough through the increasing complexity and specialisation of philological and archaeological studies. Nevertheless they have tacitly accepted defeat at many points, and this is largely due to the fact that the research-worker of today is increasingly being trained in two disciplines, that of history as well as ethnology. Briefly it is now admited by all who are not blinded by a partisan spirit, that an understanding of our common past is indispensably aided by a study of the life of 'backward' communities on this earth and of numerous characteristics which survive in our civilised societies. As far as the history of mysticism is concerned, this is practically incontrovertible.

Let us first resume those aspects of so-called 'primitive' societies which are concerned with ritual initiation. With only a few exceptions women and children are never eligible for initiation. Maleness and puberty are usually the necessary conditions for this. The new 'man', to be worthy of this name, must henceforth take his place in the life of the adult males, share in their duties and in their spiritual and material privileges. These societies usually believe too that the initiate will be fortunate after death, but he must first have fulfilled the essential conditions of initiation

by carrying out various initiation rites. Their most striking feature is that everywhere, from the ancient Mediterranean religions to the secret societies of modern 'Primitives', initiation follows the same general pattern. To ensure his survival in this world and the next, man has found nothing better than to simulate death and rebirth. This basic formula is well-known, although it is not always so easy to recognise, so carefully is it sometimes concealed from those who are not worthy to be saved by initiation. Broadly speaking it is the aspect of *ordeals, torture and ritual murder* that is of primary importance in societies of a low cultural level, while in the mysteries of more advanced peoples the accent is laid on the constructive part of initiation, on the act of resurrection. Another difference between these two groups of initiatory religions is a tendency in the latter towards universalising salvation, which in the 'primitive' type of society is jealously restricted to the smallest possible number of adult males.

Let us now look at Buddhist initiation in the light of the similar practices of religions of the type that I have just described. First of all it should be noted that the very fact of entering a Buddhist monastic order is not only a liberation for the monk but also for the promoter of the ordination, whether it be parent, master or spiritual guide of the candidate. In its manner and effects this religious act is eminently comparable to a sacrifice. Here the victim is only withdrawn from the profane world and his ultimate destruction is really only delayed, thus prolonging the virtue acquired by those who payed for his ordination. Even so we have seen that some monks put an end to their lives of their own volition and so accomplish the supreme sacrifice. Buddhist legends contain many examples of this kind of death. Even today Jain ascetics often commit suicide by letting themselves die of hunger. When their last hours have come their devotees minister to them, soothing the fever of their agony by applying damp cloths to their bodies. These later become precious talismans, like the water and the linen used in Laos for the *abhiṣekha* of the bonze promoted to the highest dignity. By participating in this way in the superior *tapas* of the ascetic, one undoubtedly increases the sum of one's

own merits. It is with exactly the same intention that almost everywhere collective gifts are made to the newly ordained monk, together with prayers which serve to advance the merits of all the participants. There is no disputing this sacramentalising of the pseudo-victim. It is proved by the way in which he is set up on high and by the veneration which even the oldest monks accord to him. All honour to the latest arrival! The fresh bloom of his passion and of his consecration make him especially precious; the body of the Law is renewed by him, incarnate in him, and we have the myth of the First Council to prove it. In just such a way after so many initiation ceremonies is the newly-elect greeted like a conqueror or the new incarnation of a god.

There is however an essential difference from a sacrifice in that the victim-initiate is considered to be the first to benefit from his consecration, and we have seen him sometimes proceed to the total destruction of his body in order to hasten his participation in the bliss of after-life. The originality of Buddhism was in limiting these self-immolations to exceptional cases, and, on the other hand, in encouraging in its followers the vocation of missionary and propagator of the liberating doctrine. We must remember that at the root of every ordination there is a double motive. Much of it is beneficent and altruistic, but it would be a mistake to see in it only free and spontaneous generosity. In China monasteries and abbots seek to keep up the supply of those who have 'withdrawn from the world' by means of purchases, adoptions and the acceptance of novices from ulterior motives. In the *theravadin* world it is almost obligatory for children to devote themselves to the 'liberation' of their parents. Whole village communities are concerned in these devotions, and you have to have seen the jealous and suspicious surveillance which the parishioners keep over their bonzes, in order to understand the personal importance that they attach to the good conduct of the latter.

But we must return to the central object of our studies. It is on the subject of ordination that we must assemble the maximum number of points that will serve to determine how ancient Buddhism, in its essence, was connected with other initiatory and

mystery religions. First let me remind you of the universal stipulations about age. Major ordination was only accorded to young men who had definitely attained puberty. It would be difficult to understand this requirement if, from the first, it had only been a question of a body of doctrine offering salvation through right-thinking alone. Similarly, without some form of primitive initiation there is no explanation of the tears shed by the women over the novice on the eve of his ordination,[1] nor of the varying rites celebrated afterwards, the principal and more widespread of which we shall now pass in review. Everywhere the president of the ceremony binds the neck and hands of the future bonze who is crouched at his feet in a peculiar position which reminds one of the human embryo. At the same time the president shaves his head, or gets someone else to do so, and cuts his nails. In Ceylon they even recite a formula about 'the hairs of the head, the hairs of the body, the nails, the skin', all external things that can be removed or shorn.[2] We know what the victim undergoes at the moment of his sacrifice,[3] and we know also the value that is everywhere attached to the hair, nails etc., the sacrifice of which is equivalent to that of the individual from which they are taken. The state of nudity evokes both this sacrificial element and the phase that follows, a return to the infantile state. It will be remembered that the mockery and ill-treatment of the candidate come in at this juncture. Raquez' perspicacious remark on the correct placing of the neophyte's feet confirms our view, for this recalls the position of the sacred imprint of the Buddha's feet. When these prints are double they are thought to resemble

[1] Cf. H. Hubert and M. Mauss, 'Essai sur la nature et la fonction du sacrifice,' in *Mélanges d'Histoire des Religions*, Paris, 1929, 2nd edn, p. 47.

[2] The president has spoken earlier the form of words relating to the *perishable* nature of the body.

[3] Hubert and Mauss, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

These operations, it will be remembered, are also frequently intended to purify the victim, to make him more holy. The purification is completed, in the Chinese ordination ceremony, by a total confession which goes back to the most far off days of the previous lives. The confession ends with an act of penance which must be performed on the spot.

those of the Buddha when he was dying.[1] The mockery and buffeting here prolong the ill-treatment suffered by the novice when, like Ānanda, he was learning the Law. At the most solemn moment of ordination the Chinese wield the celebrated 'explanatory' stick. Outrage and violence which can go as far as real murder are also widely used in all initiations at the discretion of the elders. One facet of the aim of this ill-treatment in Buddhist practice has been preserved in China, and has been largely misunderstood. I refer to a certain technique practised in *Dhyāna*,[2] which is said to have been brought to China by Bodhidharma who came from South India. When Enlightenment comes to the pupil it makes him indifferent to external things to such a degree that he will not reveal it until he has been 'tested'. And so the master follows his pupil and hurls questions at him in a violent and unexpected manner, accompanying them with kicks and blows of the fist. Any exclamation that the recipient lets fall reveals whether or not he has arrived at *bodhi*. For example, if the master considers his pupil to be mature, he may kick him full in the chest. When the pupil emerges from the swoon into which he has fallen, he bursts out laughing and cries, 'Joy, O Joy! All is held on the point of a hair'. One *Dhyāna* sect ascertains its adepts' 'progress in buddhification' by administering cudgelings to them. The internal state of the victim may be judged from the range of his cries. As soon as their Enlightenment has been recognised, the newly elect are respected, their words and gestures are sacrosanct; they have become oracles.[3] I imagine that the connection is fairly clear between these facts and the way in which the Law was extracted from Ānanda: 'Let us take it from him by surprise', says one of the texts describing the First Council.[4] Ānanda, who knew this Law, was 'holding it back', and so he is accused of crimes, insulted, driven out, and then when at last he lies down exhausted, like the Buddha in *parinirvāṇa*, he is liberated

[1] According to the texts, the Buddha carefully put his feet together before entering *nirvāna*.

[2] Wieger, *History* . . . , p. 530.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 531.

[4] Przyluski, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

from all earthly bonds. Returning to the *saṃgha*, he is enthroned and questioned about the *Dharma*. Notice in this connection that the Chinese 'explanatory' stick bears on one side the words 'explanation', and on the other 'return to the Law', that is 'to the Dharma'. This makes it hard to ignore the concrete meaning of the root DHR.[1]

Ordination ritual gives a characteristic importance to dress and to the prophylactic value of clothes. It stresses, often ingenuously, the protection that they give to the monk. This should not be underestimated, for the monk is in fact obliged to wear his two undergarments even when asleep, but he must not die in them.[2] Again, the sash that fastens these garments is the same one that once served to bind his neck and hands, while the other end was tied round his clothes made into a bundle. I should remind you too of the care with which it is established that the neophyte is in fact the sole owner of the clothes and begging bowl which henceforth will be his essential attributes, participating doubtless in his new personality and contributing towards it. In several countries the significance of these attributes is expounded in a more or less secret manner. At this same time also the *nāga* bowl is hung on the back of the Laotian bonze, and soon after he must reply to a series of questions about his true nature. Throughout the *theravadin* world he is a *nāga*. The Buddha triumphs over Kāśyapa by *showing* him the subdued *nāga* coiled up in his bowl. I have already pointed out the numerous connections which, in my opinion, join the legend of Kāśyapa to that of the First Council and to the *upādhyāya* who presides by right over ordination. The relations between initiation in general and the animal world are too well-known to need stressing here, especially as there are few indications of them in Buddhist ritual. However I have already remarked that a certain reality should be allowed to what are usually considered to be literary images. The Lion of the Śākya in the midst of the assembled lions of the First Council, sitting on his lion throne and roaring like a lion: all this in a text

[1] = 'hold, maintain, retain.'

[2] Cf. for example Mgr. Pallegoix, *op. cit.*, tome ii, p. 27.

where the Gavāmpati episode is related at length, cannot be mere literary imagery. It reflects beliefs and ritual to which one could easily find correspondences elsewhere. I have already mentioned also the deep voices, the *basso profondo* that is heard at the most solemn moment of initiation. In Tibet the recluse who by painful asceticism has proved himself worthy of mounting to a higher grade, blows a horn whose tones may well be compared to bellowings or roaring,[1] and, moreover, such deep and raucous sounds are frequently heard in Tibetan religious ceremonies. In Laos you may often hear the bonzes in their chanting, trying to get down to the deepest bass notes. I would remind you that the Buddha is 'the leader of the oxen' and 'the lion of the Śākya'. Physically too he has leonine characteristics. You will know how essential is the employment of 'bull-roarers' in initiation. Even the ancient mysteries made use of these primitive instruments which, with their screeches and roars, are usually intended to evoke the voices of ancestors and other religious powers. Mystic death is always associated with isolation, with banishment to the depths of a forest close to the supernatural powers which haunt the place. Like the Buddha, Ānanda obtains his illumination at the foot of a tree after he has been cast out, and we have compared this retreat to the simulated exit of the neophyte in every ordination. The Chinese make their candidates kneel out of doors, exposed to all kinds of weather, in a courtyard facing the sanctuary, while their heads are being tonsured. Finally I interpret the candidate's return into the assembly as a conception followed by rebirth. This is my explanation of the *saṃgha*'s closing in on the newly ordained monk in order to pronounce his admission, a solemn moment the exact time of which is carefully noted on a sundial. His life as a monk begins at that instant. The *Mahāvagga* makes it clear that in reckoning the required age for ordination, it is the date of conception and not of birth that is important. To be born in his rightful place as a new member of the *saṃgha*, the new monk must break the circle of his fellows and occupy the lowest place at the far end. When Ānanda returns to the Council he is made to pass

[1] Bleichsteiner, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

through the key-hole. This passage-ritual is well-known and understandable enough. We must see it as a kind of ordeal, as is suggested by Buddhist doctrine, but apart from this Kāśyapa is inviting Ānanda to perform this feat by saying that he ought to be capable of it if he has really become an *arhat*.

When in Laos the highest rank is being conferred on a bonze, he is led out of the bathing cabin *with clasped hands*, *like a blind man*, and is taken along 'the eight-fold path'. In this way he passes through all possible existences without stopping in any. The heavens, depicted by embroidered screens, are included among the stages that he must make before reaching the society of Buddhist monks, the only worthwhile destiny, that which leads through self-obliteration to eternity. In the list of questions put to the ordinary candidate I detect something analogous to this passage through all possible incarnations. That is how I explain the contradiction between the necessity of not being a *nāga* and the fact that in *theravadin* communities the candidate calls himself a *nāga* and bears an effigy of a *nāga* on his back or on his head. It reminds one of the *nāga*-elephant, the form in which the Buddha was *conceived*.

Let us now pass on to the ultimate form of Buddhist consecration which has been preserved by the *Mahāyāna* School: ordeal by fire. Note first that it is not specifically an accretion exterior to Indian Buddhism and which has been later incorporated into Mahāyānism. In its account of the Buddha's last moments one of the oldest texts of the Pali canon tells how once on the banks of the Kukuṭṭhāna the Blessed One manifested himself to Ānanda 'shining like a flame without smoke or ashes'. The Buddha then says that this wonder 'only happens at the moment of *nirvāṇa* and upon acquisition of *bodhi*'.[1] It would be hard to find a text that is more explicit on this vital though obscure question of *nirvāṇa* and *bodhi*. In my eyes it has the value of a formal demonstration, and it authorises the connection that I have postulated between *bodhi*, initiation by fire and a return into the immortal Absolute of those

[1] Taken from the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* (one of the most ancient texts of the Pali canon) and used by E. Senart, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

elements of the human body that are perishable. Numerous important facts have been accumulated around the notion of *brahman*, and they have led us to believe that the concept of 'flame' evoked by this ancient Indo-European word is too restricted. None the less for many years the highest aspirations of Hindu ascetics have been to increase their personal fire, their *tapas*, and to achieve this they have used not only spiritual means but purely physical ones such as exposure to the sun, wood fires and so on. Finally, at the risk of plunging into dangerous generalisations, I might add that it is in India, a country where the concept of *brahman* and its succedaneum *bodhi* have been most highly developed on the theosophical plane, that the cremation of the dead is practised on a vastly greater scale than anywhere else in the world.

Baptism by fire was well known in the Mediterranean world[1] and appears even in primitive Christianity. Generally speaking, it was considered as a kind of immunisation against premature death, or alternatively as a preparation for the great holocaust into which the world was to be plunged when its allotted span was accomplished. In many 'primitive' societies the initiates, when numb with fatigue or even under the influence of hypnosis, are carried close to a fire where they must endure the heat and smoke without moving.[2] It is a kind of smoke-curing of the human body; a hard ordeal no doubt, but it will strengthen the new being and protect it, at a very considerable cost it is true, from a too rapid decay.

One rite of initiation into the mysteries of Mithra was the brand stamped with a red-hot iron on the initiate's brow. According to the Church-father Tertullian, this distinctive mark was a

[1] *Le baptême du feu dans les mystères de Mithra:* cf. F. Cumont in *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 1945, p. 407, n. 2, mentioned in a review by H. C. Puech, in *Rev. Hist. Rel.*, tome 131, nos. 1–3 (1946), p. 226. In the same number (pp. 182–6), a long review by A. Guillaumont discusses the exhaustive work of Carl Martin Edsman on this subject in *Le baptême de feu* (Leipzig-Upsala, 1904). I refer the reader to these studies.

[2] In the initiation ceremonies of Australian tribes: cf. A. W. Howitt, *The Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, London, 1904, pp. 509 ff. (Quoted by O. E. Briem, *Les sociétés secrètes de mystères*, French trans., Paris 1941, p. 56.)

constant reminder of the solemn vows made to serve the god and to strive to attain his ends.[1] Many characteristics of Mithraism bring us close to Buddhism, but it is in the field of initiation that comparison is most revealing. I will quote the following rites in the order in which they were celebrated. The hands of the initiate were tied; the lower grades were obliged to become instructed in doctrine and to act as servants to the more advanced initiates, for there were three main grades; initiates of a certain grade had to roar like lions. Membership of this last grade gave one the right to take full part in the mysteries, which consisted essentially in a representation of the god Mithra's sacrifice of the divine bull, already referred to in connection with the myth of Gavāmpati. Finally there was a *feast* as in all our Buddhist ceremonies and in many other religious celebrations.[2] These *agapes* have passed unnoticed in the Buddhist field, but their importance must have been greater at one time.[3] Several accounts of the First Council carefully note that, when the *saṃgha* was met together, it was supplied with enough food to last the whole session. Cambodian ritual among others has preserved the rite wherein rice is offered to the ordinants by the new monk, followed by all the laity present. He gives a little rice to each of the bonzes who, before eating it, offer a 'share to the birds' and another 'to the animals'. In Southern Asia this was also, until quite recently, a form of funeral service carried out for certain criminals and also by Buddhists of great piety.[4] Often in these same countries the blood of the victim, sometimes mixed with rice, is drunk communally by the attendants at the sacred drama of sacrifice,[5] and it might be thought perhaps that it is not so far from these practices to the bonze's offering of rice to his new

[1] O. E. Briem, *op. cit.*, pp. 336 ff. [2] *Ibid. loc.*

[3] As Mr. A. W. Macdonald has recently outlined in a work utilising a large number of facts relative to Brahmanism and Buddhism ('Juggernaut reconstruit,' in *Journ. Asiat.*, 1953, no. 4, pp. 487–528).

[4] Cf. for example George Coedès, 'Etudes cambodgiennes, xxxii, La destination funéraire des grands monuments khmèrs,' in *Bull. Ecole Fse. Extr. Orient*, xl, pp. 320 and 324, n. 1.

[5] Found to some extent everywhere in South-East Asia, from India to Indo-china.

brethren. This act, which epitomises and perhaps surpasses everything that he has previously done, may well symbolise that supreme gift which is the sacrifice of his own body. It will be the last that he has to make, for thereafter he becomes an *arhat*, that is: 'worthy to receive alms'.

In my opinion it has not been sufficiently stressed that Buddhism is solidly based on a rigid system of gifts and exchanges: gifts of food and of a thousand and one material objects; gifts of human creatures who take the place of sacrificial victims. The benefits anticipated from the gifts by their givers concern in particular prolonged survival and eternal bliss. This type of religion is not primitive, for it implies a developed social structure, but the element that does go back much further into the past is the mythologico-ritual complex centred around ordination and which I have attempted to examine in the preceding lectures.[1]

We have seen its antiquity and its thoroughly radical disagreement with the gentleness that is commonly attributed to the Founder, the Buddha. On the other hand, if you conceive the origins of Buddhism within the context of an initiatory religion, a mystery religion, both the Fable and the underlying cruelty of the rites are explained. Dare I add also that I feel that the most luminous of Buddhism's ethical discoveries would bear investigation under an entirely new light by research that would continue my own? I certainly think—and I will end with this—that our study of initiatory practices could shed some light on that basic conception of Suffering which has made the sermon of Benares so famous: the idea that all is Suffering, etc. At all events I should be happy if you would agree that this great man's compassion for the misery in the world should be studied and understood as forming part of a whole, and of a whole in which it is not a premiss but a nucleus, the core of a great ritual drama.

[1] There could be no question in the limit set by these lectures, of introducing an examination of initiation ceremonies among the Brahmans, Jains, etc. . . . Nevertheless I propose, in the near future, to pursue my investigations into these fields, since their importance for this class of research is quite evident.

INDEX