

*SĀKIYABHIKKHU/SAKYABHIKKHU/
ŚĀKYABHIKṢU: A MISTAKEN
LINK TO THE MAHĀYĀNA?¹*

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In the Kuṣāṇa period² it is quite common for inscriptions to refer to the monastic fraternity either of the donor (when himself a monk) or of the recipients. Later this is less common and we see instead a growing practice of making donatory inscriptions which do not specify any monastic school. In the case of donors new titles become prevalent, while in the case of recipients it becomes more normal to donate to a monastery rather than to a monastic lineage. In two papers published around 1952 and 1962³ Masao Shizutani referred to this development and conjectured that ‘the new title Śākyabhikṣu was of Mahāyāna origin’. He was no doubt aware that earlier scholars had taken it to mean ‘Buddhist monk’;⁴ so he adds the comment that:

“This conjecture, however, may possibly be erroneous, and the title may have been devised in order to distinguish the Buddhist monks from the Jaina monks.”⁵

This was followed up by H. Sarkar in 1968. Sarkar also believed that the *Śākya-bhikṣus* could be identified as a distinct group, partly on the basis of their names.⁶ Then in an influential article first

¹ This article was initially stimulated by a paper given by Richard S. Cohen at the Spalding Symposium on Indian Religions, Oxford, 1999. It is now published: Cohen, Richard S., “Kinsmen of the Son: Śākyabhikṣu and the Institutionalization of the Bodhisattva Ideal,” *HR* 40 (2000).

² There are a few definitely pre-Kuṣāṇa inscriptions and a number that cannot be dated.

³ Shizutani, Masao, “On the Śākyabhikṣu as found in Indian Buddhistic Inscriptions,” *JIBS* I, no. 2 (1953) (in Japanese); Shizutani, Masao, “Mahāyāna Inscriptions in the Gupta Period,” *JIBS* X, no. 1 (1962).

⁴ BR s.v. *Śākya*, *Śākyabhikṣu* and *Śākyabhikṣukī*.

⁵ Shizutani, “Mahāyāna Inscriptions,” p. 356.

⁶ Sarkar, H., *Studies in the Early Buddhist Architecture of India*, Delhi, 1966, pp. 106-8. The evidence on the basis of the names is not, however, very compelling.

published in 1979 Gregory Schopen developed the same idea in rather more detail.⁷ To summarize the facts on which he based his position:

1. There is a donatory formula found in sources from around the fourth century and down to around the thirteenth century.
2. This formula involves the donation of good fortune (*puṇya*) to all beings, sometimes with an additional reference to the donor's family (kinship or monastic). In its full form it occurs with a phrase indicating that this is in order to obtain supreme knowledge (*anuttara-jñāna*).
3. The same donatory formula is found in the colophons of two Mahāyāna manuscripts from Gilgit and in the colophons of a number of post-tenth century Mahāyāna manuscripts, mostly from Nepal.
4. Many of the donors bear the titles of either *Śākya-bhikṣu* or *paramopāsaka*.

Schopen adds to the references to epigraphic materials initially collected by Shizutani and collects together a total of fifty seven passages. At the end of this article he puts forward as a 'possible interpretation' the view that from the fourth century and throughout the Gupta period the followers of the Mahāyāna:

*"appear to have gone by the names śākyabhikṣu/paramopāsaka — at least in inscriptions — and these names were never dropped."*⁸

I believe this conclusion to be mistaken. It seems in clear contradiction to the literary sources and is not clearly required even by the inscriptional evidence. In what follows I shall address first the usage of *Sākiya-bhikkhu* and *Sakya-bhikkhu* in Pali sources, then *Śākya* or *Sakka* by itself (i.e. without or separated from *bhikṣu*), then *Śākya-bhikṣu* and the earlier Pali *Sakkaputtiya*. Finally I discuss *paramopāsaka* and then look at the donatory formula itself.

Sākiya(-bhikkhu) and *Sakya-bhikkhu* in Pali

To begin with, let me turn to some Pali passages which have not as far as I know been noticed in this context.

⁷ Schopen, Gregory, "Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions," *I-JJ* 21 (1979).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.15.

In the commentary to the *Cūḷa-Nārada-jātaka*⁹ there is a reference to a *Sākiya-bhikkhu* — a mother desirous of finding a husband for her daughter seeks to arrange for a *Sākiya-bhikkhu* to become enamoured of her daughter. The passage is clearly translated by A.L. Rowse:

“So her mother thought to herself: ‘This my daughter is of full age, yet no one chooses her. I will use her as bait for a fish, and make one of those Sākiya ascetics come back to the world, and live upon him’.” (Ja Trsl. IV 136).

The story is set in the time of the Buddha and it is clear from the context that the term simply means any *bhikkhu* who is a follower of the Buddha. Here it cannot possibly mean Mahāyānist. It could conceivably mean a *bhikkhu* who is of the *Sākiya* (*Śākya*) clan, but that seems unlikely.

The exact date and authorship of the *Jātaka commentary* is still unclear. Traditionally it is attributed to Buddhaghosa, but we should not necessarily take this too literally. Even if true, it might only mean that it was compiled by a group under Buddhaghosa’s presidency. More probably, we should take the attribution as simply meaning ‘text of the school of Buddhaghosa, produced relatively close to his time’ and this is evident enough from its content.

The visit of Buddhaghosa to Ceylon is usually dated to the reign of Mahānāma in the early fifth century A.D. but this dating is dependent upon a tradition not recorded until some seven hundred or so years later. So it is better to take Buddhaghosa’s *floruit* as in the fourth century A.D. (but not earlier, assuming he is posterior to the extant *Dīpavaṃsa*).¹⁰ This would mean that the date of the *Jātaka commentary* must lie between then and the sixth century A.D.

⁹ Ja IV 219: *Te kaṭṭhāni bhinnāni ti idaṃ Satthā Jetavane viharanto thulla-kumārīkā-palobhanam ārabha katesi. Sāvatti-vāsino kir’ ekassa kulassa pannarasa-soḷasa-vass’-uddesikā dhītā ahoṣi sobhagga-ppattā, na ca naṃ koci vāresi. Ath’ assā mātā cintesi: “mama dhītā vaya-ppattā, na ca naṃ koci vāreti. Āmisena macchaṃ viya etāya ekaṃ Sākiya-bhikkhum palobhetvā uppabbājetvā taṃ nissāya jīvissāmi” ti.*

¹⁰ Kieffer-Pulz, Petra, *Die Sīmā. Vorschriften zur Regelung der buddhistischen Gemeindegrenze in älteren buddhistischen Texten*, Berlin, 1992, pp. 163-167 dates the composition of the *Vinaya commentary* to 386-87 A.D. But a date early in the fourth century cannot be ruled out. Compare also: Barua, B.M., “Buddhadatta and Buddhaghosa: Their Contemporaneity and Age,” in *Corrections to Geiger’s Mahāvamsa, etc.: A collection of monographs*, ed. Buddhadatta, Ambalangoda, 1957; Buddhadatta, A. P., *Corrections of Geiger’s Mahāvamsa, etc.: A collection of monographs*, Ambalangoda, Ceylon, 1957.

An even earlier Pali passage is found in the *Apadāna*, a work included in the Canon but generally recognized to be one of the latest works admitted.¹¹ The story concerns the Buddhist nun Bhaddā Kesakuṇḍalā (born in Rājagaha) who had previously ordained with the white-robed ones (*seta-vattha*). They pulled out her hair with an implement; so the commentator Dhammapāla is probably correct in understanding them as being Jains (*nigaṇṭha*). She learned their doctrine (*samaya*) and lived alone, investigating it.

Then a human hand (from a cemetery) was cut off and left near her. Seeing the hand, she obtained the meditative object (*nimitta*) which is 'maggot-ridden' (*puḷavākula* = *puḷavaka*).¹² Emerging from that experience, she was deeply moved (*saṃvigga*) and naturally asked her co-practitioners. They replied that the Sakya monks (*Sakya-bhikkhavo*) know about this thing (*attha*). The point of the story is that her experience was something unknown to the Jains and so she had to turn to the disciples of the Buddha. So far as I know, this kind of cemetery meditation on the stages of decomposition of a corpse is not recorded as a Jain practice and may well have been typically or even uniquely Buddhist at this time. So the spontaneous occurrence of an experience of this type could well lead to mention of the Buddhist practice.

11 Ap II 563 (cited Thī-a 105):
samayaṃ taṃ vicintesiṃ, suvāno mānusaṃ karaṃ ||
chinnam gayha samīpe me, pātayitvā apakkami.
Disvā nimittam alabhiṃ, hattham taṃ puḷavākulam. ||
Tato utthāya saṃvigga, apucchim saha-dhammike.
Te avocum: vijānanti, taṃ attham Sakya-bhikkhavo. ||
Sāham taṃ attham pucchissam, upetvā Buddha-sāvake.
Te mam ādāya gacchimsu, Buddha-seṭṭhassa santikaṃ. ||

The story is translated: Pruitt, William, *The commentary on the verses of the Therīs (Therīgāthā-Atthakathā Paramatthadīpanī VI)* by Ācariya Dhammapāla, Oxford, 1998, p. 139ff.

12 This is a technical term for one of the mental objects of a type of meditation. Pruitt translates differently: "Seeing that sign, I received the hand that was full of maggots." This is grammatically possible, but does not make sense in the context of the story. We can take *hattham* as object of *disvā*, although against the order. Or, *hattham* and *nimittam* may be in apposition or a double accusative. In the latter case, translate: "Seeing <that>, I received (apprehended) that hand full of maggots as a meditative object (*nimitta*)". This would be an early use of *nimitta* in this way, but that is not too problematic in one of the latest texts in the Canon. In the first four *Nikāyas*, we usually find: *puḷavaka-saññā*- (vll.), e.g. D III 226; S V 131f.; A I 42; II 17; V 106; 310; cf. Dhs §264; Patis I 49; 95. In the commentarial literature the uncompounded *puḷavaka*- (vl. *puḷu*-) becomes normal. See especially Vism.

13 Pt to Ps III 121: *Bhikkhū ti Sākiyā bhikkhū, maccha-mamsa-khādanato nīlābhijātī ti vadanti.*
Ñāya-laddhe pi paccaye bhuijāmānā Ajīvaka-samayassa viloma-gāhitāya paccayesu kaṇṭake
pakkhipitvā khādanā ti vadanti. Eke pabbajitā, ye savisesam atta-kilamathānuyogam anuyuttā;
tathā hi te kaṇṭake vattentā viya hontī ti kaṇṭaka-vuttikā ti vuttā.

However this may be, it is quite clear that the expression *Sakya-bhikkhu* here can only be intended to designate a Buddhist monk. That it does in fact mean 'Buddhist monk' is further confirmed by a third Pali occurrence. Commenting on a passage found in several places which describes the Ājīvaka doctrine of the six *abhijātis*, Buddhaghosa refers to *bhikkhus*. The *ṭīkā* to his *Majjhimāgama commentary* explains this as *Sākiya bhikkhus*.¹³ Elsewhere in parallel passages the *ṭīkā*s gloss this instead as '*bhikkhus* in the *Buddhasāsana*'.¹⁴ So there can be hardly any doubt that for the *ṭīkā-kāra* a *Sākiya bhikkhu* is precisely a Buddhist monk.

Śākya in Sanskrit texts

The earliest of the small number of extant Sanskrit textual passages given in the St. Petersburg Dictionary belong to the period around and just after the middle of the first millennium A.D. These include passages in works of Varāhamihira (fl. c. 550 A.D.) and the slightly later Daṇḍin. It is noticeable that the earliest of the inscriptions listed by Schopen belong to the period from the fifth century to the seventh century A.D. (One may be fourth century.) A much earlier date is in any case perhaps unlikely in inscriptions, since this is mainly a Sanskrit usage and might not have been widely current in the period when Middle Indian was still normative for most Buddhist schools. Schopen points out that inscriptions containing the term *Śākya-bhikṣu* are absent from the south and from the north-west. So in fact its geographical distribution largely coincides with that of the Pudgalavādin schools.

In the *Bṛhatsamhitā* Varāhamihira refers to *Śākyas* and teachers (*upādhyāya*) together with Jains (*ārḥata*) and Jain ascetics in the final stages (*nirgranthi*).¹⁵ Probably the meaning here is in fact *Śākyas* and their teachers. They are in any case two distinct items, since the list occurs in the treatment of a type of horary astrology in which significance is drawn from whoever the querent is looking at. So in

14 Sv-pt I 290 (= Spk-pt = Mp-t): *Bhikkhū ti Buddha-sāsane bhikkhū*.

15 BS chap. 51, v. 21:

*Śākyopādhyāyārḥata-nirgranthi-nimitta-nigama-kaivartaiḥ/
caura-camūpati-vanijām dāsi-yodhāpaṇastha-vadhyānām//*

(Kern read °*nirgrantha*-). Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras could also be meant here, but the reference is more probably to the distinction between grades of Jaina practice.

the case in question if the questioner looks at a Buddhist, the answer should concern a thief; if at his teacher, then the matter at hand concerns a military officer (*camūpati*); if at a Jain or a Jain ascetic, then it concerns a merchant or a slave-girl respectively. It is not possible to tell from this passage alone whether Śākya here means a Buddhist in general or something more specific. Most probably, however, since the Indian population at large did not identify itself as exclusively Vaiṣṇava or Buddhist or Śaiva or Jain, but rather gave support on an *ad hoc* basis, it means both junior Buddhist monks and committed lay supporters (*upāsaka*).

A later passage is rather clearer. In a chapter concerned with the setting up of images of deities, Varāhamihira lists those who should do this in each case — Bhāgavatas for (an image of) Viṣṇu, Magas for the Sun god, brahmins who wear ash for Śiva, those familiar with the setting up of the *maṇḍala* for the goddesses, brahmins for Brahmā, Śākyas for the compassionate one (*sarva-hita*) whose mind is at peace and naked ascetics for the Jinas.¹⁶ The tenth century commentator Bhaṭṭotpala specifies that the Śākyas are those who wear red (*rakta-pāṭa*), a term which sometimes refers to Buddhist monks in texts of the period when Buddhist monks were still a living presence in most parts of India.¹⁷ Moreover, he explains ‘all-compassionate’ as referring to the Buddha.¹⁸ So there can be hardly any doubt that Śākya here means ‘Buddhist monk’.

16 BS chap. 60, v. 19:
Viṣṇor Bhāgavatān, Magāṃś ca Savituh, Śambhoḥ sa-bhasma-dvijān,
māṭṛnām api maṇḍala-krama-vido, viprān vidur brahmanāh, /
Śākyān Sarva-hitasya śānta-manaso, nagnān Jinānām vidur.
Ye yaṃ devam upāśritāḥ sva-vidhinā tais tasya kāryā kriyā. //
 (Kern read: *māṭṛnām api māṭṛ-maṇḍala-vido*.)

17 e.g. Kād 94f.: *Śākyamuni-śāsana-patha-dhaurayai raktapaṭaiḥ* (v.l. *rakta-pādaiḥ*); *Āgamaḍambara*: Chap. 1 between vv. 23 and 24 where the *snātaka* humorously addresses the Buddhist monk: *bho raktapaṭa*, Chap. 2 & 3 (I owe this reference to Csaba Dezső who is preparing a new edition of this text); *Nyāyamañjarī*: NM I 145; 641; 647; *Bhāgavata-purāna*: Bhp 4.19.25 (*upadharmeṣu nagna-rakta-paṭādiṣu*).

18 *Sarva-hitasya Buddhasya śānta-manaso jit'endriyasya Śākyān rakta-paṭān viduh.*

19 Pingree, David, ed., *Yavanajātaka of Sphujidhvaja*, Cambridge, Mass., 1978, Vol. II p. 312.

20 AS chap. 3, 20.16: *śākyājīvakādīn vṛṣala-pravrajitān deva-piṭṛ-kāryeṣu bhojayataḥ śatyo danḍah.*

In fact, an earlier mention of the word *Śākya* occurs in the *Yavanajātaka* of Sphujidhvaja (YJ chap. 22, v. 4), composed in A.D. 269/270. Here we learn that a strong Mars produces a *Śākya-śramaṇa* ‘with bad character’. Indeed, David Pingree refers to a series of seven later astrological writers, all dependent upon Sphujidhvaja.¹⁹ These variously refer in the same context to the *Śākya-śramaṇa*, the *raktapaṭa*, the *Śākya-yogin* and the *Bauddhāśraya*. Other planets when strong produce other types of religious practitioner. So there can be hardly any doubt that the expression is already current in this sense in the second century A.D.

Indeed this is not the only earlier Sanskrit reference. In chapter two of the *Arthaśāstra*, we find a prohibition of the feeding at rites for ancestors of renunciants (*vr̥ṣala-pravrajita*) such as *Śākyas* and *Ājivakas*.²⁰ But probably the dating of the *Arthaśāstra* is controversial; so I will not attempt to make any use of this reference for dating purposes. We can also note a passage in Kumārila’s *Ślokovarttika*²¹ where the views of the *Śākya* are contrasted with those of the *Vaiśeṣika* and *Sāṃkhya* schools. Interestingly, it is the specifically *Vaiśeṣika* notion of the three kinds of *asamskr̥ta-dharma* that is referred to.²²

We also find a similar usage in Jain texts. The sixth century Jain commentator Jinabhadra has:

“If the thought of the Jina is your standard, don’t reject substantiality, since, if substance is destroyed, destruction of everything would follow for you, just as for a Buddhist.”²³

Kotyāryavādi, who completes this part of Jinabhadra’s unfinished auto-commentary, explains that this means like a Buddhist because you accept only the modifications (*paryāya-mātra-grāhitvāt Śākyavat*) and not substance (*dravyārtha*).²⁴

21 ŚV: *Śabdānityatādīkaraṇa* 21cd: *Śākyasyāpi tv anaikāntaḥ kṣaṇika-vyatirekabhīḥ ...*

22 There are many further passages in later Sanskrit literature — too many to list here. As examples we can note: *Tattvasamīkṣā*: (TS: first *kāṇḍa*) *Śākyānām kṣaṇikatve*; instructions for handling Buddhist and Jain monks on stage are given in the *Nāṭya-śāstra*: NŚ chap. 21 vv. 130 and 150; BhA: p. 51: *Sāṃkhyasamaya eṣa na Śākyasamayaḥ* and references to *Sakkia-samaṇa* on pp. 9, 46 and 49; Helarāja: VP p. 106f.; NM I 9; 45; 75; 195; 202; 344; 492; 526; 537; 568; II 298; 312. There are a number of further occurrences in compounds in these and other texts, but I do not list those because there is sometimes ambiguity as to the meaning.

23 VA-bh 560:
Jati Jina-mataṃ pamāṇaṃ to, mā davv’-aṭṭhiyaṃ pariccayasū. |
Sakkassa va hoti jato taṅ-nāse savva-nāso te || (2901)

24 Malvania (ibid. n. 3) cites a subcommentary which glosses *Sakkassa* as = *Bauddhasya*.

In the *Śrāvaka-prajñapti*, a work attributed to Umāsvāti and in any case pre-fifth century, we find reference to speaking praise of *Sakkas*, etc. Haribhadra's eighth century Sanskrit commentary explains this as red monks (*rakta-bhikṣavaḥ*).²⁵ Likewise, the relatively early *Pinḍa-nijjuttī* includes the *Sakka* in a list of five kinds of *samaṇa*.²⁶ Jinadāsa's *Uttarādhyayana-cūrṇi* also mentions the *Śākyas*, as do various works of Haribhadra, Abhayadeva, and Śīlānka.²⁷ Later Prakrit texts also cite other examples of this usage.²⁸

Śākyārya-bhikṣu-saṅgha and *Śākyopāsaka* in epigraphic sources

In a copper-plate grant of Guhasena of Valabhī, dated to the year 246 of the Gupta era, the king grants the revenues (cash and produce and labour) of a number of villages to provide the four requisites to the monks in the *mahāvihāra* of Duḍḍā, founded by the reverend Duḍḍā and situated in the neighbourhood of Valabhī. More exactly, the monks are referred to as the noble monastic order of the *Śākyas* who belong to the eighteen *nikāyas* and have come from many places.²⁹ Later in the same epigraph the expression 'noble monastic order of the *Śākyas*' recurs.³⁰ The monastic university of Valabhī is known from a

25 ŚP 62:

*para-pāṣaṃḍa-pasaṃsā Sakkāiṇam iha vanna-vāo u
tehiṃ saha paricao jo sa saṃthavo hoi nāyavvo* (88).

See also p. 200 where the commentary to verse 200 refers to: *na Śākyādy-upāsaka-dharme*.

26 Bollée, W.B., *Materials for an Edition and Study of the Pinḍa- and Oha-nijjuttis of the Śvetāmbara Jain Tradition. Vol. II Text and Glossary*, Stuttgart, 1994, p. 26.

Niggantha Sakka Tāvasa Geruya Ājīva pañcahā samaṇā (v. 445, pādas ab).

According to Mehta, Mohanlal and Chandra, K. Rishabh, *Āgamic Index, Vol. 1. Prakrit Proper Names*, Ahmedabad, 1970-72 (s.v. 1. *samaṇa*), this is cited in the *Niśītha-sūtra-bhāṣya* (v. 4420) and in ten other commentarial works. See also PU 298.

27 *Uttarādhyayana-cūrṇi*, p. 190 (1933). Further references in Mehta and Chandra, *op. cit.* (s.v. Sakka).

28 Somadeva (tenth century) in YT II 249: *Sugatakīrtinā Śākyena saha* and in UA pp. 3 and 95; vv. 55; 76; 174; 309; 804. Vidyānanda twice mentions the *Śākyā-sāsana* (Sśp 27 and 29). See also Williams, Robert, *Jaina Yoga. A Survey of the Mediaeval Śrāvaka-cāras*, London, 1963 p. 46; Balbir, Nalini, "Jain-Buddhist Dialogue: Material from the Pāli Scriptures," *JPTS* XXVI (2000) p. 27 (*ratta-paḍa*) and n. 74.

29 *Valabhī-tala-sanniviṣṭa-Duḍḍāpāda-kārita-Duḍḍā-mahāvihāre nānā-ḍig-abhyāgatāṣṭādaśa-nikāyābhyanantara-Śākyārya-bhikṣu-saṅghāya grāsācchādana-śayyāsana-glānapratyaya-bhaiṣajyādy-upayogārttham ...* See Bühler, J.G., "A Grant of King Guhasena of Valabhī," *Ind. Ant.* IV, no. June (1875), revised in Barnett, Lionel D., "No. 30 — Wala Plate of Guhasena: the Year 246," *EI* XIII (1915-16).

30 ... *yato 'sy'ocitayā Śākyārya-bhikṣu-saṅgha-sthū[y]ā bhūmijataḥ kṛṣataḥ ka[rṣaya]to vā na kaiścīt pratīṣedhe varttitavyam āgāmi-bhadra-nṛpatibhiḥ cāsmad-valāsa-jair anityāny aiśvaryaṇy asthiraṃ mānuṣyaṃ sāmānyaṃ ca bhūmi-dā[na]-phalam avagacchadbhir ayam asmad-dāyo 'numantavyaḥ paripālayitavyaś ca ...*

number of sources as a major centre of Buddhism in this period, especially but not exclusively for the non-Mahāyāna traditions, (and particularly those of the Puḍgalavādin schools). In this context then the term *Śākya* again clearly means simply 'Buddhist'.

A similar expression occurs in another grant of the same sixth century king: 'the noble monastic order who belong to the eighteen *nikāyas* and have come from many places'.³¹ In the former epigraph of this king he is referred to as a Śaiva devotee (*parama-māheśvara*), whereas here he is designated as a Buddhist disciple (*paramopāsaka*). It seems natural that a Śaiva king (or a Śaiva scribe working for a Śaiva dynasty) might designate the monastic order as Buddhist (*Śākya*) and equally natural that, if he has become a leading Buddhist devotee, there would be no need to refer specifically to the Buddhist nature of the order to which he is donating.

We will refer again to this inscription, but for now we should also note the occurrence several times of the expression *Śākyopāsaka*. It is found at Mathurā, at Kuda and probably at Ajaṅṭā, although the last is in the uncertain form of '*Śākya uṣaka*'. The latter two inscriptions probably date to around the fifth and sixth centuries. As regards the one from Mathurā, according to Lüders: "For palaeographic reasons the date of the inscription cannot be later than the beginning of the Kuṣāṇ rule".³² This, then, with the passages in the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Apadāna* is probably the earliest occurrence of the word *Śākya* in this sense. In this particular case it is found on the pedestal of a seated Buddha from the site of a Buddhist monastery some twelve miles west of the town of Mathurā (outside the village of Anyōr). The inscription records the gift of a Buddha image to the monastery 'for the happiness and benefit of all beings' (*hita-sukh'-artha[m]*). We will have occasion to return to the occurrence of this type of formula when we turn to the donatory formulae which Schopen and Shizutani associate with the Mahāyāna.

31 ... *nānā-dig-abhyāgatāṣṭādaśa-nikāyābhyantarāryya-bhikṣu-saṃghāya grāsācchādana-śayanāsana-glāna-bhaiṣajyādy-kriy'otsarppanārtham*; see Bühler, G., "Grants from Valabhi," *Ind. Ant.* V, July (1876), p. 207.

32 Lüders, H., *Mathurā Inscriptions. Unpublished papers edited by Klaus L. Janert*, Göttingen, 1961, p. 172.

Śākya-bhikṣu in Sanskrit texts

Moving on to the textual occurrences of the term *Śākya-bhikṣu*, we turn again to Varāhamihira. In a passage listing a number of persons and things under the rulership of the planet Mars, he includes *Śākya-bhikṣu*.³³ It does not seem very likely that Mahāyānists in particular would be under the rulership of Mars and in fact the commentator again explains as the red-robed ascetics.³⁴ A similar notion recurs later in the *Brhatsamhitā* when we learn that activities connected with Buddhist monks (and various others including doctors and thieves) will be fruitful on a day presided over by the planet Mars.³⁵ Needless to say, the association of the planet Mars with the colour red is very ancient.³⁶

Manu-smṛti (Man chap. IV, v.30) refers to *pāṣaṇḍins* among those who should not be honoured by brahmins. The commentator Kullūkabhaṭṭa (twelfth or thirteenth century) explains this as referring to *śākyabhikṣu[ka]s*, *ḥṣapaṇakas*, and so on. Earlier (and later) commentators make it certain that the reference is to Buddhist and Jain monks.³⁷ We should note also the references to a *Śākya-bhikṣukī* in the *Daśakumāracarita* (Daśa 79, 1.11) and in the *Padma-prābhṛtaka* (PP after v. 21). In the latter work a corrupt (*duṣṭa*) *Śākya-bhikṣu* is a character (between verses 23 and 25).

The introductory stanzas to the treatise on the different doctrines (*samaya-bheda*) attributed to Vasumitra (extant only in translation) appear to contain a reference to him as a *śākya-bhikṣu*. This would take the term back to the third or fourth century A.D., the likely date of Vasumitra, but in fact the reference is in one of the two stanzas which are absent from the first Chinese translation.³⁸ Since the three authentic stanzas simply state the objective of the treatise and contrast sharply with the two additional stanzas which name Vasumitra and refer to him in a way which is unlikely to have been original, we can

33 BS chap. 16, v. 14f.: *kośa-bhavanāgnihotrika-dhātṛvākara-Śākya-bhikṣu-caurāṇām*.

34 *Śākyo rakta-paṭa(ka)h bhikṣur yatih*. Or, perhaps he intends to take *Śākya-* and *bhikṣu-* as separate items. In any case, it is unlikely that Varāhamihira meant that.

35 BS chap. 104, v. 61: *anyac ca tiktam kaṭu-dravya-kūṭāhipāsārjita-svāḥ kumārā bhīṣak-Śākyabhikṣu-ḥṣapāvṛtti-kośeśa-* [vl. °kauśeya-] *śāthyāni si(d)hyanti dambhās tathā*.

36 e.g. Ptolemy (2nd century A.D.) (Tetra II 9), undoubtedly based upon older Greek sources.

37 Medhātithi (ninth century): *rakta-paṭa*, *nagna* and *carakas*, etc.; Govindarāja: *raktāmbarādi*.

38 Bareaux, A., "Trois traités sur les sectes bouddhiques attribués à Vasumitra, Bhavya et Vinītadeva. Première Partie," *JA* 242 (1954), p. 235 n.1; cf. SC p. 1 (cited from Cohen).

be confident that they are a later addition. Since they do appear to be found in the Tibetan version, we can be reasonably sure that they were added in India and prior to the time of Paramārtha (sixth century A.D.), but after the first Chinese translation which was made between 385 and 431 A.D. So this is a relevant source for the usage of *śākya-bhikṣu*, dating to around the fifth century A.D.

The farce *Mattavilāsavikrama*, written by Mahendravikrama around 600 A.D. has as one of its principal characters an entertainingly improbable Buddhist monk (residing in the Rāja-vihāra at Kañcipura).³⁹ He is usually referred to as a Śākya-bhikṣu, but there is no indication of any Mahāyāna element; rather, he is certainly just a Buddhist monk in general.

At a later date in ninth century Kashmir the Śaiva writer Jayantabhaṭṭa refers to the exponents of the Buddhist view as *Śākya-bhikṣus*.⁴⁰ The same author's philosophical drama *Āgamaḍambara* introduces the Buddhist proponent and his disciple as a *Śākya-bhikṣu* (and his *upāsaka*) dressed in red.⁴¹ The monk in question clearly expounds Yogācārin views at some points, but it is unlikely that Jayantabhaṭṭa is distinguishing Mahāyānists in particular. To this can be added a number of manuscript colophons identified (and discussed) by Schopen, including two from Gilgit.

Śākya-bhikṣu, *Sakkaputtiya* and the Śākya lineage

Richard Cohen draws attention to an additional Sanskrit reference to *Śākya-bhikṣu* in the *Sanḥabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*.⁴² This presents the events preceding the newly-awakened Buddha's return to his home-town of Kapilavastu. Udāyin (Kālodayin) is the last of a series of messengers sent by King Śuddhodana to invite his son to return home for the first time and the first to actually return.⁴³ He is told by the Buddha to announce

³⁹ MVP 48ff.

⁴⁰ NM I 664: *Śākya-bhikṣavaḥ citta-vāsanām dharmam ācakṣate*; II 344: *sarvathā Śākya-bhikṣūṇām para-loko viśaṃṣṭhulāḥ*; 461; 694.

⁴¹ ĀD chap. I (stage direction prior to v. 6): ... *rakta-paṭa-saṃvūṭaḥ Śākya-bhikṣur upāsakaś cāgrataḥ*.

⁴² Saṅhabh 186.

⁴³ This corresponds to the Pali commentarial story of Udāyin(n)/Kāludāyi(n). We should note here that, as often, material corresponding to that given in the Pali commentaries is found in the text of the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins*. Gregory Schopen has defended the relative antiquity of this *Vinaya* as against the general perception of most scholars that it is later than the other

himself at the entrance with the words: “a *Śākya-bhikṣu* has come.” And, if asked, he is to be told that there are other such *Śākya-bhikṣus* (i.e. the previous messengers who did not return).

Cohen is obviously correct that in this context the term *Śākya-bhikṣu* refers to a monk who is by birth a member of the Śākya clan. He is right also to emphasize that *śākya* is a kinship term and makes a number of valid points in relation to this. He doesn’t however pay any attention to the Pali sources; so I would like to say a little about that.

The name of the Buddha’s clan occurs in the forms *Sakka*, *Sakya* and *Sākiya* in the Pali texts. For the most part the form *Sakka* occurs in the singular with the other two forms in the plural, although there are some exceptions.⁴⁴ I take it that this is because the earlier mentions mostly refer to named individuals and that therefore *Sakka* is probably the oldest form. Given the general unreliability of etymologies of proper names, this perhaps leaves the historical correctness of the more Sanskritized forms in doubt, but I shall assume here that the name of the clan corresponds either to Sanskrit *Śakya* or *Śākya*.⁴⁵

Nearly forty times in the older texts of the Canon we meet the expression “the mendicant Gotama is a member of the Sakya clan, one

extant *Vinayas*, e.g. Schopen, Gregory, “The Monastic Ownership of Servants or Slaves: Local or Legal Factors in the Redactional History of Two *Vinayas*,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17, no. 2 (1994). I do not find his arguments convincing. To some extent, if I understand him correctly, his position is that the *Vinayas* generally were finalized at a somewhat later date than is usually supposed. Again I am not convinced. I would suppose that the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins* reached its present form at a rather late date. This of course does not mean that the components from which it was compiled are necessarily late. Nonetheless, if Schopen’s position were to be accepted, then we should have to take the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins* as evidence for an early dating of some of the material in the Pali commentaries. But part of the story of Kāḷudāyī(n) is in any case quite old — cf. Th 57-36; Mvu iii 92f.; 107ff.

⁴⁴ In canonical Pali *Sakka*- occurs in the singular apart from the locative plural form *Sakkesu* (found only in the *Parivāra* and the *ekaṃ samayaṃ* formula). *Sakya*- does not occur in the singular except once as a v.l. The same is the case for *Sākiya* except for *Sākiyo* in the *Mahāvagga* (Vin I 71; 99) with one occurrence as a v.l. (Sn 423). But note the occurrence in verse of *Sākiyasmiṃ kule* (Ap II 573; 585), *Sākiye kule* (Ap II 589; 595; 602.) The form in compounds is usually *Sakya*-, apart from *Sākiy’-atrajo* in Ap II 504, *Sākiya-sambhavā* (Ap II 592) and *Sākiya-dāsakā* in Vin IV 181f. *Sākiya-māno* at Vin II 183 is probably erroneous (cf. II 206).

⁴⁵ The *Cūḷa-niddesa* offers three possible meanings for *Sakka*. 1. The Lord is a *Sakka* i.e. one who has gone forth from that clan. 2. *Sakka* (cf. *svaka*) means wealthy. The Lord is wealthy because he is rich in good qualities. 3. *Sakka* (i.e. < *śakra* √*śak*) means powerful and heroic, hence fearless. Nidd II 99: *Sakkā ti Sakko. Bhagavā Sakya-kulā pabbajito ti pi Sakko. Atha vā, adḍho mahad-dhano dhanavā ti pi sakko; tass’ imāni dhanāni, seyyath’idaṃ — saddhā-dhanaṃ sila-dhanaṃ hiri-dhanaṃ ottappa-dhanaṃ suta-dhanaṃ cāga-dhanaṃ paññā-dhanaṃ satipaṭṭhāna-dhanaṃ sammappadhāna-dhanaṃ iddhipāda-dhanaṃ indriya-dhanaṃ bala-dhanaṃ bojjhaṅga-dhanaṃ magga-dhanaṃ phala-dhanaṃ nibbāna-dhanaṃ. Imehi aneka-vidhehi dhana-ratanehi adḍho mahad-dhano dhanavā ti pi sakko. Atha vā, sakko pahu visavī alamatto sūro viro vikkanto abhīrū acchambhī anurāsī apalāyī pahīna-bhaya-bheravo vigata-loma-haṃso ti pi sakko.*

who has gone forth from the Sakya family” (*samaṇo khalu bho Gotamo Sakya-putto Sakya-kulā pabbajito*).⁴⁶ The expression *Sakyaputta* here does not mean ‘son of the Sakyans’ (or similar), as it is sometimes taken. Rather °*putta-* at the end of a compound simply means male member of a clan or extended family. In fact, it is used occasionally of others too, e.g. Upananda, Hatthaka and Nanda, but it is clear that as the most famous member of the lineage, the Buddha soon becomes the *Sakyaputta* par excellence.

That being so, it is perhaps not surprising that the *vrddhi* formation from that: *Sakkaputtiya-* (°*ika-*) rapidly becomes the normal, if not the only, expression for Buddhist monk as opposed to, say, Jaina or Ājīvaka monk. In the *Vinaya-piṭaka* it occurs more than two hundred times.⁴⁷ In the *Sutta-piṭaka* more than sixty times.⁴⁸ I take ‘*samaṇo Sakyaputtiyo*’ as meaning ‘mendicant connected with the famous member of the Sakya clan’ i.e. ‘follower of the *Sakyaputta*’. At some point this is further developed into the notion that Buddhist monks (or some of them) are the *dhamma* heirs of the Buddha and hence in some sense themselves members of the Sakya clan.⁴⁹

46 See Ousaka, Y., Yamazaki, M., and Norman, K.R., *Index to the Vinaya-piṭaka*, Oxford, 1996. Also in the recently discovered Baltimore Ms. of the *Dirghāgama*: e.g. twice in the *Ambāṣṭha-sūtra* (folio 410): and once in the *Kūṭatāṃḍya-sūtra* (folio 401): *śramaṇo Gautamaḥ Śākya-putraḥ Śākya-kulāt keśa-śmaśrṇ avatārya kāśāyāṇi vastrāṇy ācchādya samyag eva śraddhayā agārād anagārikāṃ pravrajitah*.

47 The Index volume to the PTS edition (Ousaka, *op. cit.*) has 176 (including *asakkaputtiya-*), but this is because Oldenberg’s edition omits many repetitive passages.

48 The usage is also found in Sanskrit canonical material. See SHT Vol. I p. 11 (from an unidentified source): *śramaṇa Śakyaputriyāṇām* (twice) and six times in the *Jivaka-sūtra* of the *Dirghāgama* (folio 433f.). Occasionally also in later Sanskrit works: Abhidh-k-bh 102 & 466; in Simhasūri’s (6th or 7th century) *Nyāyāgamānusāriṇī* (NĀ 93): *apratyakṣaṃ nīlādi-ṣṣayam cakṣur-ādi-vijñānam Śakyaputriyam bhrānti-vid iti*; in the *Harṣacarita*: HC (a) p. 246 = (b) chap. 8, p. 79: *tena Śakyaputriyena*; in the *Yuktidīpikā*: (early 8th century) YD 167.

49 This is typified by passages such as: *Bhagavato putto oraso mukhato jāto dhammaḥ dhamma-nimmitto dhamma-dāyādo no āmisa-dāyādo*. We should perhaps also note such expressions as *Jina-putta* at Vin II 235; Bv II 76; X 12; XXIII 8; Dīp V 1; 58; VII 49; Mhv LXXXXVIII 293?; Mil (12 occurrences); in the *aṭṭhakathā* literature (13 occurrences); Vin-vn 2951; Nett-ṭ 1; 355f.; Mil-ṭ to Mil 119. There can be no doubt that this usually means ‘Buddhist monk’; *contra* Schopen, Gregory, Bones, Stones, and *Buddhist monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, Honolulu, 1997, p. 109f. Similarly, *Buddha-putta* at Th p. 115 (concluding verse); Ap (four times); Mil (11 times); in the *aṭṭhakathā* (28 occurrences but some refer literally to Rāhula) and in later works. Also, *Sugata-puttāna* at Nidd-a II 151. We would of course expect that just as the *Saṅgha* is properly the *ariya-saṅgha* but mostly in practice the *bhikkhu-saṅgha*, so too these two terms refer ideally to the *ariya* disciples whether monk or lay, but in practice to the monastic order who stand for that. This is explicit in the *ṭikās*: Sv-pt II 418 = Ps-pt I 387 = Mp-ṭ I 258: *Yasmā Satthu-sāsane pabbajitassa pabbajj-upagamena Sakyaputtiya-bhāvo sampajāyati, tasmā Buddha-putta-bhāvam dassento: asambhinnāyā ti ādim āha*.

It is noticeable that the term becomes less frequent in later texts.⁵⁰ There are perhaps two reasons for this. Firstly it is more natural to use such an expression in a pluralist situation i.e. when non-Buddhist mendicants are frequent. With the growth of the Buddhist order that became less often the case, particularly in outlying areas such as Ceylon and the North-West. But one would expect variation over time depending on the local numbers of (e.g.) Jain monks. Secondly, the progress of Sanskritization and the increasing influence of Sanskritic stylistic considerations in some contexts probably made a term such as *Śākyaputr(ī)ya* seem less attractive than the neater *Śākya* 'follower of the Śākya'.

paramopāsaka in epigraphic sources

An important part of Schopen's argument is that the terms *Śākya-bhikṣu* and *paramopāsaka* refer respectively to monks and lay individuals belonging to the same group. This had always to be doubtful, given that he in fact cites a case from a colophon of the Pāla period where someone is referred to as both — it is rather difficult to see how anyone can be simultaneously both a monk and a layman ! In fact several scholars have questioned whether the term *paramopāsaka* can have this meaning.⁵¹

We already saw (above p. 8) that in two grants of the Maitraka king, Guhasena of Valabhī, *paramopāsaka* replaces *parama-maheśvara*. This places the expression in close relationship with a series of other epigraphic terms which similarly express a relationship of affiliation to a religious group or deity. Other examples include: *parama-bhāgavata*, *parama-saugata*, *parama-tāthāgata* and so on.⁵² Such expressions indicate either personal affiliation of the individual

⁵⁰ It is not found in the *Parivāra* nor in the *Abhidhamma-piṭaka*. In the *Khuddaka-nikāya* it is found only in Ud and once in Nidd I, in passages which are effectively cited from earlier works. Although it occurs many times in post-canonical Pali, most occurrences are no doubt citations from the earlier literature. However, it is possibly not seen so often in the very earliest canonical material.

⁵¹ Damsteegt, T., *Epigraphical Hybrid Sanskrit: its rise, spread, characteristics and relationship to Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, Leiden, 1978, p. 257; Skilling, Peter, "A Note on the History of the Bhikkhunī-sangha (II), The Order of Nuns after the Parinirvāṇa," *W.F.B. Review* XXX-XXXI (1993-4), n. 106 (and n. 10 which expresses scepticism as to whether *Śākya* indicates Mahāyānist).

⁵² Sircar, D.C., *Indian Epigraphical Glossary*, Delhi, 1966, p. 235ff. gives references to these and also for *parama-brāhmaṇya*, *parama-daivata*, *paramāditya-bhakta*, *parama-saura*, and *parama-vaiṣṇava*.

or a familial affiliation to an *iṣṭa-devatā* or something similar. In most cases this would not involve any kind of exclusivity. In some cases it may rather indicate how the scribe or a palace official wished to identify the donor.

In effect then, if we restrict our investigation to an early date (i.e. prior to Pāla times) there are just nine epigraphs which mention *paramopāsaka/°ikā* from four locations: Sarnath, Valabhī, Ajaṅṭā and Katmandu. They are listed in Table One below. (Later occurrences which are known to me are listed in Appendix A.) The Ajaṅṭā reference is, however, suspect;⁵³ so we have in fact just two from Valabhī, five from Sarnath and one from Katmandu. According to Lüders (Ep. Ind.), the examples from Sarnath are definitely later than A.D. 400.

According to the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang, the Sāmitīya (Sāṃmatīya) school was very numerous at Valabhī. We know also from an inscription from Sarnath that the Sāmitīya school claimed to have replaced the Sarvāstivādins at nearby Vāraṅāsi. So the data are quite compatible with the supposition that the term *paramopāsaka* was initially current among the Puḍgalavādin schools. This could be either a peculiarity of the terminology of this school or a regional usage from some area near Valabhī. Later it would have spread out from this and other Sāmitīya centres in the Pāla domains to be more generally adopted.⁵⁴ Very likely too some of the later branches of the Sāmitīya school adopted the Mahāyāna.

Literary sources too might suggest that the term *paramopāsaka* is unlikely to have the kind of specificity that Schopen's argument requires. In the final chapter of the *Harṣa-carita*, the sage Divākaramitra is depicted as attended by various devotees — followers of different religious traditions and animals of various kinds. Among the latter are “monkeys who are *paramopāsakas*, committed to the three refuges and active in the (ritual) service of shrines, parrots skilled in the religion of the Śākya and providing instruction in the *Kośa*.”⁵⁵ There seems no reason to associate the monkeys with the

53 Richard Cohen reads: ... *mocāsaka[sya]*: Cohen, Richard S., “Problems in the Writing of Ajanta's History: The Epigraphic Evidence,” *I-JJ* 40, no. 2 (1997), p. 136.

54 Among the nineteen epigraphic occurrences of *paramopāsaka* in inscriptions from a later period (see Appendix), two are from the Munger (Monghyr) District of Bihar. This is the district identified by Skilling as the major Sāmitīya centre in later times. Skilling, Peter, “On the School-affiliation of the ‘Patna Dhammapada’,” *JPTS* XXIII (1997), p. 111f. Six more are again from Sarnath, while two are from Nālandā where Sāmitīya monks were almost certainly present.

55 HC (a) p. 237: *kapibhir api caityakaṃ kurvāṇais trayī-śaraṇa-paraiḥ paramopāsakaiḥ*,

Mahāyāna ! They are simply 'highly devoted'. We should also note here that the term *mahā-upāsaka-/°ikā* in Pali sources indicates a wealthy lay supporter of status.⁵⁶

Table One⁵⁷

Shizutan i II	Schopen	modern state	donor information	dating
129	Sā i D(a)16	U.P. (Sarnath)	<i>paramopāsaka- Kīrtti</i>	characters of 4th or 5th cent. A.D.
137	Sā i B(d)1	U.P. (Sarnath)	<i>paramopāsaka- viṣayapati- Suyātra</i>	
172		Gujarat (Valabhī)	the vihāra at Valabhī made by <i>paramopāsikā Duddā</i>	Gupta 216 = A.D. 534-5
176	—	Gujarat (Valabhī)	king Guhasena	Gupta 248 = A.D. 566-7
142	Sā i D(a)18	U.P. (Sarnath)	<i>paramopāsaka Bhavarudra</i>	characters of the 6th century A.D.
156	Sā iv 19 (p. 127)	U.P. (Sarnath)	<i>paramopāsaka- Namnana</i>	characters of the 6th century A.D.
33	Aj iv a 5*	Maharashtra	<para>mo[<i>pā]sa ka Upendra</i>	
128	Sā i D(a)15	U.P. (Sarnath)	<i>paramopāsikā Sulakṣmaṇā</i>	Gupta characters
		Katmandu	<i>paramopāsaka Manigupta's wife</i>	6th century

Schopen's argument

Schopen's argument depends on three separate points. He is aware that the part of his argument that depends on the donatory formula is

śukair api Śākya-śāsana-kuśalaiḥ Kośam upadiśadbhiś ca ... upāsyamānam. The commentary glosses Śākya here as 'Buddhah'. Kane (HC (b) p. 73) has: *caitya-karma kurvāṇais tri-śaraṇa-paraiḥ.*

⁵⁶ Mil 15f. Otherwise, it is found around ninety times in the *aṭṭhakathā* literature and in later, but not earlier, works; cf. also *mahā-seṭṭhi*. Vjb 315 = Sp-ṭ III 57: *Mahā-upāsako ti geha-sāmiko.* Sv-pt II 349: *Ayañ ca nayo na kevalam Sakkass' eva, atha kho Mahā-seṭṭhi-mahā-upāsikānam pi hoti yevā ti dassento "Sakko deva-rājā" ti ādim āha.*

⁵⁷ See Shizutani, Masao, *Indo Bukkyō himei mokuroku. (Catalogue of Indian Buddhist inscriptions)*, Kyoto, 1979 for most of these. For the Nepalese inscription: Gnoli, Raniero, *Nepalese inscriptions in Gupta characters*, Rome, 1956, p. 25 (on the base of an image of Avalokiteśvara).

by itself weak; so he has tried to strengthen his thesis by seeking to identify a specifically Mahāyānist group who usually refer to themselves, when lay, as *paramopāsaka* and, when monks, as *Śākya-bhikṣu*. The evidence I have cited above shows beyond doubt that the terms do not in themselves carry any Mahāyānist meaning. *Paramopāsaka* is simply a term for a committed lay supporter of high standing, while *Śākya-bhikṣu* is a term used regularly by non-Buddhists (and sometimes by Buddhists too) to refer to members of the Buddhist monastic order.

Of course, this doesn't completely rule out Schopen's position. Even if these two designations might be used by non-Mahāyānists, they could still have been used also by a specific Mahāyānist group at some point. There is no doubt that a few of the early epigraphs belonging to this supposed group are made by individuals who have adopted Mahāyānist ideas. Mahāyānists in the Pāla period regularly refer to themselves as *Śākya-bhikṣus* and occasionally as *paramopāsakas*, but that may reflect simply the predominance of support for Mahāyāna in the North-East at a later date — especially among those wealthy enough to make substantial donations. Essentially, it is dangerous to read back evidence from Pāla times to an earlier period and a different area.

Other explanations are equally possible. We might suppose that after the conflicts between Mahāyānists and non-Mahāyānists that seem to have taken place around the third century A.D. there was a reaction against sectarianism and it simply became less fashionable to refer to specific schools of origin. In that case it is likely that the term '*Śākya-bhikṣu*' simply reflects a wish to be known simply as a 'Buddhist monk' rather than by any kind of specific *nikāya* affiliation. Such a notion gains strong support from the Valabhī inscriptions which refer specifically to the eighteen *nikāyas*.

Schopen's thesis cannot then be sustained by the additional evidence he has put forward. Everything depends upon the donatory formula itself. This in fact was the earlier (and more cautious) position of Shizutani and Sarkar. And it is that which I now address.⁵⁸ But before doing so, it is necessary to be more clear as to what we mean by Mahāyānist.

⁵⁸ Schopen revises his position on the formula slightly. See: Schopen, *Bones, Stones*, p. 32f.; 36ff. and nn.; 161, n.1; 202, n.97; 250nn.; 271n.; and Schopen, G., "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India," *JIAS* 10, no. 2 (1987), pp. 120ff.

In the second century A.D. we do not yet have anything which we can truly call Mahāyāna Buddhism. We certainly have a literature to which the label Mahāyānist can be attached, but even that is to some extent retrospective. Some of the works which are later to be the core literature of the Mahāyāna certainly exist at this time, but in earlier recensions which do not contain all of the distinctive features of later Mahāyāna. This is clearly shown by studies of the earliest Chinese translations and by surviving portions in Sanskrit of earlier recensions. Although these works are certainly extant at an earlier date, they are not the literature of any kind of separate institution.

Rather they are a part of Mainstream Buddhism. That is to say a Buddhism, which is probably the ancestor of all subsequent forms of Buddhism, that recognizes in principle that there are three distinct possible goals of Buddhist practice. But there is no sense in which they are seen as in conflict; they are simply part of a menu of choices.

So typically in a larger Buddhist monastery we may suppose a wide range of options both for study and practice. This would include some of the various possibilities later included under the heading of Mahāyāna and many others that do not necessarily come under that rubric. Undoubtedly the larger part of the training and education of every monk would not be in any sense Mahāyānist. Just as there would be monks specializing in particular areas such as *vinaya* or *abhidhamma* or *jātaka* or other more specific forms of literature or preaching or meditational exercises or ascetic practices or various kinds of ritual and organizational necessities, so there would be monks specializing in particular types of literature or practice or philosophy which from a later perspective we might call Mahāyāna.

We might expect that individual monks would typically have learnt something of a range of these but the exact mix would be a matter of individual predilection. Smaller monasteries would offer a more restricted range depending upon the available personnel; no doubt this would partly depend on the fashions and interests of a given time and place. What happened at a village level is less clear. We know little about the smallest Buddhist monasteries in ancient India because they have not left much trace in the archaeological record. Nor do we know the extent of a peripatetic mendicant presence, although it seems reasonable to suppose that wandering Buddhist monks would be found throughout South Asia. We can however be sure that no monasteries existed in isolation from the lay community.

This pattern remains the norm for a very long time. It is just this kind of model which is described by the Chinese pilgrim Fa-hsien in the fifth century A.D. The difference is only that in certain areas and monasteries study of the Mahāyāna texts was not usual. Clearly at some point and in some areas a need was felt to call a halt to the new tendencies. Probably it was in the course of the third century A.D. that a measure of conflict arose between Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna. But those who continued to study and develop Mahāyāna literature and practices certainly did so in an environment where this was only one part of a much larger range of monastic activities. Of course it was an ever-increasing part and one which eventually came to have a dominant role in the traditions developing in this way. But whether it had such a predominance in India much before the seventh century A.D. seems doubtful. Of course, it is in any case unlikely that developments occurred at the same speed in every part of the subcontinent.

If this model is correct, we cannot assume that because a gift is made to monks of a named school this is necessarily non-Mahāyānist. There is no reason to believe that any institutionally separate form of Mahāyāna existed in Kuṣāṇa or Gupta times. Every 'Mahāyāna' monk was certainly supposed to be ordained in one or more of the old *Vinaya* traditions and had undoubtedly learned and practised a great deal of standard Mainstream Buddhism.

The donatory formula

The earliest inscriptions extant often have no dedicatory formula, simply referring to somebody's '*dānaṃ*'. In Kuṣāṇa times, however, the normal practice is to say that the donation is 'for the happiness and benefit of all beings' (*savva-satānaṃ hita-sukhāya* and similar). The compound '*hita-sukha-*' is unusual in the Pali Canon⁵⁹ and this exact expression is unknown in Pali literature, although *hita-sukha-* is quite frequent in the commentarial literature.⁶⁰ The sentiment, however, is normal enough. For example, the expression 'sympathetic to the

⁵⁹ But cf. Sn 683: the 'Bodhisatta ... has been born in the human world for their happiness and benefit' (*manussa-loke hita-sukhatāya*; B^c has *hita-sukh'-atthāya*) and D III 153f. (*Mahālakkhāṇa-suttanta*).

⁶⁰ But compare: Vism 325: *tesaṃ hita-sukhāya avicalādhittānā honti*; cf. It-a 191; Cp-a 309: *sabbam etaṃ yathā-vuttaṃ dāna-sampadaṃ sakala-loka-hita-sukhāya pariṇāmeti*; Ras 192: *tesaṃ kulānaṃ hita-sukhāyā ti nimantevā* with several further passages in the *ṭīkā*s.

benefit of all breathing and existent beings' (*sabba-pāṇa-bhūta-hitānukampin*) occurs nearly fifty times in the *Sutta-piṭaka*, usually in the context of keeping the first precept. In later canonical and in commentarial works there is also a tendency to refer to developing *mettā* to all beings (*sabbe sattā*, etc.).⁶¹

In effect then the formula as it occurs in Kuṣāṇa inscriptions represents a straightforward development of early Buddhist ideas. In apparent contrast, in post-Kuṣāṇa inscriptions we find a new formula: 'This is the donation of so-and-so. May all beings have the good fortune in this <act of giving> in order to attain supreme knowledge'⁶² The second part can also be rendered 'May the good fortune in this <act of giving> conduce to the attaining of supreme knowledge by all beings'. (I avoid the translation of *punya/puñña* as merit for reasons I have given elsewhere.⁶³) The first translation appears more likely in terms of the historical evolution of the formula — normally *puñña* is dedicated to beings, rather than for a purpose.⁶⁴ The second (preferred by Schopen) is perhaps more natural in terms of later Sanskrit style. Nonetheless, the first is almost certainly correct, given that when there is a shortage of space, 'in order to attain supreme knowledge' is sometimes omitted.⁶⁵ However, the formula is probably sufficiently ambiguous to be taken in different ways by different scribes and donors.

There are two elements here: the notion that all beings should benefit and the idea that they should or might attain supreme knowledge. It is likely that debates about the exact operation of the act of dedicating one's good fortune go back to an early date. Some sources try to restrict the benefit to *petas*. Clearly too, the idea that it is especially related to deceased parents or teachers has a long history. Moreover, the emphasis on all beings is already there in the Kuṣāṇa version of the formula. While we might expect such a development to be attractive to Mahāyānist, it may long precede the formation of anything distinctively Mahāyānist. It is also true that we simply do not

61 Notably Paṭi II 130-135; cf. Vin II 110 = A II 73 = Ja II 144-8 (*Khaṇḍa-jātaka*); Sn 145 (147) = Kh 8; plus additional passages with *sabba-satta-*.

62 *Deya-dhar(m)mo 'yaṃ Yad atra punyaṃ tat bhavatu sarv(v)a-satvānaṃ* (or *sakala-satvānaṃ*) *anuttara-jñānāvāptaye*.

63 See: Cousins, L.S., "Good or Skilful ? Kusala in Canon and Commentary," *JBE* 3 (1996).

64 I prefer not to refer to transference, as the donor does not lose anything. Rather the converse in fact; he gains yet more *puñña*.

65 Cohen, "Kinsmen of the Son," p. 30, n. 68 gives six examples from Ajaṇṭā.

know the position of most of the early schools on this and related matters.

In any case, it is unlikely that ordinary Buddhists (and that would certainly include most Buddhist monks) would have paid much attention to theoretical issues here. Notably, dedication of *puñña* to all beings is not particularly rare in South-East Asian Buddhism today and this should not surprise us. After all, no-one seems to argue that dedicating merit to all beings is actually harmful and it seems a rather natural outflow of loving-kindness (*mettā*). (Schopen himself does of course clearly recognize that there is nothing specifically Mahāyānist about so-called merit-transference in itself.)

The second element concerns supreme knowledge. Whether or not this is evidence for the presence of the Mahāyāna depends on the exact force of the expression *anuttara-jñāna* ‘unsurpassed knowledge’. As a compound it occurs both for the wisdom of the arahat and for the wisdom of a Buddha.⁶⁶ So it is again probably sufficiently ambiguous to suit different purposes.

In conclusion

We can summarize the results of this investigation as follows:

1. Leaving aside its earlier and occasional use to refer to a member of the Sakya clan or to the Buddha himself, the term *Śākya* or *Sakka* is found in dated texts and inscriptions from the third century A.D. and in a number of literary sources which are, or in some cases may be, earlier than that. It is found sporadically in a large number of later texts: in Jain lists of types of *samaṇa*, in Jain, Śaiva⁶⁷ and Nyāya critiques of Buddhist views, in a number of astrological texts — there is no indication in any of this that it has a reference

⁶⁶ (of a Buddha) Ps-pt II 6: *anañña-sādhāraṇa-puññānubhāva-nibbatto anuttara-nānādhigama-laddha-purāvattako ca Bhagavato rūpa-kāyo* ; (of an arahat) Pm-vn v.1043: *tattha cānuttara-nāṇaṃ, saccānaṃ paṭivedhakaṃ, samuccheda-ppahānena klesānusaya-sodhanaṃ*; cf. Pv-a 230: *Jutimā ti anuttarāya nāṇa-jutiyā jutimā*. Apart from *nāṇa*, *anuttara* occurs most often in relation to a Buddha, but quite often also in relation to an arahat or the goal. In *abhidhamma* it is defined: Dhs §1300: *Katame dhammā anuttarā ? Apariyāpannā maggā ca, magga-phalāni ca, asaṅkhatā ca dhātu — ime dhammā anuttarā*. and §1614 *Katame dhammā anuttarā ? Cattāro maggā apariyāpannā, cattāri ca sāmāñña-phalāni, nibbānaṃ ca — ime dhammā anuttarā*.

⁶⁷ For the use of Sākiyar in Tamil Śaiva literature to refer to Buddhists, see Nilakanta Sastri, N.A., “An Episode in the History of Buddhism in South India,” in *B.C.Law Volume*, ed. D.R.Bhandarkar and others, Calcutta, 1945, Vol. I pp. 35-49; Vasudeva Rao, T.N., *Buddhism in the Tamil country*, Annamalainagar, 1979, pp. 207-249; Schalk, Peter and Vēluppillai, Ālvāpillai, *Buddhism among Tamils in Pre-Colonial Tamilakam and Īlam*, Uppsala, 2002, pp. 75; 452.

- to any specific type of Buddhism.
2. The more specific terms *Sakya-bhikkhu*, *Sākiya-bhikkhu* and *Śākya-bhikṣu* are found in several Pali texts, in an astrological work, in two dramatic works, a Nyāya philosophical work and a commentary on *Manu-smṛti* — again there is no reason to take it as referring to anything other than Buddhist monks in general.
 3. It is clear that the use of the term *Śākya-* in this way develops naturally from the much earlier *Sakkaputtiya-*.
 4. The term *paramopāsaka* does not have any specific reference to a particular type of Buddhism.
 5. Therefore Schopen's additions to the thesis of Shizutani do not appear well-grounded.
 6. None of this conclusively disproves either Shizutani's thesis i.e. that the donatory inscriptions are evidence of a distinct group who had adopted Mahāyāna or the alternative view that this was a group belonging to a specific school such as the Sāmitīyas. Such a group could have chosen to identify themselves as simply 'Buddhist monks' but this thesis too cannot be regarded as firmly established on the basis of the available evidence.
 7. We can at least say that if we are dealing with a specific group and this is far from clear, their intention was precisely not to identify themselves as belonging to any specific Buddhist tradition. We should respect their wish.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks are due to Richard Thomas, Peter Skilling and Csaba Dezsö for assistance on various points. Especial gratitude is due to Harunaga Isaacson for a number of additional references to Sanskrit texts and some helpful comments.

APPENDIX

inscriptions mentioning *paramopāsaka* in the later period

Eighteen epigraphs are listed here. Ten are certainly Mahāyānist; several are fragmentary and may be Mahāyānist. None are certainly non-Mahāyānist, but most are from areas in or strongly influenced by the Pala territories where Mahāyāna predominates in this period.

Orissa (Neulpur)

Shizutani III	Schopen	donor information	dating
83		grandfather of king Śubhākara is referred to as ' <i>paramopāsako</i> '	R.D. Banerji: 'latter half of the 8th century A.D.'

Uttar Pradesh (Sarnath)

Shizutani III	Schopen	donor information	dating
101	Sā i B(d)20	<i>paramopāsa[ka]</i>	11th century characters
103	Sā i B(e)10	<i>[para]mopāsaka</i>	11th century characters
107	Sā i B(e)1	<i>paramopāsaka</i>	11th or 12th century characters
100	Sā i B(d)13	<pa> <i>ramopāsaka</i> Māgadhīya-śrī-Śamaṅka	11th century characters and sculpture
99	Sā iii	<i>°upāsaka °upāsikā</i>	Kalachuri Era 810
112	Sā iv 25 (p. 128)	<i>paramopāsikā</i>	?Pāla period

Bengal and Madhya Pradesh

Shizutani III	Schopen	modern state	donor information	dating
	Ben ii	Bengal (Belāśa, Tippera District)	<i>Mahāyāna-yāyina</i> paramopasaka Īśvara-	script of 10th-11th century
19		(Kara)	Queen Śrī-Candalla-devī	?10th century
14	MadP iii	Madhya Pradesh (Gopalpur, Jabalpur District)	<i>pravara-Mahā-jānānujāyī[naḥ]</i> <i>paramopāsaka-kāyastha-</i>	Nāgarī of the '11th or 12th century A.D.'

Bihar

Shizutani III	Schopen	modern state	donor information	dating
57	Bih iii 53 (pp. 238 & 247)	Kartihar ⁶⁸	<i>paramopāski</i> Mañju?	Nāgarī characters of the 9th to 11th centuries?
68	Bih iii 83	Kartihar	<i>paramopāsaka-Gopālahinokāyā</i> ? ⁶⁹	11th century (acc. Banerji-Sastri)
25	Bih iii 5	Kartihar	<i>pravara-Mahāyāna-jaina-pramopāsaka</i>	year 3 of Vighrapāla (III?)

⁶⁸ Sixteen miles east of Gayā.

⁶⁹ A donation was made by the same person in the year 32 of Rājyapāla.

	Nā i	Bihar (Nālandā)	<i>paramopāsikā</i> Gaṅgūkā	palaeographically 'eighth or ninth'
P82 (p. 232)	Nā ii 29	Nālandā	<i>pravara-Mahāyāna- yāyinaḥ paramopāsaka</i> Bālāditya	Mahīpāla (I?), year 11
	Bih i c (pts 3-4, pp. 7-8)	Kāndī, Monghyr District	local prince Samudrā- ditya; his father, prince Nanda was a <i>pravara- Mahāyānānuyāyin</i> <i>paramopāsaka</i>	
	Bih ii p. 146	Jaynagar, nr Lakhīsarāi, Monghyr District	Maharokā, wife of Santoṣa, a <i>pravara- Mahāyāna-yāyinyā [h]</i> <i>paramopāsikā</i>	Sircar: Gauḍīya characters of around 12th century
9		Bodhgayā	<i>pravara-Mahāyāna- yāyinaḥ</i> <i>paramopāsakasya</i>	Lakṣmaṇasena 74 or 73 (= 1182 A.D.?)
125		Gunerīya, Patna Distr.	<i>paramopāsa-</i>	Mahendrapāla 9

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-pf: (*porāṇa-*)*ṭīkā*

-t: *ṭīkā*

A: *Aṅguttaramikāya*.

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Ap: *Apadāna*.

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BhA: *Bhagavadajjukiya* of Bodhayana. Edited by P. Anujan Achan. Jayantamangalam: Paliyam Mss Library, 1925.

BhP: *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.

BS: *Bṛhatsamhitā* of Varāhamihira.

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Bv: *Buddhavaṃsa*.

D: *Dīghamikāya*.

Daśa: *Daśakumāracarita* of Daṇḍin. Edited by H.H. Wilson. London: Society for the Publication of Oriental Texts, 1846.

Dhs: *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*.

Dīp: *Dīpavaṃsa*.

HC: *Harṣacarita* of Bāṇa.

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- Mil: *Milindapañha*.
- Mp: *Manorathapūrami* of Buddhaghosa.
- MVP: *Mattavilasaprahasana* of Mahendravikramavarman. Edited by N.P. Unni (with translation). Trivandrum: College Book House, 1974.
- Mvu: *Mahāvastu*. Edited by É. Sénart, Vol. III. Paris: Société Asiatique, 1897.
- NĀ: *Nyāyāgamānusārīṇi* of Siṃhasūri. Edited by Muni Jambūvijaya with the Nyāyāgamānusārīṇi commentary of Siṃhasūri, 3 vols, Śrī Ātmānand Jaina Granthamālā Serial 92. Bhavnagar: Sri Jain Atmanand Sabha, 1966.
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