

Madhyadeśika, Madhyoddeśika and Madhy'uddeśika

By J. W. DE JONG *

The Mahāvastu (éd. É. Senart, tome premier, Paris, 1882) begins with a series of *nidānanamaskara*-s (pp. 1–2.12) which Edgerton in his dictionary translated by 'introductory salutations'. This is followed by the following statement: *āryamahāsāṃghikānāṃ lokottaravādināṃ madhyadeśikānāṃ pāṭhena vinayapitakasya mahāvastuye ādi*. In his introduction Senart rendered this as follows (p. XXI): "Commencement du *Mahāvastu*, partie du Vinayapitaka, de la recension de la branche des Mahāsāṃghikas, dite les Lokottaravādins du Madhyadeśa." J. J. Jones translates: "Here begins the *Mahāvastu*, which is based on the redaction of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* made by the noble Mahāsāṃghikās, the Lokottaravādins of the Middle Country" (The Mahāvastu, vol. I, London, 1949, pp. 2–3). In a note Jones remarks that the Middle Country is that part, variously delimited, of central India, which was the birthplace of Buddhism.

In the Prasannapadā (éd. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, Bibliotheca Buddhica IV, St.-Petersburg, 1903–1913) one finds the following reference to the Mahāvastu:

madhyoddeśikāś ca mahāvastūpadiṣṭabhūmivyavasthayaṃ prathamabhūmīsthitam bodhisattvam utpannadārśanamārgam vyācakṣāṇaḥ saṃghāntaḥpātinam vyācakṣate (p. 489.1–2).

According to a note the manuscripts have *madhyāddeśikāś*. De La Vallée Poussin quotes the Tibetan translation: *bar-ma 'don-par byed-pa dag* which he reconstructs into Sanskrit as *madhya-pāṭhaka*. Jacques May translates: "Enfin les Madhyadeśika, d'après le système des terres enseigné dans le *Mahāvastu*, affirment que le Bodhisattva de la première terre a produit le chemin de la vision [et] fait partie de la communauté" (Candrakīrti Prasannapadā madhyamakavṛtti. Douze chapitres traduits du sanscrit et du tibétain, Paris, 1959, p. 220). Apropos of the reading Madhyadeśikāś, May remarks: "Cette leçon paraît préférable à *Madhyoddeśikāś*. Le terme ne semble pas désigner une secte déterminée, mais seulement une localisation géographique. Le tib. a *madhyapāṭhaka*." In my review of May's work I pointed out that the reading Madhyoddeśika corresponds exactly to Tibetan *bar-ma 'don-par byed-pa* (IJ 5, 1961–1962, p. 164). The meaning 'to recite' for *uddisati* is quite common in Pāli, cf. Critical Pāli Dictionary,

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vol. II, fasc. 9 (Copenhagen, 1975), s. v. *uddisati* 4. c. esp. to "point out", i. e. to recite, the *pātimokkha* (and other texts); *uddesaka* 1. expounder, reciter (of the *pātimokkha*). The reading *madhyoddeśikāś* is confirmed by manuscript R, cf. IJ 20 (1978), p. 242.

In 1970 Gustav Roth published the *Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya* of the *Ārya-Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādin* (Patna, 1970). The text begins as follows: *om namo Buddhāya / ārya-Mahāsāṃghikānām Lokottaravādinām madhy'-uddeśikānām pāthena bhikṣuṇī-vinayasyādiḥ* (p. 1). In his note Roth quotes the colophons of two other vinaya texts of the same school, the *Abhisamācārikā Dharmāḥ* and the *Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa-sūtra*: *Abhisamācārikāḥ samāptāḥ / ārya-Mahāsāṃghikānām Lokottara-vādinām madhy'-uddeśa-pāṭhakānām pātheneti*; *samāptam prātimokṣa-sūtram ārya-Mahāsāṃghikānām Lokottara-vādinām madhyoddeśikānām pātheneti*. B. Jinananda, the editor of the first text (*Abhisamācārikā*, Patna, 1969) changed the reading of the manuscript to *madhyadeśapāṭhakānām* (cf. pp. XXIV and 230). W. Pachow and Ramakanta Mishra, the editors of the *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* (The *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* of the *Mahāsāṃghikas*, Allahabad, 1956), read *mādhyād-deśikānām*, but according to Roth the reading given by him can be established with certainty. In his recent edition of the *Prātimokṣasūtra*, Nathmal Tattia also reads *madhyoddeśikānām* (*Prātimokṣasūtram*, Patna, 1975, p. 38. 1–2).

Apart from the *Mahāvastu* all the other texts have either *madhyoddeśika* or *madhy'uddeśika*. In his critical apparatus Senart does not indicate any variant for the reading *madhyadeśikānām*. Senart had at his disposal six manuscripts which are probably all copies of one Nepalese manuscript (cf. Introduction, p. IX). An older manuscript (dated *Nepāla samvat* 777) is preserved in Nepal (cf. Roth, Introduction, p. XV) and it would be interesting to see whether it also has the reading *madhyadeśikānām*. However, it seems likely that the original reading was *madhyoddeśikānām*, which could easily have been corrupted to *mādhyād-deśikānām*. Another copyist probably considered it necessary to correct this reading to *madhyadeśikānām*.

In his *History of Buddhism* (Chos-'byun), Bu-ston (1290–1364 A.D.) gives an account of the Third Council in which he quotes the opinions of several authorities concerning the languages used by different Buddhist schools, cf. Obermiller's translation: *History of Buddhism. II. Part* (Heidelberg, 1932), pp. 96–101. Recently Yuyama has edited and translated the text of the relevant sections ('Bu-ston on the Languages Used by Indian Buddhists at the Schismatic Period', in: *Die Sprache der ältesten buddhistischen Überlieferung*, Göttingen, 1980, pp. 175–181). Yuyama remarks: "It admits of no doubt that Obermiller's English translation has served as the first aid for those who were unable to consult the original Tibetan text because of its inavailability ... In some cases, however, his translation is rather free and misleading, unless the original is referred to." However, Yuyama's translation is not an improvement and does not supersede Obermiller's translation.

Bu-ston quotes the following passage from the *Prabhāvatī*: *de-nas rgyal-po dharma aśva-ka śi-ba dan / dgra-bcom-pa-rnams-kyis tha-mal-pa dan zur-chag-pa dan bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig-la mñon-par zen-pa gdul-pa'i dbari-gi phyir rim-gyis gźun gzan dan gzan-du sbyar-te rgya-chen-po'i skad-du sbyar-ba'i mdo-sde-la sogs-pa lta-bu-ste* /. Obermiller translates: "Thereafter the king Dharmāçoka died, and the Arhats, in order to put an end to the practice of reciting (Scripture) in Prakrit, Apabhraṃṣa and in a dialect of intermediate character, gradually rehearsed (the kanonical texts) according to other methods. These new texts were like the sūtras which were compiled in Sanskrit." Yuyama translates: "Then King Dharma Aśoka died, and the Arhats, in order to subdue adherence to Prakrit (*tha-mal-pa*), Apabhraṃṣa (*zur-chag-pa*) and the language of intermediate speech (*bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig*), have gradually compiled the Scripture severally, (which have become) the sūtras and the like, composed in the language of great extensiveness (*rgya-chen-po'i skad*)." The text of the blockprint of the Chos-'byun has *rgya-chen-po'i skad*. Obermiller notes that the Tanjur has *rgyal-po'i skad* which he renders as Sanskrit. According to Yuyama *rgyal-po'i skad-du* seems to be simply a misprint. However, he does not explain why the reading *rgya-chen-po'i* is preferable. The meaning of *rgya-chen-po'i skad* is not known. Yuyama states that "it seems to denote not just a single dialect with a small audience. The nucleus of a dialect, absorbing its neighbouring elements as much as possible, would have attracted a more extensive audience. And this appears to have been a specific character of the languages used by Indian Buddhists. It could not be the Sanskrit language (so Obermiller!)." Needless to say Yuyama's remarks are nothing more than pure guesswork. Although Obermiller does not explain why *rgyal-po'i skad* designates Sanskrit, this is far from being excluded. It is obvious from the text quoted that the new sūtras were meant to replace texts composed in Prakrit, Apabhraṃṣa and *bar-mar 'don-pa*. Obermiller translates the word *gźun* as 'method', Yuyama translates it by 'Scripture', but *gźun* often renders Sanskrit *grantha* and it is probably better to translate the second part of this section as follows: "the Arhats successively composed (the texts) in different scriptures such as the sūtras, etc., composed in the royal (or extensive)¹⁾ language."

In two other passages we find an expression very similar to *bar-mar 'don-pa*, i.e. *'brin-du 'don-pa*. The first is taken by Bu-ston from Padmākara-ghoṣa's *Bhikṣu-varṣāgrapṛcchā*: *gnas-brtan-pa / mkhan-po rje rigs ... ka-tya-na / skad 'brin-du 'don-pa* /. Obermiller translates: "the Sthaviras ...

¹⁾ Yuyama wrongly translates *rgya-chen-po'i skad* as 'the language of great extensiveness'. Probably he did not realise that *rgya-chen-po'i* is a so-called attributive genitive (cf. Michael Hahn, *Lehrbuch der klassischen tibetischen Schriftsprache*, Hamburg, 1971, p.73). *Rgya-chen-po* can of course also render Sanskrit *udāra* 'lofty, elevated'. It is not possible to make any suppositions about the nature of the *rgya-chen-po* language without knowing the original Sanskrit term.

Their chief preceptor was Kātyāyana of the Vaiçya caste ... They spoke an intermediate dialect." Yuyama translates: "the Sthaviras: The master was Kātyāyana, a Vaiçya ... (They) pronounced the language intermediately ..." Yuyama seems to take *skad* as the object of 'don-pa but the meaning is obviously: "As to their language, it is the 'brin-du 'don-pa." The second passage quotes the opinion of some scholars (*kha-cig*): *kha-cig / phal-chen-po skad 'brin-du 'don-pa'i skad /*. Obermiller translates: "According to some the language of the Māhāsāṃghikas was the intermediate dialect." Yuyama translates: "Some [say]: – The Mahāsāṃghikas spoke the language, the language (which they) pronounced intermediately." Yuyama's strange translation seems to be based upon the fact that he takes the first *skad* as the object of 'don-pa. The text has to be translated, of course, as in the previous passage: "Some [say]: As to the Mahāsāṃghikas, their language is the 'brin-du 'don-pa language."

Yuyama remarks in a note (17): "it is difficult to know the exact meaning of the Tibetan *bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig* ... it is certainly used as synonymous to *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa* or °-pa'i *skad*." Undoubtedly, *bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig* and *'brin-du 'don-pa'i skad* (not *skad 'brin-du 'don-pa'i skad*) designate the same language. However, it is interesting to note that 'bar-mar 'don-pa is the name of a *tshig*, whereas the text speaks of a *rgyal-po'i* (or *rgya-chen-po'i*) *skad*. In the two other passages 'brin-du 'don-pa is a *skad* and not a *tshig*. Probably *skad* renders Sanskrit *bhāṣā* 'language', but it is impossible to determine the Sanskrit word translated in the Prabhāvatī by *tshig*.

Although Yuyama remarks in note 17 that it is difficult to know the exact meaning of the Tibetan *bar-mar 'don-pa'i tshig*, he writes in another note (27): "Tibetan 'brin or *bar-ma* must be used for something moderate in regard to the quality and quantity—neither too large or loud (*chen/che*) not too small or low (*chun*), neither too strong or high (*drag*) nor too weak or low (*zan*). In this case it denotes the language of moderate character with moderate hybridity. At the same time it seems to me that the language also refers to the manner of speech, that is to say, a language which is neither too harsh nor too soft, neither too loud nor too low. By using such a language they must have attracted wider audience. The more active they were in propagation, the more their language must absorb the neighbouring dialectal elements ... The most important thing in our text is that the language of moderate character, no matter how one may translate it, refers to a language compared with other dialects synchronically, and never diachronically. That is to say, it denotes by no means the language in the intermediate stage of the Sanskritization process." Yuyama's opinion does not seem to have met with universal approval. G. von Simson, one of the participants in the conference in Göttingen in July 1976, to which Yuyama contributed this paper, was of the opinion that the expressions *bar-ma* and 'brin-du referred to a language intermediary between Sanskrit and Prakrit/Apabhraṃśa (cf. p. 187).

Yuyama's gratuitous speculations seem to be entirely based on the meaning of the Tibetan words *bar-mar* and *'brin-du* which both mean 'in the middle'. All the other terms used by Bu-ston, such as *tha-mal-pa* (Prākṛta), *zur-chag* (Apabhraṃśa), *legs-par sbyar-ba* (Saṃskṛta), and *śa-za* (Paiśācī), represent Tibetan renderings of Sanskrit names of languages. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that this is also the case with regard to *bar-mar 'don-pa* or *'brin-du 'don-pa*. According to the texts quoted by Bu-ston it is a language different from Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa and used by the Sthaviras or the Mahāsāṃghikas. We have seen above that *'bar-ma 'don-par byed-pa* renders Sanskrit *madhyoddeśika*, a term used in association with the Mahāsāṃghikas. It is therefore very likely that both *bar-mar 'don-pa* and *'brin-du 'don-pa* render Sanskrit *madhyoddeśika* or Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit *madhy'-uddeśika*. In the texts quoted by Bu-ston *Madhyoddeśika* is the name of a language but it is by no means sure that this is the original meaning of the Sanskrit term. We do not know the linguistic form of this term in the Prakrit underlying the language of the Vinaya texts of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins. The literal meaning of *madhyoddeśa* would seem to be something like 'intermediate recitation'. It is to be hoped that other texts will throw light on the original meaning of *madhyoddeśika* and its later development.

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My deepest thanks are due to Dr. Gustav Roth for having been so kind as to send me photocopies of two manuscripts of the Mahāvastu which have been microfilmed on behalf of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. In his letter of the 2nd May 1981 Dr. Roth writes: "One of them, the most important one, is registered in our Seminar library [Seminar für Indologie und Buddhismuskunde, Göttingen] under the number Xc 51. It is a palmleaf manuscript of 428 leaves, complete, in a script which points towards the twelfth or thirteenth century. It may be the manuscript to which Senart referred. On fol. 2 a, line 2, the following reading is perfectly clear: *ārya-mahāsāṃghikānām lokottara-vādinām madhy'-uddeśikānām pāṭhena vinayapiṭakasya mahāvastuye ādi* /. The other complete Mahāvastu manuscript is written on 446 paper leaves dated: *likhito 'yaṃ 815* (1694 A.D.). One finds here the note: PSB 30, Mahāvastu, Privatbesitz 456 Bl., 41.5×16 cm, Papier. The copy of it in our Seminar is registered under number Xc 50. Here we read on fol. 2 a, lines 2–3: *āryya-sarva-sāṃghikānām lokottara-vādinām madhyumdeśikānām pāṭhena vinaya-piṭakasya mahāvastuye ādi* /. However, at the end of the MS, fol. 446 a, line 4, the text has: *ārya-mahāsāṃghikānām lokottara-vādinām pāṭhena* /. Dr. Roth adds: "It is clear that *madhyumdeśikānām* is nearer to *madhyuddeśikānām* than to *madhyadeśikānām*. Thus we can accept the readings *madhy'-uddeśikānām* and *madhyoddeśikānām* as the correct readings for the Mahāvastu and the

Bhikṣu Prātimokṣa-sūtra, and as characteristic for the terminology of the Lokottaravādins in general.”

The first manuscript referred to by Dr. Roth is of the greatest importance for the study of the Mahāvastu and it is very much to be hoped that it will be edited as soon as possible and/or made available in a facsimile edition. The reading *madhy'uddeśikānām* is most probably only one example of many in which this manuscript must have preserved better readings than those found in the manuscripts used by Senart for his edition of the Mahāvastu.

Additional note:

Only recently I discovered that in his review of Gustav Roth's edition of the Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya (Patna, 1970), John Brough suggested the meaning 'who preaches the Middle (Way)' for *madhyoddeśika-* (BSOAS 36, 1973, pp. 675–677). Brough does not quote other instances to support this hypothesis; the passage in which he discussed the meaning of *madhyoddeśika-* is the following:

It has generally been accepted that the *Mahāvastu* belonged to the 'Lokottaravādins of Madhyadeśa'. The form *madhyuddeśikānām* here (*madhyoddeśikānām* in their Prātimokṣasūtra) may raise doubts. On reflection, it is somewhat curious that a Buddhist sect should specify that it belonged to Madhyadeśa; and *madhyoddeśika-* would readily have been corrupted to *madhyadeśika-*, while the converse is extremely improbable. Although *uddeśa-* can mean 'place' as well as 'instruction', we may suggest as a hypothesis for future consideration that the sect designated itself as 'Lokottaravādins who preach the Middle (Way)'. In view of their transcendental doctrines (cf. A. Bareau, *Les sectes bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule*, Saigon, 1955, 77), this would probably mean a doctrine holding to a middle path between the Śrāvakayāna and the more extreme forms of the nascent Mahāyāna.