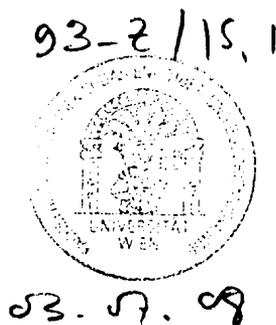


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Is the *Dharma-kāya* the Real “Phantom Body” of the Buddha?¹

by Paul Harrison

I. Introduction

The Trikāya doctrine of Buddhism, i.e., the doctrine that the Buddha has three “bodies,” is notorious for its complexities. Attributed to the Yogācāra, but regarded as typical of the Mahāyāna in general, it is customarily cited in books on Buddhism in terms of the triad *dharma-kāya*, *saṃbhoga-kāya* (or *sāmbhogika-kāya*) and *nirmāṇa-kāya* (or *nairmāṇika-kāya*). Taking these in ascending order of abstraction, the *nirmāṇa-kāya*, usually translated “apparitional body,” “phantom body,” “transformation body,” etc., is the physical manifestation of Buddhahood, the ordinary perishable human form, as exemplified by the “historical Buddha,” Siddhārtha Gautama. The *saṃbhoga-kāya* (“body of bliss,” “reward body,” “enjoyment body,” etc.) is a more exalted and splendid manifestation of the enlightened personality, still in the realm of form, but visible only to *bodhisattvas*, those of advanced spiritual capabilities. By contrast, the *dharma-kāya* (“*Dharma*-body,” “Body of Truth,” “Cosmic Body,” “Absolute Body,” etc.) is both formless and imperishable, representing the identification of the Buddha with the truth which he revealed, or with reality itself. As such the *dharma-kāya* is often linked with various terms for reality, such as *dharmatā*, *dharma-dhātu*, and so on, and has even been regarded as a kind of Buddhist absolute, or at least at one with it.² In this light the *dharma-kāya* is understood as the primal “source” or “ground” from which the other two types of bodies emanate.³ While many scholars are content to describe this in purely abstract terms, others impute personal characteristics to it;⁴ and at least one writer has gone so far as to compare it to the Christian idea of Godhead.⁵

As a summary of the Trikāya doctrine this is, of course, oversimplified. We are dealing here with a complex theory which underwent many accretions and refinements, as Buddhists continued down through the centuries to speculate on the nature of Buddhahood, on the nature of reality, and on the relationship between them.⁶ It is hardly surprising, then, that attempts to plot the course of such arcane speculations have not always been entirely successful in reaching a clear consensus, although the arguments advanced, even in recent writing on the subject, do tend to follow similar lines. A good example of this is the authoritative treatment by Nagao, "On the Theory of Buddha-body (*Buddha-kāya*)," first published in English in 1973.⁷ Generally Nagao distinguishes three phases: an initial one-body theory, a two-body theory, and the three-body theory elaborated by the Yogācāras. According to him (p. 104), the two-body theory (i.e., *rūpa-kāya* and *dharmakāya*) "became stabilized in a variety of earlier sūtras,⁸ and in early Mahāyāna sūtras, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Saddharmapundarīka*, and so forth. The *rūpa-kāya* is the Buddha seen in a human body, while the *dharmakāya* is the Buddha's personality seen in the dharma or dharma-nature." Elsewhere (pp. 106-7) Nagao states that the two-body theory was the one held "until the time of the *Prajñāpāramitā* Sūtra and the time of Nāgārjuna," even though the raw materials for the third body, the *sambhoga-kāya*, were also to hand before the time of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, as a consequence of the *bodhisattva*-concept and the idea that a *bodhisattva*'s performance of meritorious actions produced a body which was their manifest "reward." Nagao's article contains many valuable observations, but, as we shall see, some of its assertions are rather too imprecise, both chronologically and philosophically, to be of much use in unravelling the early development of the doctrine at issue. Another recent treatment of the subject by Makransky (1989) also describes certain features of the putative earlier two-body theory before the Yogācāras remodelled it (see esp. pp. 51-53), and distinguishes it sharply from the previous Mainstream⁹ (in this case, Sarvāstivādin) formulations. This analysis, too, is open to question in certain respects, as I shall show. In these and other articles on the subject¹⁰ there is a general tendency to postulate a one-body/two-

body/three-body progression, in terms of which a single personality is divided into a physical and a “spiritual” body, and then the physical body is further split in two, yielding the final complement of three. Some writers, however, point to the existence of three bodies even in the Pāli sources, what one scholar has called the “primitive triad,” i.e., *pūti-* or *cātur-mahābhūtika-kāya*, *mano-maya-kāya*, and *dharmakāya*.¹¹ The first is the corruptible physical body formed out of the four elements, while the second is the mind-made body with which the Buddha visits the celestial realms (believed by some to be a forerunner of the *sambhoga-kāya*); the third is the so-called “*Dharma*-body.” Now, although both these ways of approaching the subject—the assumption of a linear process, and the belief that the Pāli Canon contains an embryonic *Trikāya* schema—raise certain difficulties, I do not propose in this paper to discuss the evolution of the *Trikāya* theory in its entirety, since that would be a mammoth undertaking. What I wish to do is address one aspect of it only, viz., the early development of the idea of *dharmakāya*, in the hope that clarifying this will open the way to a better understanding of Mahāyāna buddhology as a whole.

II. *Dharma-kāya in Texts Translated by Lokakṣema*

One possible way of investigating the initial development of the *dharmakāya* idea in the Mahāyāna context is to look for it in the small group of *sūtras* translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema towards the end of the 2nd century C. E., given that these texts constitute our earliest datable literary evidence for Mahāyāna Buddhism.¹² What, if anything, do these ancient documents tell us about the “prehistory” of the Yogācāra *Trikāya* theory, and about Mahāyānist notions of *dharmakāya* in particular? Fortunately, we need not start from scratch: preliminary work in this area has already been done by Lewis Lancaster, who some time ago examined the various Chinese versions of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* (*AsPP*) with careful attention to the development of a number of key doctrinal concepts, among them *dharmakāya*.¹³ In view of the importance of the *AsPP* as the seminal *Prajñāpāramitā* text, clearly the most influential of all the scriptures

on which Lokakṣema worked, let us begin by reviewing Lancaster's findings.

Lancaster (1968: 92-100) originally isolated five occurrences of the term *dharma-kāya* in the Sanskrit text of the *AsPP*, and examined the relevant portions of the various Chinese translations in order to determine the development of this concept in that *sūtra*.¹⁴ He found that the term does not appear in what he called the "early text" (represented by the first three Chinese versions, the oldest of which is Lokakṣema's, the *Daoxing [banruo] jing*, T.224), except for one passage, but is attested by the "middle" and "late" texts, even though these do not entirely agree with the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions. On this basis he concluded (1974: 36) that although the later texts display the two-body theory (*rūpa-kāya* and *dharma-kāya*), "it appears that the earliest ideas in Mahāyāna sūtras were neither the two-body nor the three-body ones, but rather the notion of one Buddha-body." Although this statement in particular points us in the right direction, and Lancaster's findings are indeed interesting, some of the inferences he drew from them now merit closer scrutiny. If we look carefully at the passages in question, attending at the same time to what previous scholarship has made of them, it will become apparent that what Lancaster saw as the progressive introduction into the text of the "uniquely Mahāyāna" doctrine of the *dharma-kāya* can be understood in quite different terms.

The five occurrences of *dharma-kāya* in the Sanskrit text of the *AsPP* are:¹⁵

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Chap. IV (Vaidya 1960: 48). | Not found in T.224. |
| 2. Chap. IV (Vaidya 1960: 50). | Not found in T.224. |
| 3. Chap. XVII (Vaidya 1960: 168). | Not found in T.224. |
| 4. Chap. XXVIII (Vaidya 1960: 228). | Found in T.224. |
| 5. Chap. XXXI (Vaidya 1960: 253). | Not found in T.224. |

The first of these is perhaps the most important; the passage is worth citing in full (the key sentences are underlined):

*Śakra āha sacen me bhagavan ayaṃ jambudvīpaḥ paripūrṇas cūlikābaddhas
tathāgata-śarīrāṇāṃ dīyeta iyaṃ ca prajñā-pāramitā likhitvopanāmyeta*

*tata ekatareṇa bhāgena pravāryamāno 'nayoḥ dvayor bhāgayoḥ sthāpi-
tayoḥ imām evāhaṃ bhagavan prajñā-pāramitāṃ parigṛhṇīyāṃ / tat kasya
hetoḥ yathāpi nāma tathāgata-netrī-citrikāreṇa / etad dhi tathāgatānāṃ
bhūtārthikaṃ śarīram / tat kasya hetoḥ uktaṃ hy etad bhagavatā dharmā-
kāyā buddhā bhagavantaḥ / mā khalu punar imam bhiksavaḥ sat-kāyam
kāyam manyadhvam / dharmā-kāya-parinispattito mām bhiksavo
draksyatha / esa ca tathāgata-kāyo bhūta-koti-prabhāvito drastavyo
yaduta prajñā-pāramitā /*

Although there can be no doubt about the fundamental intent of the text here—that the Buddhas and their relics are worthy of veneration solely by virtue of their realisation of perfect wisdom, which is therefore pre-eminent—many previous treatments of this important passage of the *AsPP* have failed to take account of one crucial point. Translations by Conze (1975: 116), Kajiyama (1984: 11) and Makransky (1989: 65) have all rendered *dharmā-kāya* in the phrase *dharmā-kāyā buddhā bhagavantaḥ* as a noun, Kajiyama in the singular (“Buddhas consist of the Dharma-body”), Conze and Makransky in the plural (“The Dharma-bodies are the Buddhas, the Lords”).¹⁶ However, this raises a problem: if *dharmā-kāya* here is a noun, how can it possibly stand in the plural, as it most certainly does in the Sanskrit? Given the later understanding of this term in the Buddhist tradition, can there be more than one *dharmā-kāya*? After all, not one of the other similarly elusive words which are supposed to do duty for “reality”—*dharmatā*, *tathatā*, *bhūta-koti*, etc.—ever occurs in the plural, indeed could not: since these “things” are supposed to be formless, beyond quantification, beyond all duality, how could there be more than one of them?

The same problem pertains to two of the other citations listed above. In the passage in Chap. XVII, in fact, the relevant wording (underlined below) is identical:

*tasmād bodhisattvo mahāsattvo 'vinivartanīyaḥ sad-dharma-parigrahāya
paramudyogam āpadyate atītānāgata-pratyutpannānāṃ buddhānāṃ
bhagavatāṃ premnā ca gauraveṇa ca / dharmā-kāyā buddhā bhagavanta
iti dharme prema ca gauravaṃ copādāya sad-dharma-parigrahaṃ karoti*

Here the *iti* following the key phrase suggests that it is taken from another source, as is more strongly indicated in Chap. IV by the

words *uktam hy etad bhagavatā*, which in Mahāyāna sūtras commonly introduce citations from Mainstream canonical texts. Again, Conze (1975: 207) translates: “the Dharma-bodies are the Buddhas, the Lords.”

In Chap. XXXI, however, the wording is somewhat different:

*evam eva kula-putra ye kecit tathāgata-rūpeṇa vā ghoṣeṇa vā abhiniṣṭāḥ
te tathāgatasyāgamaṇam ca gamaṇam ca kalpayanti / ye ca tathāgata-
syāgamaṇam ca gamaṇam ca kalpayanti sarve te bāla-jāṭiyā duspajāña-
jāṭiyā iti vaktavyāḥ tadyathāpi nāma sa eva puruṣo yo 'nudake udaka-
samjñām utpādayati / tat kasya hetoḥ na hi tathāgato rūpa-kāyato
drastavyah / dharma-kāyās tathāgatāḥ / na ca kula-putra dharmatā āgac-
chati vā gacchati vā / evam eva kulaputra nāsti tathāgatānām āgamaṇam
vā gamaṇam vā /*

The key words here are paraphrased by Kajiyama (1984: 14) as “a Tathāgata should not be considered as a *rūpakāya*; Tathāgatas consist of *dharmakāyas*,” and translated by Conze (1975: 291) as “For a Tathagata cannot be seen from his form-body. The Dharma-bodies are the Tathagatas...”¹⁷

This way of construing the texts has certain theoretical implications. For example, it is on the basis of his understanding of these passages that Kajiyama (1984: 12-13) speaks of a change in the idea of the “Buddha-body,” and the emergence of a “theory of the two-bodied Buddha” at a comparatively early stage in the development of the Sanskrit text of the *AsPP*. Thus, he concludes (p. 13), “the physical Buddha body came to be called *rūpakāya*, while the Buddha body equated with *prajñāpāramitā* was called *dharmakāya*,” and he infers that the two-body theory using these terms must have been formed by the middle of the 4th century, since the passage from Chap. XXXI is attested in Kumārajīva’s translation of the *AsPP* (although the passages from Chaps. IV and XVII are not).

This is, however, problematical, for imposing a two-body schema on these passages leads us into the philosophical incoherence mentioned above: if there is such a thing as *the dharma-kāya*, how can it be plural? Fortunately, the solution to this problem lies ready to hand, having been pointed out by Edgerton as long ago as

1953 (*BHSD*, s.v.):¹⁸ the compound *dharmā-kāya* in these particular citations is not a *tatpuruṣa* (or *karmadhāraya*) substantive but a *bahuvrīhi* adjective.¹⁹ This usage, as Edgerton noted, is the only one attested for Pāli; in fact, the term occurs but once in the entire Pāli Canon. The sole citation in question is in the *Aggañña-sutta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya* (D iii 84), where *dharmā-kāya*, *brahmā-kāya*, *dharmā-bhūta* and *brahmā-bhūta* are listed as designations for the Buddha. These are all adjectives, although not all translators have recognised or preserved them as such.²⁰ The message of the text is that followers of the Buddha may claim to be his sons, not because they have been engendered by his physical body, but through being the offspring of the *dharmā*,²¹ because the Buddha is “*dharmā*-bodied” or has the *dharmā* as his body (*dharmā-kāya*),²² the Buddha is the *dharmā* itself (*dharmā-bhūta*).²³ This equation of the Buddha with the *dharmā* is also found in a number of well-known passages in the Pāli Canon, for example at S iii 120, where Gautama says to Vakkali, long stricken by illness and desperate to see the Buddha, “What is the point of your seeing this corruptible body (*pūti-kāya*)? Whoever sees the *dharmā*, Vakkali, sees me; whoever sees me sees the *dharmā*.”²⁴ Along similar lines are Gautama’s celebrated instructions to his followers to take the *dharmā* itself as their guide following the demise of his body.²⁵ The use of the adjective *dharmā-kāya* in the *Aggañña-sutta* can be seen as reflecting these ideas. The Buddha is equated with the *dharmā*; therefore, he is said to be *dharmā-kāya*, to “have the *dharmā* as his body.” To put it in more elegant English, the Buddha is truly “embodied” in the *dharmā*, rather than in his physical person, which, as Vakkali is reminded, has no real significance at all. The adjective *dharmā-bhūta* is virtually synonymous, i.e., to describe the Buddha as *dharmā-bhūta* is to say that the Buddha is the *dharmā* itself.²⁶

Turning back to the *AsPP*, we see then that the three passages thus far in question are making the same point: not that the Buddhas are the *dharmā-kāyas*, but that they are those who are embodied in the *dharmā*. While this assertion may still require explication, it seems not to lead us straight into the philosophical quicksands of

the developed Trikāya theory. In fact, there is nothing particularly Mahāyānist about it at all, as it occurs in the Pāli scriptures, even if only once. Indeed, as we have noted, in two of the *AsPP* occurrences in question there are indications that the crucial phrase may well have been a quotation from a Mainstream text, although we have yet to identify the source. It is certainly the case that the Mainstream—in this case Theravādin—interpretation of the term suits the context perfectly, far better, in fact, than the Trikāya-influenced reading. This is especially clear in the passages in Chaps. XVII and XXXI, where the interpretation suggested resolves the awkward *non sequiturs* of Conze's translation. Thus in Chap. IV Śakra, faced with a choice between the world packed to the ceiling with relics of the Buddha and a written copy of the teaching or *dharma* of the Perfection of Wisdom, expresses his preference for the latter "out of reverence for the guide of the *Tathāgatas*, since it is their genuine bodily relic. Why? Because the Lord has said 'The Buddhas and Lords have the *dharma* as their body,'" i.e., the *dharma* is their true body, and thus it is their true relic as well.²⁷ Similarly, the passage in Chap. XVII may be rendered freely as follows:

"Therefore the *bodhisattva* and *mahāsattva* who is incapable of regression makes a supreme effort to take up the true *dharma* out of love and respect for past, future and present Buddhas and Lords. Feeling love and respect for the *dharma*, with the thought 'The Buddhas and Lords have the *dharma* as their body,' he/she takes up the true *dharma*."

That is to say, the Buddhas are embodied in the *dharma*, and so to love and respect the *dharma* is to love and respect the Buddhas. And lastly, the relevant passage in Chap. XXXI may be translated like this:

"In the same way, son of good family, those who fixate on the *Tathāgata's* physical appearance or his voice imagine that the *Tathāgata* comes and goes, but it has to be said that all those who imagine that the *Tathāgata* comes and goes are inherently foolish and stupid, just like the man who perceives water where none exists. Why is that? Because a *Tathāgata* is

not to be seen through his physical body; *Tathāgatas* have the *dharma* as their body. The nature of *dharma*, son of good family, neither comes nor goes. In the same way, son of good family, there is neither coming nor going for the *Tathāgatas*.”

What is important here is the *dharma* which constitutes the true identity of the Buddhas, not any particular “body,” however abstract. Just as coming and going cannot be predicated of the *dharma* itself, or of the nature of *dharma(s)* (*dharma(tā)*), it cannot be predicated of the Buddhas insofar as they are identified with the *dharma*.²⁸

We are still left, however, with three instances in the *AsPP* where *dharma-kāya* appears as a noun. The first is the sentence *dharmakāya-pariṇiṣpattito māṃ bhikṣavo draṅṣyatha* in the Chap. IV passage cited at length above. This is rendered by Kajiyama as “Monks, you should see me as the accomplishment of the Dharma-body,” by Conze as “Monks, you should see Me from the accomplishment of the Dharma-body.” However, since we are dealing here with a continuation of a (probably Mainstream) scriptural quotation, we ought first to consider interpretations of *dharma-kāya* which are consistent with Mainstream doctrine, to see whether they fit the context better.

Although *dharma-kāya* as a noun is not attested in the Pāli Canon, it does occur in other Mainstream sources. To begin with, there is a handful of passages in the Chinese translations of the Āgamas where the appearance of the term *fa-shen*, “body of *dharma(s)*,”²⁹ indicates that the underlying Indic may have had *dharma-kāya* as a substantive. These passages were exhaustively studied by Anesaki (1982),³⁰ whose findings may be found summarised in Demiéville’s article in the *Hōbōgirin*, s.v. *busshin* (1930: 176-177). There is one clear reference in the *Samyuktāgama*, now generally assigned to the Mūlasarvāstivādin,³¹ and three in the *Ekottarāgama*, thought by many to be part of the Mahāsāṃghika canon.³² In the *Samyuktāgama* passage King Aśoka justifies his lavish veneration of the *stūpa* of Ānanda with reference to the latter’s key role in the preservation and transmission of the *dharma*. Asked by his ministers why these offerings surpass all others, he

says “The body of the *Tathāgata* is the body of *dharma(s)*, pure in nature. He [Ānanda] was able to retain it/them all; for this reason the offerings [to him] surpass [all others].”³³ In the opening verses of the *Ekottarāgama* (T.125, I, 549c14), which have no Pāli counterpart, we read: “The appearance of the Master of the Śākyas in this world was very brief. Although the physical body has passed away, the body of *dharma(s)* endures.” And later, in the same passage (550a 1-2): “The body of *dharma(s)* of the *Tathāgata* is indestructible; it abides in the world forever, and does not cease. When gods and human beings get to hear it, they perfect the fruit of the Way.” This idea is subsequently thematised in Section LXIV, where the Buddha and Ānanda discuss the survival of the *dharma* after the death of the *Tathāgata* (787b17-29):

Then Ānanda said to the Lord: “The Buddhas and Lords of the distant past had an extremely long lifespan, precept-breakers were rare and there was no impurity. Now, however, people have a very short lifespan, not exceeding ten decades. After the Buddhas of the past attained extinction, how long did the *dharma* they left behind remain in the world?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “After the Buddhas of the past attained extinction, the *dharma* did not remain for long.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “After the *Tathāgata* attains extinction, how long will the true *dharma* remain in the world?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “After I attain extinction, the *dharma* will remain for a long time. After the extinction of the Buddha Kāśyapa, the *dharma* which he left behind lasted seven days. Right now, Ānanda, you [may think] the *Tathāgata* has few disciples. Don't hold this view: there are countless thousand *koṭis* of disciples in the east, and countless thousand *koṭis* of disciples in the south. Therefore, Ānanda, you should think: ‘The lifespan of our Buddha Śākyamuni is extremely long. Why? Although the physical body undergoes extinction, the body of *dharma(s)* persists. This is its meaning, which we should ponder, take up and put into practice.’”

Finally, in Section XXXI (719b7-8), Anuruddha remarks that “The body of the *Tathāgata* is the body of the true *dharma* (*rulai shen-zhe zhenfa zhi shen*).”

As becomes especially clear when one considers the contexts in which they are embedded, all these Āgama citations make a specific identification of the term translated as *fa-shen*, “body of

dharma(s),” with the *dharma* or *dharma*s demonstrated by the Buddha, or with the true *dharma*, i.e., with his teachings or his Teaching considered as a whole. It is this which is described as pure, indestructible, eternal, remaining after the *nirvāṇa* of the physical body, and, according to one telling passage, something that one can *hear*. But there is a problem: can we be sure that the underlying Indic word was indeed *dharma-kāya*? For there is at least one other candidate for the position, and that is *dharma-śarīra*. The occurrence of this compound in the *AsPP* has already been noted above. To what extent its meaning differs from *dharma-kāya* remains to be determined, but some light is thrown on this in the lengthy discussion by the unknown author of the *Karma-vibhaṅgopadeśa* (see Lévi 1932: 157ff., 172ff.).³⁴ In this text we find an explicit equation of *dharma-śarīra* with the teaching of the Buddha, the hearing or realisation of which far outweighs the vision of the Buddha’s physical body, the “body produced by mother and father.”³⁵ The theme of the text, then, is similar to that of the *Aggañña-sutta*, viz., that the *dharma* in the sense of the teaching is the true body (and in this case “relic”)³⁶ of the Buddha; and in line with the text’s own definition the noun *dharma-śarīra* is best interpreted as a *karmadhāraya*, i.e., as “the body/relic which consists in the *dharma(s)*.” Since all this is obviously congruent with the *Āgama* passages we have just looked at, one has to ask whether the word translated in them as *fa-shen* was not *dharma-śarīra* rather than *dharma-kāya*.

In the absence of Indic fragments or parallels, we cannot answer this question with certainty. Only for the *Samyuktāgama* passage can we refer to the *Divyāvadāna*, where we see that neither compound is attested;³⁷ the other *Āgama* passages remain in doubt. However, it is quite clear that *dharma-kāya* is at least possible, for it definitely occurs in the sense required in other Mainstream sources. One of these is the *Milinda-pañha*, a non-canonical Pāli text preserved by the Theravādins. The relevant passage, as translated by Horner (1965: 99-100), runs as follows: “the Lord has attained final nibbāna in the element of nibbāna that has no substrate remaining (for future birth); it is not possible to point to the Lord who has gone home and say that he is either here or there;

but, sire, it is possible to point to the Lord by means of the body of Dhamma, for Dhamma, sire, was taught by the Lord.”³⁸ This echoes a previous statement in the same section, to the effect that “He who sees the *dhamma* sees the Lord, for the *dhamma* was taught by the Lord.”³⁹ These variations on what are by now familiar themes indicate that the substantives *dharma-kāya* and *dharma-śarīra* certainly overlap in meaning, even if they may not be entirely synonymous. A second Mainstream citation of interest here is a passage in the Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya (see Dutt 1950: 185-186), where Śroṇa Koṭīkarṇa expresses his strong desire to see the physical body of the Buddha, since the “seeing” (*darśana*) of Buddhas is as rare as the Uḍumbara flower. His words are: “On the authority of my preceptor [my emphasis] I have seen the Lord by means of the body of *dharma(s)*, but not by means of the physical body (*dr̥ṣṭo mayopādhyāyānubhāvena sa bhagavān dharma-kāyena no tu rūpa-kāyena*).” In both these sources I would maintain that *dharma-kāya* clearly refers not to some “spiritual body,”⁴⁰ but, in line with the Āgama passages cited above, to the Buddha’s teachings, acquired, in Śroṇa Koṭīkarṇa’s case, on the authority of his preceptor Mahākātyāyana.⁴¹ However, one question remains, which I have left open up till now: if we accept that the first element of the nominal compound *dharma-kāya* denotes the Buddha’s teachings, should we continue to translate it in the singular, as is customary, or in the plural?

Although it may not seem so at first sight, the answer to this question is suggested by a number of scholastic Sarvāstivādin sources, which use the term *dharma-kāya* to refer to the special, undefiled *dharma*s or qualities which make a Buddha a Buddha.⁴² There appear to have been differences of opinion as to the identity of these *dharma*s. According to Vasubandhu’s *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* some scholars identified them with the 18 qualities exclusive to a Buddha (*āveṇika-dharma*s),⁴³ viz., the ten powers (*bala*), four assurances (*vaiśāradya*), three applications of mindfulness (*smṛtyupasthāna*) and great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*).⁴⁴ Other Sarvāstivādin sources, however, equated them with the more modest list of the five *anāsrava-skandhas*, or “incorruptible constituents,” viz., *śīla*, *samādhi*, *prajñā*, *vinukti* and *vimukti-jñāna*-

darśana (see, e.g., Lamotte 1958: 689-690), an identification which is also found in the work of the great Theravādin commentator Buddhaghosa.⁴⁵ Whatever the composition of the list, however, *dharma-kāya* in this context clearly means the *collection* of the (undefiled) qualities or principles which the Buddha has realised in his own person and revealed to others. That is to say, the use of the Sanskrit word *kāya* turns on the same ambiguity possessed by the English word “body” or the Latin *corpus*; it means “body” in the sense of a complete collection of constituent parts, ensemble, entirety, totality. And this is in itself an indication that the first term in the compound—at least when it is a substantive—is indeed to be construed as plural.⁴⁶ Further, there is a second ambiguity built into the term: the *dharma*s in question are both taught by the Buddha, in which case we might call them “teachings” or “truths,” and they are realised in his person, in which case we might call them “qualities” (in the latter sense they are more obviously plural). This ambiguity is probably intentional and fundamental. We find it acknowledged, for example, in a commentary on the *Vajracchedikā* ascribed to Asaṅga, who distinguishes two types of *dharma-kāya*: the “*dharma-kāya* as words” and the “*dharma-kāya* as realisation.”⁴⁷ If we accept then that this interpretation, “body of *dharma*s,” with its multiple ambiguities, well established for Mainstream scholastic sources, can also be applied to Mainstream scriptural texts in which the substantive *dharma-kāya* appears, we must concede that renditions such as “Body of the *Dharma*,” “Body of Truth” or “Body of the Teaching” are mistaken, or at the very least too limiting, since a collection cannot consist of one thing.⁴⁸

To return now to the Mahāyāna sources, it can be seen that the rather multivalent Mainstream interpretation of the substantive form of our term—“body/collection of qualities/truths/teachings”—is consistent with the *AsPP* citations under consideration. The remainder of the passage from Chap. IV, therefore, may be translated as follows: “Again, *bhikṣus*, you ought not to think that this existing body is [my real] body. *Bhikṣus*, you should see me in terms of the full realisation of the body of *dharma*s (i.e., the totality of undefiled qualities or truths).⁴⁹ And one ought to see that this [real] body of the *Tathāgata* is constituted by⁵⁰ perfect truth, i.e.,

by the Perfection of Wisdom.” This interpretation fits the context, and raises fewer philosophical difficulties.

A similar reading can be applied to the other occurrence of *dharma-kāya* as a noun in Chap. IV (no. 2 in the list above; no equivalent in any Chinese translation), where it is said that just as the king’s representative is inviolable and worthy of worship by the great mass of people because of the authority (*anubhāva*) of the king, so too the preacher of the *dharma* (*dharma-bhāṅaka*) is inviolable and worthy of worship because of the authority of the body of *dharma*s (*dharma-kāyānubhāvāt*).⁵¹ It seems to me far more likely that the preachers in question owe their reception to the inherent power of the teachings they purvey than to some abstract but nonetheless awe-inspiring theistic principle; that is to say, the king’s servants represent the king, and derive their authority from him, the *dharma*-preachers represent the *dharma*, and derive their authority from it.

Finally, the same reading is also preferable for the fourth passage listed above, which happens to be the only one represented in the early Chinese versions. The Sanskrit text reads:

*sumanasikṛtā ca sudhṛtā ca suparyavāptā ca supravartitā ca tvayā Ānanda
iyam prajñā-pāramitā kartavyā / suparivyaktenākṣara-pada-vyañjana
suniruktā codgrahītavyā / tat kasya hetoḥ atītānāgata-pratyutpannānām hi
Ānanda tathāgatānām arhatām samyak-sambuddhānām dharma-kāyateti
tām dharmatām pramāṅikṛtya /*

Most previous commentators have recognised that this has nothing to do with the Trikāya,⁵² even though Conze’s rendition (1975: 267) blurs the issue: “For as the dharma-body of the past, future and present Tathagatas is this dharma-text authoritative.” Lokakṣema’s Chinese translation (468c16-18) reads:

“You should carefully study [the Prajñāpāramitā] and accept it in its entirety, bear it all in mind, keep it, and copy out its words correctly without error or loss [since] it is equivalent to and not different from the body of the scriptures of the Buddhas [*fo-jing-shen*] of the past, future and present.”

The use of the Chinese word *jing* (canonical text, scripture) for *dharma* is standard with Lokakṣema, and so the presence of the word *dharma-kāya* in the earliest accessible version of the *AsPP* is hardly to be doubted. Here the text is obviously playing on the aforementioned ambiguity of the term *dharma*, meaning both teaching and principle or law of existence, as the Buddha advises Ānanda to ponder, remember, master, etc., the Prajñāpāramitā with minute care, because “one ought to accept that nature of things [which the Prajñāpāramitā teaches] as authoritative, as being the body of *dharma*s of all past, future and present *Tathāgatas*.”⁵³

My contention is, then, that even in the later Sanskrit text of the *AsPP*, where *dharma-kāya* clearly occurs as a noun, it is perfectly comprehensible in terms of the multivalent Mainstream interpretation of the word, as the body or collection of qualities, principles, truths, or teachings. Elsewhere it appears as an adjective, a usage which is also found in Mainstream sources. What is common to both grammatical forms in the different Mainstream sources we have reviewed is that the emphasis is on the prior member, *dharma*, not on *kāya*. The same is true for all occurrences in the *AsPP*. Therefore there is no real support for Lancaster’s contention that *dharma-kāya* is one of the specifically *Mahāyāna* doctrines inserted into the text of the *AsPP* in the course of its development, even though it is true that many of the citations are not attested in the three early Chinese translations.⁵⁴

Is there, then, any support in the rest of the Lokakṣema corpus for a distinctively *Mahāyānist* interpretation of *dharma-kāya*? It is in the *Lokānuvartanā-sūtra (LAN)*⁵⁵ that we would most expect to encounter material relating to this question, for the *LAN* is in essence a meditation on buddhology proper. In this work, which is closely affiliated with the *Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravādins*, we do indeed find a sustained attempt to harmonise conflicting notions of Buddhahood, in particular to reconcile the obvious frailties and limitations of the historical human being with a more glorious conception of the physical and spiritual attributes of an enlightened personality. Most of the text, then, turns on the discrepancies between what are in the classical *Trikāya* theory called the *nirmāṇa-kāya* and the *saṃbhoga-kāya*, even though the second of these

terms is not used in the extant Tibetan version.⁵⁶ The Tibetan for *dharmakāya* does occur twice, however, in verses 37 and 79, in both of which it appears in the predicative position, i.e., it is almost certainly rendering the *bahuvrīhi* adjective.⁵⁷ The relevant verses read as follows:

Verse 37:

/ yid kyi sku dang ldan pas na⁵⁸ /
 / de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku yang /
 / rrag can sku ni ston mdzad pa /
 / 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin /
 "Even though, being endowed with a mental body,
 The *Tathāgatas* have the *dharmā* for a body,
 They manifest a corruptible body;
 This is conformity with the world."

Verse 79:

/ de bzhin gshegs pa chos sku ste /
 / gcig ci 'dra bar de bzhin kun /
 / 'on kyang tha dad ston mdzad pa /
 / 'di ni 'jig rten 'thun 'jug yin /
 "Since the *Tathāgatas* have the *dharmā* for a body,
 As one is, so are they all;
 Nevertheless, they make a show of multiplicity;
 This is conformity with the world."

There can be no doubt that the text which Lokakṣema had in front of him also contained these two verses, in much the same form. His version of them (T. 807) runs:

The Buddha's body is like an illusion. [He] calls the scripture/*dharmā(s)* (*jingfa*)⁵⁹ [his] body. To others he displays an impure body. It is in conformity with worldly custom that he engages in such a manifestation. (752a18-19)

All Buddhas share the one body; [they] regard the scripture/*dharmā(s)* (*jingfa*) as [their] body. The Buddhas manifest teaching the scripture/*dharmā(s)* to others. It is in conformity with worldly custom that they engage in such a manifestation. (753a19-20)⁶⁰

Not only does Lokakṣema's translation demonstrate the existence of the term *dharmakāya* in his text of the *LAn*, but the Chinese wording, almost identical in both verses (*yi jingfa ming*

wei shen, yi jingfa wei shen), shows clearly that he construed it as a *bahuvrīhi*. Using the classical Chinese *yi X wei Y* construction (“to take X as Y,” “to regard X as Y,” etc.), he split the compound just as we might.⁶¹ Neither the Chinese nor the Tibetan version of the *LAn*, then, attests *dharmā-kāya* in its nominal form. Both versions suggest, in addition, that the Sanskrit text of the relevant *pāda* in both verses read *dharmā-kāyā tathāgatāḥ*, which is the same phrase found in Chap. XXXI of the *AsPP*.

Although a full discussion of the buddhology of the *LAn* is beyond the scope of this paper, we ought to note that in v. 37 the Tib. term *yiḍ kyī sku* is attested, which the Chinese glosses as a body “like an illusion,” but which must represent *manomaya-kāya*, normally translated as “mental body” or “mind-made body.” Set beside *dharmā-kāya*, this is contrasted with *rnag can sku*, which is surely Skt./Pāli *pūti-kāya*.⁶² We have here what Lancaster calls the “primitive triad” (see above), the three bodies supposedly found in the Pāli Canon. However, since *dharmā-kāya* is an adjective, only two actual bodies in the proper sense of the word are attested in this verse, as indeed they are in the Pāli Canon. Both these bodies, the mind-made and the corruptible, belong to the world of material forms.

Turning next to the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhī-sūtra* (*PraS*), we find a single obscure citation, at Section 1X, where the Tib. has *chos kyī sku dang 'dra bar rtogs pas nam mkha' lta bu rnams su 'gyur ba*. In my English translation of this text I tentatively rendered this as “become those who resemble space in their understanding [of it as?] similar to the Body of Dharma,” the problem being partly the presence in all three Chinese versions of what seems to be an equivalent for *animitta*. Thus I suggested that the original sense of the passage may have been “become those who understand the Body of Dharma to be signless like space.”⁶³ T.418’s (Lokakṣema’s) equivalent for *dharmā-kāya* here is *jing-zang-shen*, literally “body of the treasury of scriptures,” while T.416 has simply “all *dharma*s,” suggesting once again that *dharmā-kāya* means the totality of *dharma*s.⁶⁴ The citation is obscure, but the presence of *dharmā-kāya* as a substantive in the

earliest known version is beyond doubt, in a context which seems to have nothing to do with buddhology as such.

In the *Kāśyapa-parivarta* (KP), another important text in the Lokakṣema corpus, the word *dharma-kāya* does not appear, but *rūpa-kāya* occurs once, in Section 125, in a context which is relevant to the discussion. The Sanskrit text runs: *dharmato pi tathāgataṃ na samanupaśyati kaḥ punar vāda rūpakāyeṇa*, i.e., “[the *bodhisattva*] does not view the *Tathāgata* even in terms of the *dharma(s)*, how much less in terms of his physical body.”⁶⁵ Lokakṣema’s version—“he is not even attached to the Buddha-*dharma(s)*, how much less constantly [?] attached to form?”—conveys the intent of the Sanskrit reasonably well. The Jin dynasty translation accords with it too, but the Qin and Song versions both introduce the term *fa-shen* (= *dharma-kāya*). This could represent translator’s license, or a different Sanskrit recension of the text which sought to clarify its sense along the lines suggested by the passages in Chaps. IV and XXXI of the *AsPP*. That is to say, one does not “view” the Buddha even in terms of the body of qualities or principles which he has realised (*dharma-kāya-pariniṣpattitas*), to say nothing of viewing him in terms of his physical person (*rūpa-kāyatas*).

As we move on to other less well-known works of early middle Mahāyāna *sūtra*-literature, a significant new pattern begins to emerge. In the *Druma-kinnararāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* (DKP),⁶⁶ to begin with, although there are no occurrences of the term *chos kyi sku* in the Tibetan text, Lokakṣema’s Chinese version (T.624) contains several occurrences of *fa-shen*, the standard Chinese equivalent for *dharma-kāya*. In Section 2D (349c27-28), for example, we find: “What does it mean to say that *bodhisattvas* know the realm of all human beings without being separated from the body of *dharmas*?” which in the Tib. text is *ji lta na byang chub sems dpa’ khams sna tshogs la yang mam par blta la chos kyi dbyings las kyang mi g.yo ba rnam s lags*. Here Lokakṣema appears to have used *fa-shen* to render *dharma-dhātu* (Tib. *chos kyi dbyings*), which is also indicated by the appearance of *fa-jie*, the standard Chinese equivalent for *dharma-dhātu*, in Kumārajīva’s

rendition of the same passage (T.625, 368c17-18).⁶⁷ The same wording is repeated in the Tib. text at 2M, and the renditions in T.624 (350c15) and T.625 (369c8) agree with those for the first citation. There can be little doubt, therefore, that Lokakṣema has rendered *dharmadhātu*, contrasted with *sattvadhātu*, as *fa-shen*, presumably because he believed both terms to refer to the totality of *dharma*s. The same thing happens at 2G where Tib. has *chos kyi dbyings*, T.625 (369a18-19) has *fa-jie* and T.624 (350a21) has *fa-shen*.⁶⁸

A more pertinent citation is found at 7K, where the Tibetan reads *chos kyi dbyings bsam gyis mi khyab pa la zhugs pas / sangs rgyas thams cad sangs rgyas gcig tu shes pa*, “knowing that all Buddhas are one Buddha, by virtue of [their] entry into the inconceivable *dharmadhātu*”; i.e., all Buddhas are the same by virtue of their common “entry” into, or understanding of, the inconceivable *dharmadhātu* (Skt. *acintya-dharma-dhātvavatāra*). T.624 (358b5-6) has “all Buddhas are nothing but one Buddha. For what reason? Because [their] penetration of the body of *dharma*s (*fa-shen*) is incalculable,”⁶⁹ while T.625 (377b18-19) agrees exactly with the Tibetan, i.e., construing *acintya* as qualifying *dharmadhātu* rather than *avatāra*. At 8Cv54 T.624 (360b26) again has *fa-shen* where Tib. has *chos kyi dbyings* and T.625 (379c14) has *fa-jie*. A further occurrence at 9G is especially interesting: in enumerating the six *anusmṛtis*, the Tib. text has *sangs rgyas kyi sku thob par bya ba’i phyir / sangs rgyas rjes su dran pa*, i.e., “commemoration of the Buddha in order to acquire the body of a Buddha.” Here too T.625 (381a13-14) agrees with the Tibetan, but T.624 (361b29) has “constantly think of the Buddha and obtain the body of *dharma*s (*fa-shen*).” This is unexpected; we could postulate corruption, but it is also possible that the translator has settled on *fa-shen* as conveying the true sense of *buddha-kāya*. It is not easy to see how Lokakṣema has arrived at his translation of 10Hv25, but the appearance of *fa-shen* in T.624 (363a11), *zhu-fa* in T.625 (383a16), and *chos mams kun* in Tib. suggests that *sarva-dharma* stood in the original Indic text. At 11D, in a list of 64 “*dharma*-sounds,” we again find *fa-shen* in T.624 (363c18) where Tib. and T.625 (384a18) indicate *dharmadhātu*. The three versions differ

substantially from this point on, and it is interesting to note that the following items in T.624 are the ten powers, the four assurances and the eighteen exclusive *dharma*s (not listed in the two other versions), suggesting an association between these qualities and *dharma-dhātu* as equated with *dharma-kāya*. At 14D *chos kyī dbyings* in Tib. again finds a counterpart in *fa-shen* in T.624 (366a22), but the sentence in question is missing from T.625 (see 387b22-26). Finally, a less clear-cut case occurs in Section 15E, where T.624 (366c5) has: “they are able to practice and guard the *dharma*; through this they obtain the body of *dharma*s (*fa-shen*).” The Tib. text at this point (Section 15E) has *dam pa’i chos yongs su srung ba dang / sangs rgyas bcom ldan ’das mams kyī dam pa’i chos ’dzin par ’gyur ba*, i.e., “they [the *bodhisattvas*] protect the true *dharma*, and they obtain the true *dharma* of the Buddhas and Lords,” while Kumārajīva’s version (T.625) reads “they protect the true *dharma* and uphold the treasury of the Buddha-*dharma*(s) (*fo-fa-zang*).” Although not attested by the Tibetan, therefore, *dharma-kāya* is suggested by both Chinese versions of 15E, in a context which implies it carries the meaning “collection of *dharma*s.” The most significant finding in relation to the *DKP*, however, is that in some half-a-dozen cases Lokakṣema has translated *dharma-dhātu* by *fa-shen*.

Despite the doctrinal richness of the *Ajātaśatru-kaukrīya-vinodanā-sūtra* (*AjKV*), as well as the presence in it of apparent Yogācāra tendencies, I have not been able to locate a single occurrence of *dharma-kāya* in the Tibetan text. However, once again Lokakṣema’s translation (T.626) contains a number of uses of the term *fa-shen*, and the passages in question need careful investigation. At 390b1, to begin with, we read that *bodhisattvas* “do not deviate from twelvefold causation; they consider the body of *dharma*s (*fa-shen*) to be neither increasing nor decreasing.” This corresponds to Tib. *rten cing ’brel bar ’byung ba dang mi ’gal ba’i phyir des chos thams cad* (Derge: *nyid for thams cad*) *la brtag par bya’o // thog ma nas ma skyes pa’i phyir chos gang yang ma bri ba dang ma ’phel bar bya’o* (Peking Mdo Tsu 225a6-7). None of the other complete Chinese versions (T.627, T.628) supports *dharma-kāya*, so it appears *fa-shen* has been used by Lokakṣema to denote

all *dharmas*. At 390b28-29 the text states: “They see the Buddhas, but do not think of seeking them through form. Why is that? Because of the body of *dharmas* (or: because they have the *dharma* as body?).” However, Tib. (Peking 226b2-3) has only *sangs rgyas thams cad mthong mod kyi / gzugs la dmigs pa’i ’du shes kyang mi skyed*, “although they see all the Buddhas, they do not give rise to any conception based on form,” which is supported by the other Chinese translations, indicating that T.626 has probably incorporated a gloss. At 392b we also come across a number of occurrences of *fa-shen* (392b2, 4-5, 15), but the corresponding Tibetan text has only *chos* or *chos nyid* (see Peking 232a1-8), while the Chinese version of Dharmarakṣa (T.627, 410b18-c3) has *fa-jie* or *fa*, that of Fatian (T.628, 432b17-29) simply *fa*. At 398b6-7, in the course of Mañjuśrī’s exposition of the *bodhisattva-piṭaka*, Lokakṣema’s text states: “The *dharmas* of *bodhisattvas* are unsurpassed, because they penetrate the body of *dharmas*, because of great compassion.” But when we compare this with the Tibetan, we find: *byang chub sems dpa’i bslab pa ni tshad med pa’i rjes su song ba / snying rje chen pos zin pa’o* // (Peking 253a2-3), “The *bodhisattva*’s training starts with the immeasurable states and is completed by great compassion. Similarly, T.627 (418a15) and T.629 (439c21) mention only compassion.” Taken with the clumsy repetition of “because” in T.624, the testimony of the later versions indicates again that a gloss has been incorporated in the text. Later occurrences, however, follow the pattern laid down in the *DKP*. At 398c1 *fa-shen* corresponds to *chos kyi dbyings* in the Tibetan text (see Peking 254a2), *fa-jie* in T.627 (418c1) and T.628 (440a14); at 401b9-12 *fa-shen* occurs several times, corresponding to *chos kyi dbyings* or possibly *chos thams cad (sarva-dharma)* in the Tibetan (see Peking 263a7-263b1) and to *fa-jie* in both T.627 (422b1-7) and T.628 (443a3-4); and finally, at 402c1-3, *fa-shen* again occurs several times, corresponding to *chos kyi dbyings* in the Tibetan (see Peking 267b7-268a2) and *fa-jie* in the later Chinese versions (see T.627, 423c15-18, and T.628, 44b25(?)).

It would be inappropriate here to give the full text of all the passages cited, but it is clear enough that Lokakṣema has used *fa-shen* throughout the *AjKV* to designate the totality of *dharmas*,

generally in places where his Indic original had *dharma-dhātu*. The two exceptions to this rule are almost certainly glosses which have been erroneously incorporated in the text.

There are three other texts belonging to the Lokakṣema corpus: T.458, the *Wenshushili wen pusa-shu jing* (*WWP*); T.280, the *Dousha jing* (*DSJ*, an early version of a small section of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*); and T.313, the *Achu-fo guo jing*, a translation of the *Akṣobhya-tathāgatasya-vyūha* (*AkTV*).⁷⁰ Lokakṣema's translations of the first two of these texts contain no references to *dharma-kāya*, and the same is true, as far as I am aware, of the later Chinese or Tibetan versions, where they exist.⁷¹ A perusal of the various versions of the *AkTV*, however, reveals one problematical occurrence of the term, in Chap. 1, Sections 69-70 (according to the divisions in the translation by Dantinne).⁷² Here the Tibetan text states that when the Buddha Akṣobhya used to pursue the course of training of a *bodhisattva* he never once experienced any bodily or mental fatigue while expounding or listening to the *dharma*, the reason being that, ever since the time he conceived his initial aspiration to awakening, he had realised the *dharma-kāya*. Further, when he was pursuing the course of training of a *bodhisattva* and listening to the *dharma* he thought "In the same way that I now love the *dharma*, so too may beings in my Buddha-field also be lovers of the *dharma*, and not those who do not love it!"⁷³ At first blush this seems coherent, coherent enough for Dantinne to have translated it without comment—but is it? I think not; a closer inspection of the Chinese translations shows us why. Bodhiruci's Chinese translation (T.310, No. 6), produced in the period 706-713, reads (104c8-13):

"Śāriputra, when in the past he was practising the course of practice of a *bodhisattva*, the *Tathāgata Arhat Samyaksambuddha* Akṣobhya did not experience physical or mental tiredness when expounding the *dharma*s or listening to them. Why? Because when he first conceived the aspiration to cultivate the course of practice of a *bodhisattva*, he obtained the awesome power (*weili*, usually = *anubhāva*) of the body of *dharma*s (*fa-shen*). Śāriputra, when in the past he was practising the course of practice of a *bodhisattva*, the *Tathāgata Arhat Samyaksambuddha* Akṣobhya made the following vow: 'May all the *bodhisattvas* and *mahāsattvas* in my

buddha-kṣetra obtain the perfection of the body of *dharmas*, just like me!”⁷⁴

In Lokakṣema’s version, however, the passage in question runs as follows (755a4-8):

The Buddha said to Śāriputra: “Long ago, when the *Tathāgata Arhat Samyaksambuddha Akṣobhya* was practising the way of the *bodhisattva* and listening to or expounding the *dharma*, his body experienced no fatigue, and his mind felt no fatigue either. Śāriputra, long ago, when the *Tathāgata Akṣobhya* was pursuing the way of the *bodhisattva* and listening to or expounding the *dharma*, [he said:] ‘This is how [I] love the *dharma*. May the *bodhisattvas* and *mahāsattvas* in my *buddha-kṣetra* love the *dharma* like this!’”

At first sight we might be disposed to accept Bodhiruci’s text: Akṣobhya possesses a “*dharma*-body” which is immune to fatigue, and he wishes that on other *bodhisattvas*. But how can *bodhisattvas* (especially those at the beginning of their career) be said to “realise” the *dharma-kāya* before they become Buddhas? And why is there only one occurrence of the term in the Tibetan, as opposed to two in Bodhiruci’s version? Lokakṣema’s text, with no occurrences at all, offers the solution: in the transmission of the Indic, *dharma-kāma* has been corrupted to *dharma-kāya*, quite possibly under the influence of Yogācāra Trikāya speculations.⁷⁵ The Tibetan translation, which stands closer to Lokakṣema’s version than to Bodhiruci’s,⁷⁶ represents a half-corrupted text, since it still preserves one *dharma-kāma* (*chos ’dod pa*). Originally the AkTV was making the unproblematical point that from the very first Akṣobhya was indefatigable in teaching and hearing the *dharma* because he loved it so much, and so he vowed that the *bodhisattvas* of his Buddha-field would be similarly endowed with this unwearying love for the *dharma*. The “because he loved it so much” appears to have been missing from the earliest version of the text, if we go by T.313. The Tibetan wording (*chos kyi sku rab tu bsgoms par gyur pa’i phyir ro*) suggests that a gloss containing the words *dharma-kāma-prabhāvita*⁷⁷ may have been subsequently incorporated into the text before being corrupted to *dharma-kāya*-

prabhāvita.⁷⁸ In an even later form of the text this corruption appears to have infected the last sentence of the passage as well, leading to the peculiar message of Bodhiruci's rendition.⁷⁹

Let us now review our findings. We have seen that in the small group of texts translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema in the latter half of the 2nd century C. E. there is no evidence for any developed Mahāyāna notions of *dharma-kāya*, even though this term was clearly familiar to him and does occur, albeit rarely, in several of his translations in the two grammatical forms and senses attested in Mainstream sources. That is to say, it is either (1) a *bahuvrīhi* adjective, meaning "having the *dharma* as body" or "embodied in the *dharma*" (twice in the *LAn*), or (2) a *tatpuruṣa* substantive, with the sense "body of *dharma*s," *dharma*s in this case being understood as qualities, principles of existence, truths, or teachings (once in the *AsPP*, once in the *PraS*, possibly once in the *DKP*). Furthermore, even when the term does appear more frequently in later Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit versions of the scriptures in question, it still exhibits the same forms and meanings, as was demonstrated in particular for the Sanskrit text of the *AsPP*. An additional and unexpected discovery was that the Chinese term *fa-shen*, the standard equivalent for the substantive *dharma-kāya*, sometimes occurs in Lokakṣema's translations at points where the Indic original is almost certain to have had *dharma-dhātu*.⁸⁰ This suggests that he regarded the two terms (viz., *dharma-dhātu* and *dharma-kāya* as a substantive) as interchangeable; for him both meant the totality of *dharma*s.⁸¹ While this is of course in keeping with the Mainstream interpretation, and therefore supports our thesis, two things remain puzzling. The first is that Lokakṣema also used renditions of *dharma-dhātu* which do approximate the standard Chinese equivalent.⁸² Why then was he not consistent? The second enigma is his insistence on employing the Chinese word *shen*, given that this never means "collection." Unable to replicate the ambiguity of the Sanskrit in Chinese, Lokakṣema was clearly faced with a difficult choice. That he opted for *shen* suggests that he regarded the primary meaning of the word *kāya* as more important, as somehow worth preserving, and could indicate that even by his time there were Buddhists who were already starting

to regard the *dharmā-kāya* as a “body” of some kind, even if only metaphorically. While these questions relating to Lokakṣema’s stylistic preferences will only be clarified by the continuing examination of his translations, they do not, I believe, invalidate our general thesis, which is that the use of the term *dharmā-kāya* in this important body of early middle Mahāyāna *sūtras* is continuous with Mainstream interpretations.

III. Dharma-kāya in Other Māhāyāna Sources

There we might be content to let the matter rest, but before attempting to formulate some general conclusions it might be useful to look for corroborating evidence in Mahāyāna *sūtras* outside the Lokakṣema corpus, especially those often cited in discussions of the Trikāya theory.⁸³ Clearly there are limits to what we can undertake here, but one obvious candidate for re-appraisal is the *Vajracchedikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra* (*Vaj*) and the well-known verses which run, according to Conze’s (1974: 57) edition of the Sanskrit text (I have regularised the spelling):

*ye māṃ rūpeṇa cādrākṣur ye māṃ ghoṣeṇa cānvayuh /
mithyā-prahāṇa-prasṛtā na māṃ draṅṣyanti te janāḥ //*

*dharmato buddhā draṣṭavyā dharmā-kāyā hi nāyakāḥ /
dharmatā ca na vijñeyā na sā śakyā vijñānituṃ //*

Once again, Conze’s translations—for there are several in existence—are far from adequate. In one version (Conze 1973b: 136) we find the second verse rendered:

From the Dharma should one see the Buddhas,
From the Dharmabodies comes their guidance.
Yet Dharma’s true nature cannot be discerned,
And no-one can be conscious of it as an object.

Here, too, we encounter errors in linguistic interpretation compounding philosophical incoherence. What on earth can it mean to say that the Buddhas are guided by the “Dharmabodies”? Conze

has, of course, mistaken the subject for the predicate and *vice versa*, in the belief that *dharma-kāya* is a substantive. What the text says is that the Guides or Leaders *are dharma-kāya*, i.e., this word is once again functioning as an adjective. Even for the (6th century?) Gilgit version, recently re-edited by Schopen (see Gomez & Silk 1989: 89-139), where the words *hi nāyakāḥ* in the relevant line are replaced by *tathāgataḥ* (i.e., singular), the same interpretation is in my opinion the correct one.⁸⁴ However, Schopen, following Conze's example, translates *dharma-kāya* as a noun ("The Tathāgata is the body of Doctrine"), thus continuing a long tradition. The second verse makes much better sense if we translate it properly: "The Buddha is to be seen in terms of the *dharma*; the *Tathāgata* has the *dharma* for a body. The nature of *dharma(s)*, however, is indiscernible [to the senses]; it is not possible to discern it."⁸⁵

What this means is that in the *Vaj* there is no use of the term *dharma-kāya* in the nominal sense, although the term *rūpa-kāya* does occur, in a passage which may at first have directly preceded the above, but become separated from it in the course of time (see Conze 1973b: sections 20a, 26a). This is possibly a further indication of the age of the *Vaj*, in that no Trikāya-related notion of the *dharma-kāya* is found in it.⁸⁶ Both verses are apparently drawn from a Mainstream text, although Mainstream parallels have been found only for the first one.⁸⁷ The second verse, of greater interest to us here, has so far proved elusive. One notes, however, the similarity of the wording in the Gilgit version (viz., *dharma-kāyas tathāgataḥ*) with that of the passage from Chap. XXXI of the *AsPP* and the two verses from the *LAn* cited above, and the fact that the point being made by the *Vaj* here is precisely that which *KP 125* is attempting to trump, as it were. That this second verse is missing from some recensions of the *Vaj*, such as the Central Asian MS⁸⁸ and the earliest Chinese translation by Kumārajīva (T.235, dated 402 C. E.), indicates that it has been inserted later in the history of the text, possibly under the influence of a different Perfection of Wisdom or other Mahāyāna *sūtra*.⁸⁹ In one sense, however, the date of its insertion is beside the point: even with it, the *Vaj* never goes beyond the Mainstream position.

Another text occasionally cited in connection with Trikāya theory is the *Samādhi-rāja-sūtra* (*SR*), in particular the 22nd chapter dealing explicitly with the bodies of the Buddha, which was edited and translated by Regamey (1938b). As Regamey remarks in his comments on the doctrinal standpoint of the text (pp. 23-25), its buddhology is akin to that of the Perfection of Wisdom *sūtras* in knowing only two bodies, the *rūpa-kāya* and the *dharma-kāya*. Its notion of the *rūpa-kāya* encompasses many features which are commonly assigned to the *sambhoga-kāya* (in this regard it resembles the *LAn*), but here we are more concerned with its description of the *dharma-kāya*. We find many statements with a familiar ring. For example, in Section 7 (Regamey 1938b: 81), we are told that the *Tathāgata* is not to be discerned on the basis of his physical body, because the Buddhas and Lords are distinguished or constituted by the *dharma-kāya*, not by the physical body (*na rūpa-kāyatas tathāgataḥ prajñātavyaḥ. tat kasya hetoḥ? dharma-kāya-prabhāvitās ca buddhā bhagavanto na rūpa-kāya-prabhāvitāḥ*). This *dharma-kāya* is then described in fairly abstract terms in the prose (Sections 9-12) and verses (Sections 13-37) which follow. Although Regamey translates it consistently as “Absolute Body,” there is no reason why we should not render it as “body of *dharma*,” except for Section 34, where the words *dharma-kāyo mahāvīro* ought to be rendered “The great hero has the *dharma* for a body” (i.e., *dharma-kāya* is a *bahuvrīhi*).

What then of the *Sad-dharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra* (*SP*), which is said by Nagao (1991: 104) to be one of the Mahāyāna *sūtras* in which the two-body theory “became stabilized”?⁹⁰ In fact, there is only one occurrence of the term *dharma-kāya* in the entire Sanskrit text, in v. 82 near the end of Chap. 5 (Vaidya’s edition, p. 96), which clearly has the sense of “body of *dharma*,” “totality of *dharma*,” “all *dharma*.”⁹¹ The context places this beyond any doubt. Therefore, while it is certainly true that the *SP* teaches a developed Mahāyāna buddhology, it does not explicitly invoke the concept of *dharma-kāya* to support it.⁹²

Let us turn finally to the *Lāṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (*LA*), where we might reasonably expect to find traces of Yogācāra doctrines, given the well-known affinity of this text with that school. As Suzuki

points out (1930: 316ff.), there are adumbrations of the Trikāya doctrine, but although “the idea of Dharmakāya is not wanting in the *Lāṅkāvatāra* ... it is used not in the sense of the Dharmakāya of the Triple Body dogma.” And yet Suzuki’s own interpretation of the relevant passages is heavily influenced by Trikāya notions, or perhaps by Christian theology, and therefore the text needs to be re-interpreted in a number of places.

For example, at *LA* 30.7-8,⁹³ the words *tathāgato dharmakāya-vaśavartī bhaviṣyati dharmā-nairātmya-darśanāt* mean “he will become a *Tathāgata* who has mastery over the body/collection/totality of *dharma*s through seeing the absence of self in *dharma*s.”⁹⁴ Here *dharmakāya* probably has the same sense it carries in the *SP* passage cited above. Suzuki’s translation (“endowed with the perfect freedom of the Dharmakāya”) is ambiguous, but could easily give one the impression that *dharmakāya* possesses the quality of “perfect freedom,” rather than being merely the object of *vaśavartin*. The same problem arises at *LA* 55.11-12, which reads: *punar api lokottarānāsrava-dhātu-paryāpannān sambhārān paripūrya acintya-dharma-kāya-vaśavartitām pratilapsyante*. One could translate this roughly as “Further, having acquired all the requisites pertaining to the supramundane and incorruptible realm, they will obtain mastery over the body of inconceivable *dharma*s.” Unaccountably, Suzuki (1932: 116) speaks of “the attainment of the Dharmakāya which is of sovereign power and beyond conception,”⁹⁵ but here *acintya*, which usually means “inconceivable in number or extent,” is just as likely to qualify *dharma* as it is *kāya*, and *dharmakāya* must again be the *object* of *vaśavartitā*, as in the preceding citation.⁹⁶ Other passages where *dharmakāya* is best understood as the totality of *dharma*s are *LA* 10.11-12 (Chap. II, v. 4);⁹⁷ *LA* 20.12, where Mahāmati invites the Buddha to expound the *dharmakāya*—surely the collection of *dharma*s understood as teachings—praised (*anugīta*) by the *Tathāgatas*;⁹⁸ *LA* 23.16, where as a result of the teachings of the *Tathāgatas* the *bodhisattvas* are said to obtain the *dharmakāya*;⁹⁹ and *LA* 94.19, where the *dharmakāya* of the *Tathāgatas* is said to be as indestructible as the sands of the Ganges.¹⁰⁰ While these passages could at a pinch be interpreted in terms of some kind of “cosmic body,” “body of

dharmas” is a perfectly adequate rendition in all cases, and a better one in most.

There are, however, a number of passages where buddhology seems to be the issue. At LA 58.11-14, for example, the bodily identity (*kāya-samatā*) of all *Tathāgatas* is explained in terms of the sameness of both the *dharma-kāya* and the *rūpa-lakṣaṇānuvyañjana-kāya*, except when *Tathāgatas* assume different forms to convert beings.¹⁰¹ This passage is a definite echo of LAn v. 79 (see above), even though *dharma-kāya* is a substantive here; we noted the same idea in the *DKP*, the *Upāya-kauśalya-sūtra* and the *Kośa*.¹⁰² As Suzuki points out (1930: 318), this passage certainly implies all three bodies, but *dharma-kāya* here may still be interpreted along the lines already established. A more puzzling passage occurs at LA 78.6-8:

kiṃ tu mahāmate manomaya-dharma-kāyasya tathāgatasyaitad adhivacanam yatra sarva-tīrthakara-śrāvaka-pratyekabuddha-sapta-bhūmi-pratiṣṭhitānām ca bodhisattvānām aviśayah / so 'nutpādas tathāgatasya ['] etan mahāmate paryāya-vacanam.

Although the faulty punctuation is easily remedied, the compound *manomaya-dharma-kāyasya* is potentially troublesome, given that there is such a thing as the *manomaya-kāya*. However, if we take it as a *bahuvrīhi* adjective qualifying *tathāgatasya*, the passage yields the following sense:

“However, Mahāmati, there is a designation for the *Tathāgata*, insofar as he is embodied in the *dharma* which is mind-made [or better: in the *dharmas* which are mind-made], which is beyond the reach of any sectarians, *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas* or *bodhisattvas* on the [first] seven stages. It is ‘non-production.’ This, Mahāmati, is a synonym for the *Tathāgata*.”¹⁰³

That is to say, the term *manomaya-dharma-kāya* is probably to be explained as an allusion to the celebrated opening verses of the *Dhammapada*, which say that all *dharmas* are, among other things, *manomaya* or “mind-made.”¹⁰⁴ Thus the designation *anutpāda*, “non-production,” applies to the *Tathāgata* insofar as he is embod-

ied in or identified with the *dharma* or *dharmas*, which are *manomaya* and therefore essentially “unproduced.” Non-movement also follows from this, as we saw in the *AsPP*. Of course, the Buddha’s physical body is a different matter, since it is corruptible; it is produced and destroyed, which is exactly the message of *LAn* v. 37 (see above).¹⁰⁵ Finally, we encounter the *bahuvrīhi* adjective again at *LA* 104.2-3, in the section prohibiting meat-eating, where we find the words *dharma-kāyā hi mahāmate tathāgatā dharmāhāra-sthitayo*, i.e., “for the *Tathāgatas* have the *dharma* as their body, they are dependent on the *dharma* for their food.”¹⁰⁶ The phrase *dharma-kāyās tathāgatāḥ* is by now an old friend; the adjective *dharmāhāra-sthiti*¹⁰⁷ is reminiscent of another of the *Āgama* passages studied by Anesaki, *Ekottarāgama XV* (T. 125, 623b7): *rulai-shen-zhe yi fa wei shi*, “the *Tathāgata*’s body has the *dharma* as its food.”¹⁰⁸

We must conclude, then, that although the *LA* may well contain many allusions and references to the *Yogācāra Trikāya* theory, its use of the term *dharma-kāya* itself does not differ in any significant way from the other *sūtras* we have studied, a fact of which Suzuki himself was aware. Despite this, he was frequently seduced by a somewhat theistic interpretation of the *Trikāya* doctrine into misconstruing the relevant passages, so that his readers were left thinking that the *LA* did in fact teach such a thing as the “*Dharmakāya* which is of sovereign power and beyond conception.”¹⁰⁹

IV. General Conclusions

In the context of this paper I cannot survey the full range of *dharma-kāya* references in the scriptural and scholastic literature of the *Mahāyāna*, but I hope that I have covered enough major works to demonstrate that a case can be made for a different reading of the concept. At least as far as the early and middle *Mahāyāna* are concerned, there is little in the texts I have studied to suggest a departure from Mainstream interpretations. I see this paper, therefore, as yet another attempt at what I might call the abolition of imaginary discontinuities in Buddhist history. In this case what is

done away with is the prevailing notion that the *dharmakāya* is some kind of Buddhist “Godhead” or “Cosmic Body” invented by the followers of the Mahāyāna in the philosophical exuberance of their headlong rush towards theism. Pioneers in the field like Suzuki and Conze can be excused for falling under the spell of this idea, but, as we have seen, even recent writers on the subject of the Trikāya have continued to ignore such basics as Edgerton’s observations concerning the use of *dharmakāya* as an adjective in early and middle Mahāyāna *sūtras*, and have therefore obscured more than one important moment in the development of the concept. Too ready to assimilate all occurrences of the term to a particular understanding of the nominal *dharmakāya* of the developed Trikāya theory, they have misconstrued many key passages, thereby collapsing what may have been centuries of gradual doctrinal development, into a single incoherent theoretical position. Further, this incoherency has become enshrined in the standard English translations of key Mahāyāna *sūtras*, to the extent that it now goes unchallenged by some of the leading lights of Buddhist studies. Nor is it merely that the adjective, even when recognized as such, has been misinterpreted as the noun; the noun has also been misinterpreted. Where *dharmakāya* does appear as a substantive, to continue to translate it as “*Dharma-body*” or “*Body of Dharma*” may not seem a serious error, but when that term appears in conjunction with the other “bodies” of the Buddha, the temptation is to impute some kind of unitary ontological status to it, and to engage in theological flights of fancy which are unsupported by the texts. Thus metaphor gives way to metaphysics. That *kāya* means both “body” in the ordinary sense and “body” in the sense of collection obviously provided Buddhists of both Mainstream and Mahāyāna persuasions with an ambiguity which they found exceedingly useful and suggestive, but one presumes they were always in a position to construe the term *dharmakāya* in a way which did not involve hypostatisation of a non-existent entity, however abstract, even when it occurred alongside other *kāya* terms which did relate to the material world. Reification of the nonexistent is a cardinal sin as far as Buddhists are concerned. We Buddhist scholars should avoid it too. Since the English expression “the body

of *dharma*s” does not carry the same potential ontological freight as “the Body of *Dharma*” or “the *Dharma*-body,” we could do worse than use it from now on, assuming, of course, that we are dealing with the substantive.

All this raises the question: is the “*Dharma*-body” understood as an actual body of the Buddha purely a figment of the modern Buddhological imagination, or does it go back to the Yogācāras or some other followers of the Mahāyāna at a later point in its history? The study of the texts translated by Lokakṣema demonstrates that an actual “Buddha-body” called the *dharma-kāya* is not attested in the earlier versions, but we have also seen that even in their later forms many *sūtras* did not move very far (if at all) beyond a position which was also acceptable to at least some of the Mainstream schools, and were a long way from postulating the “cosmic body” or “absolute principle” which we have come almost automatically to identify with the *dharma-kāya*. For we must remember in this connection that the Tibetan and Sanskrit versions of the texts referred to in this study date for the most part from a relatively late period; if they show no trace of this idea, it can hardly have been common coin. Would it then be appropriate to suggest that the standard notion of *dharma-kāya* as a unitary cosmic principle was, in Indian Buddhism at least, exclusively a matter of Yogācāra scholastics, and not one of the staple Mahāyāna doctrines as is commonly supposed? At this point I arrive at the limits of my own competence, but in the light of my findings with respect to the *LA*, a text rich in Cittamātra elements, I am tempted to ask if even the Yogācāra discussions of the subject, as well as those writings influenced by them, may also need to be reconsidered. I hope therefore that others might be prompted by this paper to re-evaluate *dharma-kāya* passages in the later *sūtra* and *śāstra* literature, in order to see if less “reifying” interpretations make better sense of them, or are at least possible.¹¹⁰

Although my conclusions may well have wider application, they relate in the first instance to the Mainstream and early and middle Mahāyāna understanding of *dharma-kāya*. Let us be clear about the central issue here, since that may well have become obscured by the sheer mass of textual detail which this paper has

thrown up. As far as the Buddhists who wrote the texts were concerned, what was important was the identification of the Buddha with the *dharma* or *dharma*s, of the Teacher with the truth which he taught or the principles which he realised, considered either in the abstract, or concretely embodied in scripture. A simple equation perhaps, but with far-reaching consequences, especially for Buddhist cult-practice, in which the cult of relics eventually coalesced with the cult of the book. In light of this we ourselves should always opt for an interpretation which emphasises the *dharma* of *dharma-kāya*, rather than the *kāya*, that is, the *dharma* or *dharma*s by which Buddhahood is truly constituted and in which it finds its expression, and not some ill-defined transcendental “body.”¹¹

I trust that this paper has in passing illustrated some of the benefits to be derived from a close study of the early Chinese translations.¹² Undoubtedly it illustrates the complexity of such an undertaking, since even the attempt to run a single technical term to ground has led us a merry chase, through and around scores of textual and philosophical difficulties, deep into the four-dimensional labyrinth of Mahāyāna *sūtra*-literature. We have seen, I hope, that careful linguistic analysis is our equivalent of Ariadne’s thread, enabling us to keep our bearings as we move slowly—if not always surely!—towards the clarification of the issues central to our concern. It is not enough to count the occurrences of this or that term in this or that translation: each and every occurrence has to be weighed in the balance, considered in its context. Of course, it is stating the obvious to say that the study of Buddhist ideas should always proceed like this, carefully and on the basis of sound philology, but let us not be too quick to pass judgement on those who in preceding us have lost their way. At this point the labyrinth harboured something particularly deceptive, in a way which is not unusual. It is common knowledge that Buddhist texts, scriptures and treatises alike, often use puns, double meanings, plays on words and fanciful etymologies to get their message across, and that this poses exceptional difficulties for translators and commentators. The beast in this instance not only had the power to appear

in two grammatical forms, but those forms were also cloaked in multiple ambiguities. Even when cornered, it continued to resist its interpreters. In the ensuing struggle the ambiguities and the twin forms perished. Worse still, from their mangled remains arose a ghostly entity which continues to haunt us, insubstantial but yet substantivised (and provided with imposing capitals to boot), the cosmic or absolute *Dharma-Body of the Buddha*—a “body” which is more of a phantom than any of the apparitions ever conjured up by the *Tathāgatas* out of compassion for suffering sentient beings.¹³

NOTES

1. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at Berkeley and at the 10th Congress of the International Association of Buddhist Studies in Paris in July, 1991. I wish to thank all those friends and colleagues who either heard or read this first draft and made helpful comments on it, in particular Rolf Giebel, Richard Gombrich, Kevin Lee, Jan Natier, David Seyfort Ruegg, Lambert Schmithausen, Gregory Schopen and Jonathan Silk.

2. See, e.g., Murti 1955: 284-287.

3. See, e.g., Reynolds and Hallisey 1987: 330-331.

4. See, e.g., Murti 1955: 285: “The Dharmakāya is still a Person, and innumerable merits and powers etc. are ascribed to him.”

5. See Suzuki 1930: 308-338. Suzuki’s discussion of the whole subject has a distinctly “theological” flavour (see especially pp. 308, 310), to which we shall return later.

6. For example, sometimes the *dharma-kāya* is also referred to as the *svābhāvika-kāya* or “essential body,” sometimes this latter is said to constitute a fourth body. The dispute over this issue is the focus of the article by John Makransky (1989).

7. This article was reprinted with inconsequential changes in Nagao 1991: 103-122. All citations are from this later version.

8. Presumably Nagao means Mainstream Buddhist scriptures here. “Mainstream Buddhism” is the term I employ to refer to non-Mahāyāna Buddhism, in preference to the other terms in current use, none of which is totally satisfactory. “Theravāda” is patently inaccurate and anachronistic, “Hīnayāna” is pejorative and potentially offensive, “Śrāvakayāna” is more subtly pejorative, and also makes it hard to place the Pratyekabuddhayāna (whatever that was), while “Nikāya” or “Sectarian Buddhism,” although neutral, are historically misleading, given the fact that the Mahāyāna was a pan-Buddhist movement running across Nikāya or Vinaya school/ordination lineage boundaries. This means that monks and nuns converted to the Mahāyāna continued to belong also to the Nikāya in which they had been ordained, to uphold its Vinaya, and so on. However, they



remained in the minority, at least in India. The term "Mainstream" reflects this situation.

9. See above, n. 8.

10. Other valuable recent contributions are by Kajiyama (1984/1989) and Williams (1989: 167-184). The lengthy discussion by Dutt (1977: 141-177) cannot be recommended. For an excellent survey of earlier scholarly work on this question and of the Buddhist sources themselves, see de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 762-813.

11. See Lancaster 1968: 92; see also de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 764.

12. For a short survey of these texts see Harrison 1987 and forthcoming.

13. Although a detailed treatment can be found only in Lancaster's unpublished doctoral dissertation (1968), indications of some of his findings appear in Lancaster 1974 & 1975.

14. A sixth passage containing the term *dharma-sarīra* (in Chap. III; see Vaidya 1960: 29 and Conze 1975: 105-106) was also studied in Lancaster's dissertation, but was not considered in his published work. Although it seems to have nothing to do with Trikāya theory, it is in certain respects relevant to our subject, as we shall see.

15. References to the Sanskrit are to Vaidya's text, on account of its general availability.

16. A similar rendering of *dharma-kāya* as a noun is also found in Kajiyama's Japanese translation of the *AsPP* (Kajiyama 1974: I, 128).

17. Makransky's rendering (p. 66) agrees substantially with Conze's, as does that of Dutt (1977: 175).

18. The same point was made by S. Bagchi in the "Glossary and Critical Notes" appended to Vaidya's edition of the *AsPP* (p. 576).

19. *Bahuvrīhis* are exocentric possessive compounds. Although their final member is a substantive, they function primarily as adjectives, qualifying other substantives. A *bahuvrīhi* of the form "XY" may be often be translated as "having a Y which is X." Analogues in English are expressions like "two-car family" and "wide-body jet."

20. The four terms mean "having the *dhamma* for a body," "having *brahman* for a body," "become *dhamma*," "become *brahman*." Cf. T. W. & C. A. F. Rhys Davids 1921: IV, 81; de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 765; Lamotte 1958: 689; and Takasaki 1987: 64. The translation by de La Vallée Poussin (accepted by Lamotte) seems to me the most accurate: "les Bouddhas ont pour corps le Dharma, le Brahman, sont le Dharma, sont le Brahman" (see also Lamotte 1988: 622). Similarly, the listing for *dhamma-kāya* in this passage in the *Pali Tipiṭaka Concordance*, s.v., is: "having dh. as body." However, the translation by Demiéville (1930: 176) misleadingly renders *dhamma-kāya* and *brahma-kāya* as substantives, as does the recent translation by Walshe (1987: 409). Reynolds (1977: 379) follows the same tendency, and even Mus, in his lengthy ruminations on this passage (1978: 624-625, 712-717), constantly substantivises the term. These writers, one assumes, have been unduly influenced by Trikāya formulations. The worst offender is Mus, who, largely on the basis of this passage, discerns in the Pāli canon "une doctrine ésotérique du dhammakāya: le Corps du Buddha est fait de la substance transcendante du dharma,

et les Saints ont part à cette substance" (1978: 761).

21. Throughout this study I refrain from capitalising the Sanskrit word *dharma* (Pāli: *dhamma*), since doing so restricts its possible range of meanings. In Sanskrit, which has no capitals in any case, the word is often ambiguous, and this ambiguity ought to be preserved in English.

22. I take *dhamma-kāya* to be that kind of *bahuvrīhi* composed of two nouns and termed "appositional possessive" by Whitney (1962: 506), where the form "XY" may be translated "having a Y which is X" or "having X for Y." I can think of no exact analogue in English, but an ersatz example like "snake-hair(ed) woman" as a description of Medusa illustrates how such compounds work; i.e., they can be literal as well as metaphorical in meaning.

23. There is no equivalent of *dhamma-kāya* in the Chinese translations of the corresponding text in the *Dirghāgama*; see Demiéville 1930: 176. The pair *dhamma-bhūta*, *brahma-bhūta* also occurs at M iii 195.

24. See also *Itivuttaka* 91 and *Milinda-pañha* 71 (translated in T.W. Rhys Davids 1890: 110; Horner 1965: 96-97; see also below) for similar statements.

25. See, e.g., the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (D ii 154). Cf. S i 71, where Gautama observes that although the body succumbs to aging, the *dhamma* of the good does not (*sataṃ ca dhammo na jaraṃ upetī*).

26. See, e.g., the equation of the two terms by Dhammapāla, cited in Mus 1978: 707.

27. I shall return to the remainder of this passage below. Let us note in passing, however, the crucial ambiguities embedded in this passage. Just as the word *śarīra* refers both to the living body and to the physical remains or relics of that body in which its life-force is believed to inhere, so too does "*dharma*" here refer to the law or truth in itself and to the physical objects in which it is concretised, i.e., the written copies of the scriptures. Much depends on this equation of the text with the truth (and thus the power) which it conveys.

28. Note that the correct interpretation of these three passages in the *AsPP* is also given by Dantinne (1983: 175), who, however, still cites them as evidence for a conception of the *dharma-kāya*.

29. I adopt the translation "body of *dharma(s)*" to avoid prejudicing the issue, for reasons which will become clear shortly.

30. The original work appeared in 1901; I have used the 1982 reprint of the revised version which appeared in the *Collected Works* in 1956.

31. The complete translation of the *Samyuktāgama* (T.99) was done by Guṇabhadra 435-443 C. E.

32. The translation (T.125) was made by Gautama Sanghadeva during the Eastern Jin Period (317-420). For recent studies on the school affiliation of the *Āgama* literature see Bechert 1985.

33. See T.99, XXIII, 168b16. Cf. Anesaki 1982: 155, especially his citation of the

parallel passage in *Divyāvadāna* XXVII (pp. 396-397), the first two lines of which run: *yaṭ taccharīraṃ vadatāṃ varasya dharmātmano dharmamayaṃ viśuddham* (also quoted in de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 766). A further reference in T.99, XXIV, 171c14-16, to the *mingjuwei-shen*, the “body of words, phrases and syllables,” is relevant to our subject too: “The teachings of the *Tathāgata* are immeasurable and limitless; the body of words, phrases and syllables is also immeasurable and endless.” This reflects the Sanskrit terms *nāma-*, *vyañjana-*, and *paḍa-kāya* (cf. *BHSD*, s.v. *kāya*); the peculiar use of the character *wei* (literally, “flavour”) to translate *vyañjana* presumably relates to its other meaning of “sauce” or “condiment.” For the sense of *kāya* here, see below.

34. I am indebted to Gregory Schopen for bringing this reference to my attention. The school affiliation of the text is undetermined.

35. I refer here to such statements as “The *dharmā* taught by the Lord is the body of the Lord” (p. 157: *ya eṣa dharmo Bhagavatā deśitaḥ etad Bhagavataḥ śarīraṃ*) and “The *dharmā* is the body of the Lord” (p. 160: *dharmā eva [or dharmas ca] Bhagavataḥ śarīraṃ*), together with the frequent use of the noun compound *dharmā-śarīra* (at one point—p. 157—described as *Bhagavataḥ śarīraṃ pāramārthikam*, cf. the *AsPP* passage cited above). *Bahuvrīhis* also crop up in the expressions *dharmā-śarīras tathāgata* (p. 158) and *dharmakāyāḥ tathāgatāḥ* (pp. 158-159), which have the same meaning we saw above: “The *Tathāgata(s)* is/are *dharmā*-bodied.” It is to be noted that *dharmā-kāya* as a substantive does not make an appearance. Further, although there are many quotations of Mainstream scriptures, almost all of the above-cited material appears in the commentary appended to them by the author. By my reckoning there is one citation from the *Bodhi-mūla-sūtra* which contains the phrase *dharmas ca Bhagavataḥ śarīraṃ*. A parallel text is found in the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins; see Lévi 1932: 160, n. 2 and T.1451, 224c-225c.

36. On the ambiguity of the word *śarīra* (living body, dead body, physical remains, relic) see above, n. 27.

37. See above, n. 33.

38. See Trenckner’s edition (1986: 73): *dhamma-kāyena pana kho mahārāja sakkā bhagavā nidassetuṃ, dhammo hi mahārāja bhagavatā desito*. On this passage, see also Mus 1978: 708-709; and Horner’s own comments (1965: xl-xli).

39. Trenckner 1986: 71: *yo dhammaṃ passati so bhagavantaṃ passati, dhammo hi... bhagavatā desito*.

40. Contra Edgerton (*BHSD*, s.v. *dharmā-kāya*), in his discussion of the parallel to this Vinaya passage in the *Divyāvadāna*. Note that this parallel has the words *upādhyāyānubhāvena*, whereas according to Dutt the Gilgit MS omits the word *anubhāvena*.

41. For further evidence for a Theravādin understanding of the *dhamma-kāya* as “body of the teachings,” see Reynolds 1977: 376-377.

42. See de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 766-768, Makransky 1989: 51-52, and Williams 1989: 170-171 for a discussion of this Sarvāstivādin usage.

43. Note that this Sarvāstivādin list does not tally with Mahāyāna enumerations of the 18 exclusive Buddha-*dharmas*. See *Traité*, III, pp. 1625-1703, and, for one

Mahāyāna example, Harrison 1990: 169-171.

44. Cf. the understanding of the *dharma-kāya* as consisting of the ten powers, four assurances, four special types of knowledge (*pratisaṃvid*), the 18 exclusive qualities (here a separate category), and other qualities, as attested by the *Dazhidu-lun* attributed to Nāgārjuna (T.1509, 274a); see *Traité*, IV, pp. 1913-1914, and de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 783-784. This notion is also echoed in Candrakīrti's *Tri-śaraṇa-saptati*, pp. 10-11 (see Sorensen 1986: 20-21; I am indebted to Peter Skilling for this reference).

45. See Reynolds 1977: 380.

46. On the various meanings of the word *kāya*, see Makransky 1989: 63, n. 2, and *BHSD*, s.v.

47. See T.1510, 584b. Cf. also *Ratna-gotra-vibhāga*, v. I.145, which distinguishes two aspects of *dharma-kāya*, one being the utterly pure *dharma-dhātu* and the other being its "outflow" (*niṣyanda*), the teaching; or, in other words, *dharma* as realisation (*adhigama-dharma*) and *dharma* as teaching (*deśanā-dharma*); see Takasaki 1966a: 182, 284-285; Ruegg 1969: 275.

48. The alternative is to construe *dharma-kāya* as a *karmadhāraya* with the first term being a noun used appositionally or in an adjectival sense, but this is totally unsuited to the Sarvāstivādin scholastic context. In effect I am proposing a single interpretation which will fit all contexts, viz., as a *tatpuruṣa*, the case relationship being genitive plural, as in the compounds *deva-senā* or *mūrkha-śatāni* (cf. Whitney 1962: 489-490). Of course, the compound *dharma-śarīra* cannot be understood like this; it is a *karmadhāraya*, with an appositional relationship between the two terms (i.e. "the body/relic which consists in the *dharma(s)*"), and is thus different in meaning. This is presumably why, when the author of the *Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa* wants to talk about this type of "body" or "relic," he uses only *dharma-śarīra*, and avoids the substantive *dharma-kāya*, even though he is quite prepared to use both terms interchangeably as *bahuvrīhis*.

49. I assume that the scriptural quotation ends at this point, as is indicated by the Tibetan version. I have consulted only the Derge edition, Sher phyin Brgyad stong section, Volume Ka; see folio 53b1-2.

50. On the various ways of interpreting *prabhāvita*, see Conze 1974: 98-99; Conze 1973a: 284; *BHSD*, s.v. *dharma-kāya*; and especially the lucid discussion by Schmithausen (1969: 109-111). The word's nuances include "produced," "manifested," "recognised," "characterised," and "distinguished"; Schmithausen proposes the rendering "constituted by" (*konstituiert durch*) in order to cover most of these senses. See also Ruegg 1969: 347-351 and Takasaki 1966a: 290, 314, & 355 for further examples of the use of *prabhāvita*.

51. Cf. Conze's translation (p. 118), which is in error in various respects, as has been pointed out by de Jong (1979: 375). This is possibly an echo of the *Samyuktāgama* passage concerning Ānanda quoted above.

52. See, e.g., Lancaster 1968: 93-94, 1975: 36, and Kajiyama 1984: 14.

53. Cf. Kajiyama 1974: II, 286. The Tibetan text (Derge Ka 249b3) suggests that *pramāṇīkṛtya* is to be taken as a gerundive.

54. It is worth noting that not one of the *dharma-kāya* citations in question is represented in the text of the *Ratna-guṇa-saṃcaya-gāthā*, the so-called verse summary of

the *AsPP*; see Yuyama 1976.

55. For an introduction to this text, see Harrison 1982. A full study of the *LAN* in its two extant versions is in preparation.

56. The verb *sprul pa* (= Skt. *nir-mā-*) is, however, found twice, once in v. 54 (*sku lus sprul pa mdzad pa ni*), and once in v. 89 (*sku lus dag ni sprul mdzad pa*). In the first case *nirmāna-kāya* could underlie the Tibetan.

57. I take David Seyfort Ruegg's point (personal communication, July, 1991) that one cannot be absolutely sure that the Tibetans have construed *bahuvr̥his* here. Indeed, classical Tibetan lacks the grammatical resources to make a clear distinction between a *bahuvr̥hi* and a *taṭpuruṣa*, unless it separates the two terms of the compound, which it appears to be reluctant to do. If the two terms are kept together there is no way of marking the difference, since even locutions like *chos (kyi) sku can* or *chos (kyi) sku dang ldan pa* might render an expression containing *dharmā-kāya* as a noun, such as *dharmā-kāya-saṃpanna* (unattested in Sanskrit as far as I am aware). Hence, while *bahuvr̥his* may be indicated by the use of particles like *can* (cf. Ruegg 1969: 510), they may also be indicated simply by the predicate *position*, and perhaps by the refusal to translate the plural. This can be seen in the Tibetan text for the *dharmā-kāya* passages of the *AsPP* discussed above, those in which the Sanskrit clearly has a *bahuvr̥hi* (the Tibetan is taken from the Derge edition, Sher phyin Brgyad stong section, Volume Ka). In Chap. IV, Skt. *dharmā-kāya buddhā bhagavantaḥ* = Tib. *sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das mams ni chos kyi sku yin* (53b1), in Chap. XVII, Skt. *dharmā-kāya buddhā bhagavanta* = Tib. *sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das mams chos kyi sku 'o* (187a6), and in Chap. XXXI, Skt. *dharmā-kāyās tathāgatāḥ* = Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa ni chos kyi sku 'o* (277b2).

58. Variant reading in the Tshal pa Kanjurs: *rab ldan pas* for *ldan pas na*.

59. Lokakṣema uses a number of words to translate Skt. *dharmā*; see Harrison 1990: 241. In order to reflect what I take to be his attempt to convey the polyvalency of the term, I adopt the strict rule of rendering his *jing* as "scripture," *fa* as "dharmā."

60. To say that the Buddhas are the same insofar as they are embodied in the *dharmā*, which is always the same, is somewhat different from saying that they are the same because they all possess the same *dharmā-kāya*, or body of pure qualities, etc., but there is definitely a connection between the two. The *dharmā* as a whole is the same, the ensemble of *dharmas* which constitute it is the same. The second idea appears in the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya*, Chap. VII, v. 34 (Pradhan 1975: 415):

*saṃbhāra-dharmā-kāyābhyāṃ jagataś cārtha-caryayā /
samatā sarva-buddhānāṃ nāyur-jāti-pramāṇataḥ //*

See also the translation of this verse and the following discussion in de La Vallée Poussin 1971: V, 79ff., and the English translation by Pruden (1990: IV, 1145ff.). Cf. also Mus 1978: 627-628.

61. Here I cannot resist underlining the fact that, even though the early Chinese translations are often dismissed as too crude and imprecise to be of much use to us, in this case Lokakṣema has handled a crucial phrase with far greater precision and accuracy than many of his twentieth-century counterparts have contrived to do, with all the resources at their disposal.

62. Cf. TSD, where the equivalent *mag gi lus* is given for *pūti-kāya*.

63. See Harrison 1990: 22, n. 42 for the Chinese versions. In the light of the present article this passage in the *PraS* ought to be retranslated, with "Body of *Dharma*" replaced by "body of *dharmanas*."

64. Cf. de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 708: "Plusieurs textes...disent que ce corps est commun à tous les Tathāgatas, pénétre tous les Dharmas, est semblable à l'espace, sans marques (*animitta*), sans causes (*asaṃskṛta*); qu'il n'est pas Rūpa ou Citta." Cf. also Mus 1978: 686.

65. See KP, Section 125. Cf. Tib.: *de de bzhin gshegs pa la chos nyid du yang mi lta na / gzugs kyi skur lta ci smos*.

66. A critical edition of the Tibetan translation of this text is in progress. The chapter and section divisions cited refer to this edition, to be published by the International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo, in 1992.

67. T.625 also indicates that the original had *sattva-dhātu* rather than the *nāna-dhātu* suggested by the Tibetan.

68. The term *fa-shen* occurs again in Lokakṣema's version of 2M (350c16), at a point where Tib. has only *chos*. Although his version of the latter half of the passage is rather obscure, neither Tib. nor T.625 suggests *dharma-kāya* here.

69. Note that the Song, Yuan and Ming editions read *jingfa* (i.e., scripture-dharmas) for *fa-shen*. This may well represent the original wording of Lokakṣema's text.

70. T.313 is here accepted as a translation by Lokakṣema or members of his school, which may subsequently have been partially revised, with the result that it now possesses various stylistic features which are not characteristic of Lokakṣema. Given that the same thing has happened to a number of Lokakṣema's works (most notably the *Banzhou sanmei jing*), I now see no reason to reject the traditional attribution entirely. Cf. Harrison 1990: 275, n. 43.

71. However, the *WWP*, a *sūtra* for which only the version ascribed to Lokakṣema is extant, does contain some interesting episodes where several brahmins who were previously unaware of the superiority of the Buddhist path report the decisive experience of seeing the Buddha with a body endowed with the 32 marks and the minor characteristics (see, e.g., 438a26 et seq.). This suggests that the vision of what we now think of as the *sambhoga-kāya* was not restricted to advanced *bodhisattvas*, at least as far as some Buddhists were concerned.

72. See Daninne 1983: 120.

73. The Tib. text (Derge ed., Dkon brtsegs Kha 18b7-19a2) reads:
sha ra dwa ti'i bu yang bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas mi 'khrugs pa de sngon byang chub sems dpa'i spyad pa spyod pa na chos ston pa 'am chos nyan pa'i tshe / lan dga' [read 'ga'] yang de'i lus ngal ba 'am sems ngal bar gyur pa med de / de ci'i phyir zhe na / sha ra dwa ti'i bu 'di ltar de bzhin gshegs pa des dang po sems bskyed pa nas bzung ste / byang chub sems dpa'i spyad pa spyod pa na chos kyi sku rab tu bsgoms par gyur pa'i phyir ro // sha ra dwa ti'i bu yang bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas mi 'khrugs pa de sngon byang chub sems dpa'i spyad pa spyod cing chos nyan pa na 'di

snyam du sems te ji ltar bdag da ltar chos 'dod pa de bzhin du bdag bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa'i sangs rgyas kyi zhing de na sems can mams kyang chos mi 'dod par mi 'gyur zhing chos 'dod par gyur cig snyam mo //.

74. This passage is part of a long section of the text (one of many) omitted in the translation of T.310, No. 6 by Garma C. C. Chang *et al.* (Chang 1983: 320).

75. For proof that this corruption is possible, see *BHSD*, s.v. Dharmakāma, and Regamey 1938b: 58, n. 11.

76. Cf. Dantinne 1983: 3-4, 38-39. Dantinne postulates two separate recensions of the text, one represented by T.313 and the Tib., the other by T.310.

77. *Prabhāvita* meaning "distinguished by," etc. See above, n. 50. Presumably this word was construed somewhat differently by Bodhiruci.

78. This corruption may well have been influenced by the phrase *dharma-kāya-prabhāvita* which occurs, e.g., in Chap. 22 of the *SR* (this passage is discussed below). It also occurs in the *Tathāgata-guhyā-sūtra*, as quoted in the *Śikṣā* (Vaidya 1961: 89), where the *bodhisattva* is said to be *dharma-kāya-prabhāvita*, i.e., "distinguished by [their possession of] the body of *dharma*." It seems highly unlikely that this is the same body which suffering beings see, hear and touch to such good effect, although Bendall and Rouse's translation of the passage would have it so (1971: 157-158). Cf. also Conze 1974: 99. On *prabhāvita*, see above, n. 50.

79. Note that this interpretation of the passage clashes with Dantinne's Sanskrit "reconstructions" and, indeed, his division of the text into two separate sections. However, I am in agreement with Dantinne's translation of *dharma-kāya* as "l'ensemble des qualités." See also his lengthy note on the term (pp. 175-180), which provides a number of useful references to passages concerning *dharma-kāya*, which he also translates as "corps de qualités."

80. Examples found so far only in the *DKP* and the *AJKV*. A close re-reading of Lokakṣema's other works may turn up further instances.

81. This is, of course, a perfectly acceptable equation; see, e.g., Takasaki 1966b, Ruegg 1969: 275, King 1991: 13, and above, n. 47. A similar instance of interchangeability in translation is found in the *Upāya-kausalya-sūtra*, in a passage which echoes a number of themes we have already raised. If we go by the Tibetan text translated from Indic (see Derge, Dkon brtsegs Cha 32a2-6), this passage says that *bodhisattvas* skilled in the use of creative stratagems (*upāya-kuśala*) who worship one Buddha know that by doing so they worship them all, through reflecting that "the Buddhas and Lords have arisen from one and the same *dharma-dhātu*, and have one and the same morality, *samādhi*, wisdom, liberation, knowledge and vision of liberation, cognition and understanding (Tib. *sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das mams ni chos kyi dbyings gcig las nges par byung ba dang / tshul khirms gcig pa dang / ting nge 'dzin gcig pa dang / shes rab gcig pa dang / mam par grol ba gcig pa dang / mam par grol ba'i ye shes mthong ba gcig pa dang / ye shes gcig pa dang / rig pa gcig pa yin no*)." The earliest Chinese translation, that of Dharmarakṣa (T.345, 156b20f.), states that the Buddhas are equal in their *dharma-kāya* (*fa-shen*); the second, of Zhu Nanti (T.310, No. 38, 595a18f.) states that "all *Tathāgatas*

share one and the same *dharma-dhātu* and *dharma-kāya* (*yi qie rulai tong yi fajie yi fashen*"); while the latest version by Dānapāla (T.346, 166b20) says only that they share one and the same *dharma-dhātu* (*fa-xing*). In the words which follow, the two older versions also list only the five *anāsrava-skandhas*, which, as we have already noted, comprise a classic Mainstream definition of *dharma-kāya*.

82. See, e.g., his version of the *LAn* (T.807), where *jingfa-benjie* (753b2, 15) and *jing-benjie* (753b18) correspond to *chos kyi dbyings* in the Tib. version (vv. 87, 93 & 94).

83. Here we transgress against one of the basic methodological principles of the "Lokakṣema Project," viz., to consider only those scriptures known to have been used in a certain place at a certain time, but it is to be hoped that the results achieved will make up for any departure from methodological purity.

84. The Gilgit text reads:

*ye mām rūpeṇa adrākṣur ye mām ghoṣeṇa anvayuh /
mithyā-prahāṇa-prasṛtā na mām drakṣyanti te janāḥ //
draṣṭavyo dharmato buddho dharma-kāyas tathāgataḥ /
dharmatā cāpy avijñeyā na sā śakyam vijñānitum //*

85. Dantinne also provides a correct interpretation (1983: 176), as does Nagao (1973b: 62); see also Takasaki (1987: 66). I take *avijñeya* here to mean "not able to be made the object of sensory consciousness (*vijñāna*)."

86. Cf. Schopen 1975: 153.

87. A partial parallel in *Thera-gāthā* 469; see Conze 1974: 57.

88. This is the Sanskrit MS of the *Vaj*, dated to around the end of 5th century, edited by Pargiter in Hoernle 1916: 176-195 (see especially p. 192).

89. The second verse is to be found in all the later Chinese translations of the *Vaj*, beginning with Bodhiruci's version of 509 (T.236, 756b & 761b). An equivalent also appears in the Khotanese version edited by Sten Konow in Hoernle 1916: 214-288; the verses appear on pp. 270-271; note also the English translation on p. 286: "The Exalted Ones should be viewed as being the Law; their body consists of the Law; he is rightly understood as being the Law, and he is not to be understood by means of expedients." It is to be observed that the relevant passage in Chap. XXXI of the *AsPP* makes its first appearance in Chinese in Kumārajīva's translation, i.e., early 5th century.

90. See also Reynolds & Hallisey 1987: 331: "According to such texts as the *Saddharmapundarīka*, the *dharma-kāya* is the true meaning of Buddhahood." While not exactly wrong, this statement is quite misleading in its context.

91. Cf. *BHSD*, s.v. *kāya*.

92. Cf. Mus 1978: 678-703. Although he identifies its magnificent central figure as a kind of *sambhoga-kāya*, Mus contends at length that the entire buddhology of the *SP* rests ultimately on a notion of *dharma-kāya*—the relevant chapter of his book is even entitled "Le Dharmakāya du *Lotus de la Bonne Loi*"—without ever drawing attention to the virtual non-occurrence of the term in the text! The relationship of the buddhology of the *SP* to *dharma-kāya* is also considered at length in Lai 1981.

93. References are to Vaidya's edition, 1963.

94. Cf. Suzuki 1930: 317 and 1932: 62: "become a Tathagata endowed with the

perfect freedom of the Dharmakāya, because of his insight into the egolessness of things.”

95. In full Suzuki’s translation reads: “Now being taken into a super-world which is the realm of no-evil-outflows, they will gather up all the material for the attainment of the Dharmakāya which is of sovereign [*sic*] power and beyond conception.” It is small wonder that the *LA* is thought to be so confused, if this is all non-Sanskritists have to go on.

96. Note the matching verse at the end of the chapter (55.29) which says *te buddha-dharmākhyam kāyam prāpsyanti māmakam*, “they will attain the body of mine which is known as the Buddha-dharmas.”

97. Cf. Suzuki 1932: 22, and *BHSD*, s.v. *kāya*. A possible alternative interpretation would be to take *dharmakāya* as a noun based on a *bahuvrīhi*: “How can one praise him who has the nature of an illusion or a dream, who has the *dharmas* for a body?”

98. Cf. Suzuki 1932: 40.

99. The Sanskrit reads: *sarva-srāvaka-pratyekabuddha-tūthakara-dhyāna-samādhi-samāpatti-sukham atikramya tathāgatācintya-viśaya-pracāra-gati-pracāram pañca-dharma-svabhāva-gatī-vinivṛtaṃ tathāgataṃ [?] dharmakāyam prajñā-jñāna-sunibaddha-dharmaṃ māyā-viśayābhiniṣṛtaṃ sarva-buddha-kṣetra-tuṣita-bhavanākanīṣṭhālayopagaṃ tathāgata-kāyam pratilabheran*. This is without doubt an extremely difficult passage; cf. Suzuki 1932: 46.

100. Cf. Suzuki 1930: 318-319 & 1932: 200. Note the following comments about the *dharmas* being bodiless (94.25-27). This is rather reminiscent of the Āgama passages cited above.

101. Skt.: *tatra katamā kāya-samatā? yaduta ahaṃ ca te ca tathāgatā arhantaḥ samyak-saṃbuddhā dharmakāyena ca rūpa-lakṣaṇānūvyañjana-kāyena ca samā nirviśiṣṭā anyatra vaineya-vaśam upādāya / tatra tatra sattva-gatī-viśeṣeṇa tathāgatā rūpa-vaicitryam ādarśayanti*. Cf. Suzuki 1932: 123.

102. See above. ns. 60 & 81.

103. Cf. Suzuki 1930: 318 & 1932: 165: “...there is another name for the Tathāgata when his Dharmakāya assumes a will-body. This is what goes beyond the comprehension of the philosophers, Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and those Bodhisattvas still abiding in the seventh stage. The unborn, Mahāmātī, is synonymous with the Tathāgata.”

104. See Carter & Palihawadana 1987: 89-94. My thanks to Richard Gombrich (personal communication, 30/7/91) for suggesting this interpretation.

105. Cf. also de La Vallée Poussin 1929: 704, quoting *Madhyamakāvatāra*, p. 361.

106. Cf. Suzuki 1932: 219: “The Tathāgata is the Dharmakāya, Mahāmātī: he abides in the Dharma as food.”

107. Cf. Pāli *āhāra-ṭhītika* (*PTSD*, s.v. *āhāra*, *ṭhītika*).

108. Cf. Anesaki 1982: 155 (with several similar citations in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*); also quoted in Demiéville 1930: 177: “Le Corps du Tg. a pour nourriture la Loi.” Note the use of the *yi... wei...* construction to render the *bahuvrīhi*.

109. In fact the buddhology of the *LA* is so chaotic and complex that a full study of it would be a truly Herculean task. For the purposes of this paper it is enough to show

that its use of *dharma-kāya*, both as an adjective and a noun, can be satisfactorily interpreted along traditional lines.

110. Sallie King's recent book on the "Buddha Nature" is a good example of the "non-reifying" approach, applied *inter alia* to *dharma-kāya* (see King 1991: 65-68, 101ff.).

111. It should be noted that even if my attempt to apply a single grammatical interpretation to the substantive *dharma-kāya* is rejected, and it is read in some contexts as a *karmadhāraya* like *dharma-śarīra*, viz., as "the body which is the *dharma*," a "non-reifying" approach emphasizing *dharma* can still be defended.

112. On this see, e.g., Lancaster 1977.

113. As David Seyfort Ruegg has pointed out (personal communication, July, 1991), the evolution of the *tathāgata-garbha* concept also poses problems which are in some respects similar to those outlined above. In both cases semantic and grammatical difficulties compound the philosophical complexity of the issues involved. On this and on the use of *tathāgata-garbha* and related terms as *bahuvrīhis* see Ruegg 1969: 499-516. It may well be, as Ruegg suggests (p. 512), that the occurrence of the term as a *bahuvrīhi* is historically prior to its appearance as a *tatpuruṣa*. This raises the possibility that in the case of *tathāgata-garbha*, too, we are faced with many different textual strata, deposited over time by the gradual process of hypostatisation (of something that began life as pure metaphor), but now hopelessly jumbled in heterogeneous sources whose dates we can only guess at. Once again, the matter is further complicated by the ambiguity of the word *garbha*, which means both "womb" and "embryo." Hence, for example, the statement in the *Tathāgata-garbha-sūtra* to the effect *sarva-sattvās tathāgata-garbhāḥ* (cited Ruegg 1969: 510; see also Takasaki 1966a: 196) may be understood as "all sentient beings are *Tathāgata*-wombs" (i.e., contain the *Tathāgata*, a common use of *garbha* in *fine compositi*), or as "all sentient beings have the *Tathāgata* as embryo." While these two senses are much the same, and may be read purely as a figure of speech—inside every unenlightened sentient being is a Buddha trying to get out—secondary and possibly later interpretations of *tathāgata-garbha* as a substantive meaning "the embryo of the *Tathāgata*" entail quite different and much more complex philosophical consequences. But that of course is another story....

ABBREVIATIONS

A	<i>Anguttara-Nikāya</i> (Pali Text Society Edition).
AjKV	<i>Ajātaśatru-kaukrīya-vinodanā-sūtra</i> .
AkTV	<i>Akṣobhya-tathāgatasya-vyūha</i> .
AsPP	Vaidya, P. L., ed., <i>Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra</i> , Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960.
BHSD	Edgerton, F., <i>Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary</i> , New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953 [Reprinted Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, 1972].
D	<i>Dīgha-Nikāya</i> (Pali Text Society Edition).

<i>DKP</i>	<i>Druma-kinnararāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra.</i>
<i>DXJ</i>	<i>Daoxing jing</i> or <i>Daoxing banruo jing</i> (T.224).
<i>DZDL</i>	<i>Dazhidu-lun</i> (T.1509).
<i>HBGR</i>	<i>Hōbōgirin: Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les sources chinoises et japonaises</i> , Tokyo, 1929.
<i>JIABS</i>	<i>Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies.</i>
<i>KP</i>	von Staël-Holstein, A., ed., <i>The Kāyapaparivarta</i> , Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1926.
<i>LA</i>	Vaidya, P. L., ed., <i>Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra</i> , Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1963.
<i>LAn</i>	<i>Lokānuvartanā-sūtra.</i>
<i>M</i>	<i>Majjhima-Nikāya</i> (Pali Text Society Edition).
<i>P</i>	Peking Edition of the Tibetan Kanjur (Suzuki Daisetz T., ed., <i>The Peking Edition of the Tibetan Tripitaka</i> , Tokyo-Kyoto: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1955-61).
<i>PraS</i>	<i>Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhī-sūtra.</i>
<i>PTC</i>	Hare, E. M., et al., eds., <i>Pali Tipiṭaka Concordance</i> , London: Pali Text Society, 1955.
<i>PTSD</i>	Rhys Davids, T. W. & W. Stede, eds., <i>The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary</i> , London: Pali Text Society, 1921-25.
<i>S</i>	<i>Saṃyutta-Nikāya</i> (Pali Text Society Edition).
<i>Śikṣā</i>	Vaidya, P. L., ed., <i>Śikṣā-samuccaya</i> , Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1961.
<i>Skt.</i>	Sanskrit.
<i>SP</i>	Vaidya, P. L., ed., <i>Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra</i> , Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960.
<i>SR</i>	Vaidya, P. L., ed., <i>Samādhirāja-sūtra</i> , Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1961.
<i>T.</i>	Takakusu Junjirō & Watanabe Kaikyoku, eds., <i>Taishō shinshū daizōkyō</i> , 100 vols., Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924-34.
<i>Tib.</i>	Tibetan.
<i>Traité</i>	Lamotte, E., <i>Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra)</i> , 5 vols., Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1944-80 [Vols. 1 & 2 reprinted 1966 & 1967].
<i>TSD</i>	Chandra, Lokesh, <i>Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary</i> , New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1961 [Reprint edition, Tokyo: Rinsen, 1971].
<i>Vaj</i>	<i>Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra.</i>
<i>WWP</i>	<i>Wenshushili wen pusa-shu jing</i> (T.280).

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GLOSSARY OF CHINESE CHARACTERS

<i>Achu-fo guo jing</i>	阿閼佉國經
<i>Banzhou sanmei jing</i>	般舟三昧經
<i>Daoxing banruo jing</i>	道行般若經
<i>Dazhidu-lun</i>	大智度論
<i>Dousha jing</i>	鬼沙經
<i>fa</i>	法
<i>fa-jie</i>	法界
<i>fa-shen</i>	法身
<i>Fatian</i>	法天
<i>fa-xing</i>	法性
<i>fo-fa-zang</i>	佛法藏
<i>fo-jing-shen</i>	佛經身
<i>jing</i>	經
<i>jin3-benjie</i>	經本界
<i>jingfa</i>	經法
<i>jingfa-benjie</i>	經法本界
<i>jing-zang-shen</i>	經藏身
<i>mingjuwei-shen</i>	名句味身
<i>rulai-shen-zhe yi fa wei shi</i>	如來身者以法為食
<i>rulai shen-zhe zhenfa zhi shen</i>	如來身者真法之身
<i>shen</i>	身

<i>wei</i>	味
<i>weili</i>	威力
<i>Wenshushili wen pusa-shu jing</i>	文殊師利問菩薩暑經
<i>yi jingfa ming wei shen</i>	以經法名為身
<i>yi jingfa wei shen</i>	以經法為身
<i>yiqie rulai tong yi fajie yi fashen</i>	一切如來同一法界一法身
<i>yi... wei...</i>	以...為...
<i>zhu-fa</i>	諸法