

Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets (1984), all published by the Cambridge University Press.

For those interested in pursuing the study of Buddhism in a cross-cultural, thematic manner, Frank E. Reynolds's *Guide to the Buddhist Religion* (Boston, 1981), done with the assistance of John Holt and John Strong, is a useful resource. It provides 350 pages of annotated bibliography of English, French, and German materials (plus a preface and 65 pages of index) organized in terms of eleven themes, including "Historical Development," "Religious Thought," "Authoritative Texts," "Popular Beliefs and Literature," "Social, Political and Economic Aspects," "The Arts," "Religious Practices and Rituals," and "Soteriological Experience and Processes: Path and Goal."

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THE BUDDHA

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Etymologically, the Sanskrit/Pali word *buddha* means "one who has awakened"; in the context of Indian religions it is used as an honorific title for an individual who is enlightened. This metaphor indicates the change in consciousness that, according to Buddhism, is always characteristic of enlightenment. It suggests the otherness and splendor associated with those named by this epithet in various Buddhist traditions. *Buddha* is also related etymologically to the Sanskrit/Pali term *buddhi*, which signifies "intelligence" and "understanding." A person who has awakened can thus be said to be "one who knows."

Within the traditional Buddhist context *buddha* is an appellative term or title—that is, a term or title that is inclusive in character. As with all titles of office (e.g., king), the term *buddha* denotes not merely the individual incumbent but also a larger conceptual framework. As an appellative, *buddha* describes a person by placing him or her within a class, instead of isolating and analyzing individual attributes. It emphasizes the paradigm that is exhibited, rather than distinctive qualities or characteristics.

The designation *buddha* has had wide circulation among various religious traditions of India. It has been applied, for example, by Jains to their founder, Mahāvīra. [See Mahāvīra.] The definition of the inclusive category has varied, however, and *buddha* has been used to describe a broad spectrum of persons, from those who are simply learned to those rare individuals who have had transforming and liberating insight into the nature of reality. Buddhists have, in general, employed the term in this second, stronger sense.

Buddhists adopted the term *buddha* from the religious discourse of ancient India and gave it a special imprint, just as they have done with much of their vocabulary. It seems, however, that the early Buddhists may not have immediately applied the term to the person—the historical Gautama—whom they recognized as the founder of their community. In the accounts of the first two Buddhist councils (one held just after Gautama's death, the other several decades later) Gautama is spoken of as *bbagavan* ("lord," a common title of respect) and *śāstrī* ("teacher"), not as *buddha*. However, once the term *buddha* was adopted, it not only became the primary designation for Gautama but also assumed a central role within the basic structure of Buddhist thought and practice.

We will begin our discussion by focusing on the question of the historical Buddha and what—if anything—we know about him and his ministry. This issue has not been of particular importance for traditional Buddhists—at least not in the way that it is formulated here. But it has been of major significance for modern scholars of Buddhism, and it has become of great interest to many contemporary Buddhists and others who have been influenced by modern Western notions of history.

We will then turn to the term *buddha* as it has been employed within the various traditions that constitute classical Buddhism. As an appellative term utilized in classical Buddhist contexts, *buddha* has had three distinct, yet interwoven, levels of meaning. It has referred, first of all, to what we will call “the Buddha”—otherwise known as the Gautama Buddha or the Buddha Śākyamuni (“sage of the Śākyas”). Most Buddhists recognize Gautama as the *buddha* of our own cosmic era and/or cosmic space, and they honor him as the founder of the existing Buddhist community. As a perfectly enlightened being, Gautama is understood to have perfected various virtues (*pāramitās*) over the course of numerous lives. [See *Pāramitās*.] These prodigious efforts prepared Gautama to awake fully to the true nature of reality just as other Buddhas had awakened before him. The preparation also gave him—as it did other Buddhas—the inclination and ability to share with others what he had discovered for himself. Following his Enlightenment, Gautama became a teacher who “set in motion the wheel of Dharma” and oversaw the founding of the Buddhist community of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen.

The second level of meaning associated with *buddha* as an appellative term has to do with “other Buddhas.” Many Buddhas of different times and places are named in Buddhist literature. Moreover, anyone who attains release (*mokṣa*, *nirvāṇa*) from this world of recurring rebirths (*samsāra*) can be called—in some contexts at least—a Buddha. Buddhas, then, are potentially as “innumerable as the sands of the River Ganges.” But all Buddhas are not equal: they possess different capabilities according to their aspirations and accomplishments. The enlightened insight of some is greater than that of others. Some attain enlightenment only for themselves (e.g., *pratyekabuddha*), others for the benefit and welfare of many (e.g., *sa-myaksambuddha*). Some accomplish their mission through their earthly careers, others through the creation of celestial Buddha fields into which their devotees seek rebirth.

Finally, the term *buddha* as an appellative has a third level of meaning that we will designate as Buddhahood—a level that provides its widest conceptual context. This level is constituted by the recognition that the Buddha and other Buddhas are, in a very profound sense, identical with ultimate reality itself. Consequently, Buddhists have given the more personal and active connotations associated with the Buddha and other Buddhas to their characterizations of absolute reality as *dharmā* (salvific truth), *sūnyatā* (“emptiness”), *taibātā* (“suchness”), and the like. At the same time, the term *Buddhabood* has on occasion given a somewhat depersonalized cast to the notions of the Buddha and other Buddhas. For example, early Buddhists, who were closest to the historical Buddha, were reluctant to depict Gautama in anthropomorphic forms and seem to have intentionally avoided biographical structures and iconic imagery. They used impersonal and symbolic representation to express their perception that the Buddha whose teachings they had preserved was fully homologous with reality itself. In some later traditions the pervading significance of

this third level of meaning was expressed through the affirmation that the Buddha’s impersonal and ineffable *dharmakāya* (“*dharmā* body”) was the source and truth of the other, more personalized manifestations of Buddhahood.

The Historical Buddha

The scholars who inaugurated the critical study of Buddhism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were deeply concerned with the question of the “historical Buddha.” But their views on the subject differed radically. The field was largely divided between a group of myth-oriented scholars, such as Émile Senart, Heinrich Kern, and Ananda Coomaraswamy, and a group of more historically oriented philologists, such as Hermann Oldenberg and T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids. The myth-oriented interpreters placed emphasis on the study of Sanskrit sources and on the importance of those elements in the sacred biography that pointed in the direction of solar mythology; for these scholars, the historical Buddha was, at most, a reformer who provided an occasion for historicizing a classic solar myth. In contrast, the historically oriented philologists emphasized the texts written in Pali, as well as those elements in these texts that they could use to create (or reconstruct, in their view) an acceptable “historical” life of the Buddha. From the perspective of these scholars, the mythic elements—and other supposedly irrational elements as well—were later additions to a true historical memory, additions that brought about the demise of the original Buddhism of the Buddha. Such pious frauds were to be identified and discounted by critical scholarship.

More recently, scholars have recognized the inadequacy of the older mythic and historical approaches. Most scholars working in the field at present are convinced of the existence of the historical Gautama. The general consensus was well expressed by the great Belgian Buddhologist Étienne Lamotte, who noted that “Buddhism would remain inexplicable if one did not place at its beginning a strong personality who was its founder” (Lamotte, 1958, p. 707). But at the same time scholars are aware that the available tests provide little information about the details of Gautama’s life.

The difficulties involved in saying anything significant about the historical Buddha are illustrated by the lack of certainty concerning the dates of his birth and death. Since different Buddhist traditions recognize different dates, and since external evidence is slight and inconclusive, scholars have ventured diverging opinions.

Two chronologies found in Buddhist texts are important for any attempt to calculate the date of the historical Buddha. A “long chronology,” presented in the Sri Lankan chronicles, the *Dīpavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*, places the birth of the historical Buddha 298 years before the coronation of King Aśoka, his death 218 years before that event. If we accept the date given in the chronicles for the coronation of Aśoka (326 BCE), that would locate the Buddha’s birth date in 624 BCE and his death in 544. These dates have been traditionally accepted in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and were the basis for the celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha’s death, or *parinirvāṇa*, in 1956. However, most modern scholars who accept the long chronology believe, on the basis of Greek evidence, that Aśoka’s coronation took place around 268 or 267 BCE and that the Buddha’s birth and death should therefore

be dated circa 566 and circa 486, respectively. These later dates are favored by the majority of Buddhologists in Europe, America, and India.

A "short chronology" is attested to by Indian sources and their Chinese and Tibetan translations. These sources place the birth of the Buddha 180 years before the coronation of Aśoka and his death 100 years before that event. If the presumably reliable Greek testimony concerning Aśoka's coronation is applied, the birth date of the Buddha is 448 and the date of his death, or *parinirvāna*, is 368. This short chronology is accepted by many Japanese Buddhologists and was spiritedly defended by the German scholar Heinz Bechert in 1982.

Although there seems to be little chance of resolving the long chronology/short chronology question in any kind of definitive manner, we can say with some certainty that the historical Buddha lived sometime during the period from the sixth through the fourth centuries BCE. This was a time of radical thought and speculation, as manifested in the pre-Socratic philosophical tradition and the mystery cults in Greece, the prophets and prophetic schools of the Near East, Confucius and Lao-tzu in China, the Upaniṣadic sages and the communities of ascetic wanderers (*śramaṇas*) in India, and the emergence of "founded" religions such as Jainism and Buddhism. These intellectual and religious movements were fostered by the formation of cosmopolitan empires, such as those associated with Alexander in the Hellenistic world, with the Ch'in and Han dynasties in China, with Darius and Cyrus in Persia, and with the Maurya dynasty in India. Urban centers were established and soon became the focal points around which a new kind of life was organized. A significant number of people, cut off from the old sources of order and meaning, were open to different ways of expressing their religious concerns and were quite ready to support those engaged in new forms of religious and intellectual endeavor.

The historical Buddha responded to this kind of situation in northeastern India. He was a renouncer and an ascetic, although the style of renunciation and asceticism he practiced and recommended was, it seems, mild by Indian standards. He shared with other renunciants an ultimately somber view of the world and its pleasures, and he practiced and recommended a mode of religious life in which individual participation in a specifically religious community was of primary importance. He experimented with the practices of renunciants—begging, wandering, celibacy, techniques of self-restraint (*yoga*), and the like—and he organized a community in which discipline played a central role. Judging from the movement he inspired, he was not only an innovator but also a charismatic personality. Through the course of his ministry he gathered around him a group of wandering mendicants and nuns, as well as men and women who continued to live the life of householders.

Can we go beyond this very generalized portrait of the historical Buddha toward a fuller biography? Lamotte has advised caution, observing in his *Histoire* that writing the life of the historical Gautama is "a hopeless enterprise" (p. 16). There are, however, a few details that, though they do not add up to a biography, do suggest that there is a historical core to the later biographical traditions. These details are presented in almost identical form in the literature of diverse Buddhist schools, a reasonable indication that they date from before the fourth to third centuries BCE, when independent and separate traditions first began to develop.

Some of these details are so specific and arbitrary or unexpected that it seems unlikely that they were fabricated. These include the details that Gautama was of the *ksatriya* caste, that he was born in the Śākya clan (a more distinguished pedigree

could have been created), that he was married and had a child, that he entered the ascetic life without the permission of his father, that his first attempts to share the insights that he had gained through his Enlightenment met with failure, that his leadership of the community he had established was seriously challenged by his more ascetically inclined cousin, and that he died in a remote place after eating a tainted meal. But these details are so few and disconnected that our knowledge of the historical Buddha remains shadowy and unsatisfying. In order to identify a more meaningful image of Gautama and his career we must turn to the Buddha who is explicitly affirmed in the memory and practice of the Buddhist community.

The Buddha

The general history of religions strongly suggests that the death of a founder results in the loss of a charismatic focus. This loss must be dealt with if the founded group is to survive. In his classic article "Master and Disciple: Two Religio-Sociological Studies," Joachim Wach suggests that "the image" of the beloved founder could produce a unity sufficient for the group to continue (*Journal of Religion* 42, 1962, p. 5).

Each founded religion has developed original ways of preserving the image of their master: Christians with the Gospels and later artistic expressions, Muslims with *ḥadīth* and Mi'rāj stories of Muḥammad's journeys to heaven, and so on. Buddhists, it seems, have addressed this crisis with the assumption—explicitly stated in the words of a fifth-century CE Mahāyāna text known as the *Saptasatikā-prajñāpāramitā*—that "a Buddha is not easily made known by words" (Rome, 1923, p. 126). This recognition has not proved to be a restraint but has instead inspired Buddhists to preserve the image of Gautama through the creation and explication of epithets, through a variety of "biographical" accounts, and through a tradition of visual representation in monumental architecture and art. The image of the founder became, in Joachim Wach's phrase, "an objective center of crystalization" for a variety of opinions concerning the nature and significance of his person.

The creative preservation of the image of the Buddha was closely related to evolving patterns of worship—including pilgrimage, contemplation, and ritual—in the Buddhist community. This reminds us that the various ways of portraying the Buddha are the result of innumerable personal efforts to discern him with immediacy, as well as the product of the desire to preserve and share that image.

EPITHETS

Certainly one of the earliest and most ubiquitous forms in which Buddhists have expressed and generated their image of Gautama Buddha was through the medium of epithets. For example, in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (London, 1948, vol. 1, p. 386), a householder named Upāli, after becoming the Buddha's follower, acclaims him with one hundred epithets. The Sanskrit version of this text adds that Upāli spoke these epithets spontaneously, as an expression of his faith and respect. Over the centuries the enumerations of these and other epithets focused on the extraordinary aspects of the Buddha's person, on his marvelous nature. In so doing they became a foundation for Buddhist devotional literature, their enunciation a support of devotional and contemplative practice.

Countless epithets have been applied to the Buddha over the centuries, but *buddha* itself has been a particular favorite for explanation. Even hearing the word *buddha* can cause people to rejoice because, as the Theravāda commentary on the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* says, "It is very rare indeed to hear the word *buddha* in this world" (London, 1929, vol. 1, p. 312). The *Paṭisambhidā*, a late addition to the Theravāda canon, explored the significance of the word *buddha* by saying that "it is a name derived from the final liberation of the Enlightened Ones, the Blessed Ones, together with the omniscient knowledge at the root of the Enlightenment Tree; this name 'buddha' is a designation based on realization" (*The Path of Purification*, translated by Ñāṇamoli, Colombo, 1964, p. 213). Sun Ch'o, a fourth-century Chinese writer, explicated the *buddha* epithet in a rather different mode, reminiscent of a Taoist sage: "'Buddha' means 'one who embodies the Way'. . . . It is the one who reacts to the stimuli (of the world) in all pervading accordance (with the needs of all beings); the one who abstains from activity and who is yet universally active" (quoted in Erik Zürcher's *The Buddhist Conquest of China*, Leiden, 1959, p. 133).

Particular epithets accentuate specific qualities of the Buddha that might otherwise remain unemphasized or ambiguous. Thus the epithet "teacher of gods and men" (*satthar devamanussānām*) is used in the *Mahāniddeśa*, another late canonical text in the Theravāda tradition, to display the Buddha as one who helps others escape from suffering. The techniques used—exploiting ordinary polysemy and puns and deriving elaborate etymologies—are favorites of Buddhist commentators for exposing the significance of an epithet.

He teaches by means of the here and now, of the life to come, and of the ultimate goal, according as befits the case, thus he is Teacher (satthar).

"Teacher (satthar)": the Blessed One is a caravan leader (satthar) since he brings home caravans. Just as one who brings a caravan home gets caravans across a wilderness. . . gets them to reach a land of safety, so too the Blessed One is a caravan leader, one who brings home the caravans; he gets them across. . . the wilderness of birth.

(Ñāṇamoli, p. 223)

Some of the epithets of the Buddha refer to his lineage and name: for example, Śākyamuni, "sage of the Śākya tribe," and his personal name, Siddhārtha, "he whose aims are fulfilled." Some refer to religio-mythic paradigms with which he was identified: *mahāpuruṣa* means "great cosmic person"; *cakravartin* refers to the "universal monarch," the possessor of the seven jewels of sovereignty who sets in motion the wheel of righteous rule. Some—such as *bhagavan*—convey a sense of beneficent lordship. Others—such as *itthāgata* ("thus come," or "thus gone")—retain, at least in retrospect, an aura of august ambiguity and mystery.

Various epithets define the Buddha as having attained perfection in all domains. His wisdom is perfect, as are his physical form and manner. In some cases the epithets indicate that the Buddha is without equal, that he has attained "the summit of the world." André Bareau concluded his study "The Superhuman Personality of the Buddha and its Symbolism in the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*," which is largely an examination of the epithets in this important text, by stating that through these epithets the authors "began to conceive the transcendence of the Buddha. . . . Perfect

in all points, superior through distance from all beings, unique, the Beatific had evidently taken, in the thought of his followers, the place which the devotees of the great religions attributed to the great God whom they adored" (*Myths and Symbols*, edited by Charles H. Long and Joseph M. Kitagawa, Chicago, 1969, pp. 19–20).

The epithets of the Buddha, in addition to having a central place in Buddhist devotion, are featured in the *buddhānusmṛti* meditation—the "recollection of the Buddha." This form of meditation, like all Buddhist meditational practices, had as its aim the discipline and purification of the mind; but, in addition, it was a technique of visualization, a way of recovering the image of the founder. [See Nien-fo.] This practice of visualization by contemplation on the epithets is important in the Theravāda tradition, both monastic and lay, and it was also very popular in the Sarvāstivāda communities in northwestern India and influential in various Mahāyāna traditions in China. It was instrumental in the development of the Mahāyāna notion of the "three bodies" (*trikāya*) of the Buddha, particularly the second, or visualized, body that was known as his *sambhogakāya* ("body of enjoyment").

BIOGRAPHIES

Like the tradition of uttering and interpreting epithets that extolled the exalted nature and virtues of the Buddha, the tradition of recounting biographical episodes is an integral part of early Buddhism. Episodic fragments, preserved in the Pali and Chinese versions of the early Buddhist literature, are embedded in sermons attributed to the Buddha himself and illustrate points of practice or doctrine. Such episodes are also used as narrative frames to provide a context indicating when and where a particular discourse was taught. It appears certain that other episodic fragments were recounted and generated at the four great pilgrimage centers of early Buddhism—the sites that were identified as the locations of the Buddha's birth, of his Enlightenment, of the preaching of his first sermon, and of his death, or *parinirvāna*. Some of the scattered narratives do seem to presuppose a developed biographical tradition, but others suggest a fluidity in the biographical structure. Thus, a crucial problem that is posed for our understanding of the biographical process in the Buddhist tradition is when and how a more or less fixed biography of the Buddha actually took shape.

The most convincing argument for the very early development of a comprehensive biography of the Buddha has been made by Erich Frauwallner (1956). Frauwallner argues, on the basis of a brilliant text-critical analysis, that a no longer extant biography of the Buddha, complete up to the conversion of the two great disciples, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, was written approximately one hundred years after the Buddha's death and well prior to the reign of King Aśoka. This biography, he maintains, was composed as an introduction to the *Skandbaka*, a text of monastic discipline (Vinaya) that was reportedly confirmed at the Second Buddhist Council held at Vaiśālī. Appended to the *Skandbaka*, according to Frauwallner, was an account of the Buddha's death, or *parinirvāna*, and of the first years of the fledgling monastic community. Frauwallner contends that all subsequent Buddha biographies have been derived from this basic ur-text. The fragmentary biographies found in the extant Vinaya literature of the various Buddhist schools indicate a crumbling away

of this original biography; later autonomous biographies are versions cut from the original Vinaya context and subsequently elaborated.

A different argument has been made, also on the basis of close text-critical study, by scholars such as Alfred Foucher, Étienne Lamotte, and André Bareau. They have argued that there was a gradual development of biographical cycles, with only a later synthesis of this material into a series of more complete biographies. According to this thesis, the earliest stages of the development of the Buddha biography are the fragments in the Sūtra and Vinaya texts, which show no concern for chronology or continuity. The Sūtra literature emphasizes stories of the Buddha's previous births (*jātaka*), episodes leading up to the Enlightenment, the Enlightenment itself, and an account of his last journey, death, and funeral. André Bareau states that the biographical material in the Sūtras was "composed for the most part of episodes taken from separate traditions, from which the authors chose with complete freedom, guided only by their desire to illustrate a particular point of doctrine" (Bareau, 1963, p. 364). The Vinaya texts, on the other hand, focus on the Buddha as teacher and incorporate—in addition to accounts of the events associated with his Enlightenment—narratives that describe the early days of his ministry, including an account of the conversion of his first disciples. The air of these Vinaya fragments seems to be to confer authenticity on the monastic rules and practices set forth in the rest of the text.

The oldest of the surviving autonomous biographies is the *Mahāvastu*, an unwieldy anthology written in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit about the beginning of the common era. Other more tightly constructed biographies were produced soon after the *Mahāvastu*—notably, the *Lalitavistara*, which played an important role in various Mahāyāna traditions; the *Abhiniskramana Sūtra*, which was especially popular in China, where at least five Chinese works were, nominally at least, translations of it; and the very famous and popular *Buddhacarita*, attributed to Aśvaghōṣa. Much later, between the fourth and fifth centuries, still another autonomous biography, known as the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, was given its final form. This voluminous compendium of biographical traditions provided later Mahāyāna schools with a major source for stories about the Buddha and his career.

These new autonomous biographies continued to incorporate stories that had developed at the pilgrimage sites associated with the Buddha's birth and great renunciation, his Enlightenment, and his first sermon. For example, in the *Lalitavistara* an episode is recounted that is clearly related to a specific shrine at the Buddhist pilgrimage site at Kapilavastu—namely, the story in which the Buddha's charioteer leaves him and returns to the palace in Kapilavastu. What is more, these new autonomous biographies also continued to exhibit structural elements that had been characteristic of the biographical segments of the older Vinaya literature. For example, all of the early autonomous biographies (with the exception of the "completed" Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Buddhacarita*) follow the Vinaya tradition, which ends the story at a point soon after the Buddha had begun his ministry.

These new autonomous biographies testify to three important changes that affected the traditions of Buddha biography during the centuries immediately following the death of King Aśoka. The first is the inclusion of new biographical elements drawn from non-Buddhist and even non-Indian sources. The autonomous biographies were the products of the cosmopolitan civilizations associated with the Śātavāhana and Kushan (Kuṣāṇa) empires, and therefore it is not surprising that new

episodes were adapted from Greek and West Asian sources. Somewhat later, as the autonomous Buddha biographies were introduced into other areas, changes were introduced to accentuate the Buddha's exemplification of new cultural values. Thus, in a fourth-century Chinese "translation" of the *Abhiniskramana*, great emphasis was placed on the Buddha's exemplification of filial piety through the conversion of his father, King Śuddhodana.

The second important change exhibited by these new autonomous biographies was the ubiquitous inclusion of stories about the Buddha's previous lives (*jātaka*) as a device for explicating details of his final life as Gautama. This is particularly evident in the *Mahāvastu* and in certain versions of the *Abhiniskramana Sūtra*, in which, according to Lamotte, "the Jātakas become the prime mover of the narration: each episode in the life of the Buddha is given as the result and reproduction of an event from previous lives" (Lamotte, 1958, p. 725).

The third discernible change is the increasing placement of emphasis on the superhuman and transcendent dimensions of the Buddha's nature. Earlier narratives refer to the Buddha's fatigue and to his susceptibility to illness, but in the autonomous biographies he is said to be above human frailties. There is a tendency to emphasize the Buddha's superhuman qualities, not only of mind, but also of body: "It is true that the Buddhas bathe, but no dirt is found on them; their bodies are radiant like golden amaranth. Their bathing is mere conformity with the world" (*Mahāvastu*, translated by J. J. Jones, London, 1949, vol. 1, p. 133). As a function of this same emphasis on transcendence, the Buddha's activities are increasingly portrayed in the modes of miracle and magic. With the emergence and development of Mahāyāna, new narratives began to appear that portrayed the Buddha preaching a more exalted doctrine, sometimes on a mountain peak, sometimes in a celestial realm, sometimes to his most receptive disciples, sometimes to a great assembly of *bodhisattvas* (future Buddhas) and gods.

Whereas the Mahāyāna accepted the early autonomous biographies and supplemented them with additional episodes of their own, the Theravāda community displayed a continuing resistance to developments in the biographical tradition. For almost nine centuries after the death of Gautama, the various elements of the Buddha biography were kept separate in Theravāda literature. But in the fifth century CE, about half a millennium after the composition of the first autonomous biographies, the Theravādins began to create their own biographical genres. These brought together and synthesized, in their own, more restrained style, many of the previously fragmented narratives.

Two types of Buddha biographies have had an important impact and role in the later history of the Theravāda tradition. The model for the classical type is the *Nidānakathā*, a text that serves as an introduction to the fifth-century *Jātaka Commentary* and thus continues the pattern of using biography to provide a narrative context that authenticates the teaching. It traces the Buddha's career from the time of his previous birth as Sumedha (when he made his original vow to become a Buddha) to the year following Gautama's Enlightenment, when he took up residence in the Jetavana Monastery. Subsequent Theravāda biographies, based on the *Nidānakathā*, continued the narration through the rest of Gautama's ministry and beyond.

The second type of Theravāda biography—the chronicle (*vamsa*) biography—illustrates a distinctive Theravāda understanding of the Buddha. From very early in their history the Theravādins had distinguished between two bodies of the Buddha,

his physical body (*rūpakāya*) and his body of truth (*dbarmakāya*). After the Buddha's death, or *parinirvāna*, the *rūpakāya* continued to be present to the community in his relics, and his *dbarmakāya* continued to be present in his teachings. In the fourth to fifth centuries CE the Theravādins began to compose biographical chronicles that focused on these continuing legacies. These begin with previous lives of the Buddha, then provide an abbreviated account of his "final" life as Gautama. They go on to narrate the history of the tradition by interweaving accounts of kings who maintain the physical legacy (in the form of relics, stupas, and the like) with accounts of the monastic order, which maintains his *dbarma* legacy (in the form of proper teaching and discipline). Examples of this type of biographical chronicle are numerous, beginning with the *Dīpavamsa* and *Mabāvamsa* and continuing through many other *vamsa* texts written in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

Throughout the premodern history of Buddhism, all of the major Buddhist schools preserved biographies of the Buddha. And in each situation, they were continually reinterpreted in relation to contemporary attitudes and experiences. But in the modern period, a new genre of Buddha biographies has been introduced. This new type of biography has been influenced by Western scholarship on Buddhism and by Western attempts to recover the historical Buddha, who had—from the modernist perspective—been hidden from view by the accretions of tradition. New, largely urbanized elites throughout the Buddhist world have sought to "demythologize" the Buddha biography, deleting miraculous elements of the Buddha's life and replacing them with an image of the founder as a teacher of a rationalistic ethical system or a "scientific" system of meditation or as a social reformer committed to the cause of democracy, socialism, or egalitarianism. This new genre of Buddha biography has appeared in many Buddhist contexts and has made an impact that has cut across all the traditional lines of geographical and sectarian division.

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS

The images of the founder that Buddhists have generated and expressed visually are more enigmatic than the images presented in epithets and biographies. The history of Buddhist monumental architecture, art, and sculpture does not neatly fit such accustomed categories as "mythologization" or "divinization." Furthermore, the association of various kinds of visual representation with veneration and worship challenges many stereotypes about the secondary place of cult activity in the Buddhist tradition. The situation is further complicated by the fact that the function and significance of visual representations of the Buddha are only explained in relatively late Buddhist literature, after both doctrine and practice had become extremely complex.

The most important of the very early visual representations of the Buddha was the burial mound, or stupa (Skt., *stūpa*). The interment of the remains of kings and heroes in burial mounds was a well-established practice in pre-Buddhist India. Buddhists and Jains adopted these mounds as models for their first religious monuments and honored them with traditional practices. In the Pali *Mabāparinibbāna Suttanta* and its parallels in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, the Buddha gives instructions that his funeral rites should be performed in the manner customary for a "universal monarch" (*cakravartin*), an epithet that was applied to the Buddha. [See *Cakravartin*.] After his cremation his bones were to be deposited in a golden urn and placed in a mound built at the crossing of four main roads. Offerings of flowers

and garlands, banners, incense, and music characterized both the funeral rites themselves and the continuing worship at a stupa.

As Buddhism developed, the stupa continued to serve as a central visual representation of the founder. Seeing a stupa called to memory the greatness of the Buddha and—for some at least—became equivalent to actually seeing the Buddha when he was alive. Since the Buddha's physical remains could be divided, replicated, and distributed, new stupas containing relics could be constructed. They became a focal point for worship wherever Buddhism spread, first within India and then beyond. What is more, the stupa had symbolic connotations that exerted a significant influence on the way in which the Buddha was perceived. For example, stupas had a locative significance through which the Buddha was associated with specific territorial units. They also came increasingly to represent a cosmology and cosmography ordered by Buddhist principles, thus symbolically embodying the notion of the Buddha as a cosmic person.

The later literature explains that a stupa is worthy of worship and reverence not only because it contains a relic or relics but also because its form symbolizes the enlightened state of a Buddha, or Buddhahood itself. In some texts the stupa is described as the *dbarmakāya*, or transcendent body, of the Buddha, and each of its layers and components is correlated with a set of spiritual qualities cultivated to perfection by a Buddha. Such symbolic correlations made evident what, in some circles at least, had been long accepted, namely, the notion that the stupa represents the Buddha's spiritual, as well as his physical, legacy.

The beginnings of Buddhist art are found on post-Aśokan stupas, such as those found at Bhārhut, Sāñcī, and Amarāvātī. These great stupas and their gates are decorated with narrative reliefs of events from the Buddha's life and with scenes of gods and men "rendering homage to the Lord." The Buddha is always depicted symbolically in these reliefs, with emblems appropriate to the story. For example, in friezes depicting scenes associated with his birth he is often represented by a footprint with the characteristic marks of the *mabāpuruṣa* (the cosmic man destined to be either a *cakravartin* or a Buddha). In scenes associated with his Enlightenment he is often represented by the Bodhi Tree under which he attained Enlightenment, or the throne on which he was seated when that event occurred. When the subject is the preaching of his first sermon he is often represented by an eight-spoked wheel that is identified with the wheel of *dbarma*. When the subject is his death, or *parinirvāna*, the preferred symbol is, of course, the stupa. [See also *Stupa Worship*.]

The motivation for this aniconic imagery is not clear, especially since the friezes abound with other human figures. However, it is probable that abstract art was more adaptable to contemplative uses that we have already seen emphasized in connection with the epithets of the Buddha and with the symbolic interpretation of the stupa. It may also be that these aniconic images imply a conception of the Buddha as a supramundane being similar to that of the docetic portrayals found in the autonomous biographies that appear somewhat later. This suggests that at this time Buddhism may have been richer in its concrete reality, in its practice, than in its doctrine, as it took centuries for a doctrinal understanding of the significance of these first representations to be formulated in the literature.

The stupa and other aniconic symbols emblematic of the Buddha have remained an integral component of Buddhist life in all Buddhist areas and eras. Toward the end of the first century BCE, however, another form of visual representation began

to appear, namely, the anthropomorphic image that subsequently assumed paramount importance in all Buddhist countries and sects. The first of these images are contemporary with the autonomous biographies of the Buddha, and like these texts, they appropriate previously non-Buddhist and non-Indian motifs to express Buddhist conceptions and experiences. At Mathurā, in North-Central India, where the first statues seem to have originated, sculptors employed a style and iconography associated with *yakṣas*, the popular life-cult deities of ancient India, to create bulky and powerful figures of the Buddha. At Gandhāra in northwestern India, another major center of early Buddhist image-making, the artists sculpted the Buddha images quite differently, appropriating Hellenistic conventions introduced into Asia by the Greeks, who ruled the area in the centuries following the invasions of Alexander the Great.

A great many styles have developed for the Buddha image; and just as at Mathurā and Gandhāra, local conventions have been fully exploited. There has been a continuity, however, to all these creations: the Buddha image has consistently served a dual function as both an object of worship and a support for contemplation. It seems clear that the basic form of the image was shaped by conceptions of the Buddha as *lokottara* (supramundane), *mahāpuruṣa*, *cakravartin*, omniscient, and so on, and standardized iconography was used to convey these various dimensions. The sculpted (and later painted) image was both an expression of, and an aid for, the visualization of the master and the realization of his presence.

If aniconic symbols lend themselves especially well to contemplative uses, anthropomorphic images seem more appropriate to emotion and prayer, as well as to worship as such. In fact, the patterns of veneration and worship that developed in connection with Buddha images show a strong continuity with the ancient devotional and petitionary practices associated with the *yakṣas* and other folk deities. Throughout Buddhist history the veneration and worship of Buddha images have involved sensuous offerings of flowers, incense, music, food, and drink, and have often been closely tied to very immediate worldly concerns.

Later Buddhist literature explains that the Buddha image is worthy of honor and worship because it is a likeness of the Buddha. Popular practice often ascribes a living presence to the statue, whether by placing a relic within it or by a ritual of consecration that infuses it with "life." Thus the image of the Buddha, like the stupa, is both a reminder that can inspire and guide and a locus of power. [See also Iconography, *article on* Buddhist Iconography.]

Other Buddhas

The representations of the Buddha in epithet, biography, and image have been shared in their main outlines by the great majority of Buddhist schools. However, the recognition of other Buddhas, the roles other Buddhas have played, and the evaluation of their significance (and hence the role and significance of Gautama himself) have varied greatly from one tradition to another.

BUDDHAS OF THE PAST AND FUTURE

Quite early, Gautama is perceived as one of several Buddhas in a series that began in the distant past. In the early canonical literature, the series of previous Buddhas sometimes appears as a practically anonymous group, deriving probably from the

recognition that Gautama could not have been alone in achieving enlightenment. It is thus not surprising that in texts such as the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* the interest in these previous Buddhas focuses on their thoughts at the time of enlightenment, thoughts that are identical with those attributed to Gautama when he achieved the same experience.

The most important early text on previous Buddhas is the *Mabāvadāna Sutta*, which refers to six Buddhas who had appeared prior to Gautama. This text implicitly contains the earliest coordinated biography of the Buddha, for it describes the pattern to which the lives of all Buddhas conform. Thus, describing the life of a Buddha named Vipāśyin, Gautama narrates that he was born into a royal family, that he was raised in luxury, that he was later confronted with the realities of sickness, aging, and death while visiting a park, and that he subsequently took up the life of a wandering mendicant. After Vipāśyin realized the truth for himself, he established a monastic order and taught what he had discovered to others. In the narratives of the other Buddhas, some details vary; but in every instance they are said to have discovered and taught the same eternal truth.

There is clear evidence that Buddhas who were thought to have lived prior to Gautama were worshiped in India at least from the time of Aśoka through the period of Buddhist decline. In the inscription, Aśoka states that he had doubled the size of the stupa associated with the Buddha Konākamana, who had lived earlier than Gautama and was his immediate predecessor. During the first millennium of the common era, successive Chinese pilgrims recorded visits to Indian monuments dedicated to former Buddhas, many of them attributed to the pious construction activities of Aśoka.

The *Buddhavamsa* (Lineage of the Buddhas), which is a late text within the Pali canon, narrates the lives of twenty-four previous Buddhas in almost identical terms. It may be that the number twenty-four was borrowed from Jainism, which has a lineage of twenty-four *tīrthamkaras* that culminates in the figure of the founder, Mahāvīra. The *Buddhavamsa* also embellished the idea of a connection between Gautama Buddha and the lineage of previous Buddhas. It contains the story that later came to provide the starting point for the classic Theravāda biography of Gautama—the story in which the future Gautama Buddha, in his earlier birth as Sumedha, meets the previous Buddha Dīpamkara and vows to undertake the great exertions necessary to attain Buddhahood for himself.

According to conceptions that are closely interwoven with notions concerning previous Buddhas, the appearance of a Buddha in this world is determined not only by his own spiritual efforts but also by other circumstances. There can only be one Buddha in a particular world at a given time, and no Buddha can arise until the teachings of the previous Buddha have completely disappeared. There are also cosmological considerations. A Buddha is not born in the beginning of a cosmic aeon (*kalpa*) when human beings are so well off and live so long that they do not fear sickness, aging, and death; such people, like the gods and other superhuman beings, would be incapable of insight into the pervasiveness of suffering and the impermanence of all things and therefore would not be prepared to receive a Buddha's message. Furthermore, Buddhas are born only in the continent of Jambudvīpa (roughly equivalent to India) and only to priestly (*brāhmaṇa*) or noble (*ksatriya*) families.

The idea of a chronological series of previous Buddhas, which was prominent primarily in the Hīnayāna traditions, accentuates the significance of Gautama by des-

ignating him as the teacher for our age and by providing him with a spiritual lineage that authenticates his message. This idea also provides a basis for hope because it suggests that even if the force of Gautama's person and message has begun to fade, there remains the possibility that other Buddhas are yet to come.

The belief in a future Buddha also originated in the Hīnayāna tradition and has played an important role in various Hīnayāna schools, including the Theravāda. The name of this next Buddha is Maitreya ("the friendly one"), and he seems to have come into prominence in the period after the reign of King Aśoka. (Technically, of course, Maitreya is a *bodhisattva*—one who is on the path to Buddhahood—rather than a Buddha in the full sense. However, the degree to which the attention of Buddhists has been focused on the role that he will play when he becomes a Buddha justifies consideration of him in the present context.) [See Maitreya and Kingship, *article on* Kingship in Southeast Asia.]

According to the Maitreyan mythology that has been diffused throughout the entire Buddhist world, the future Buddha, who was one of Gautama Buddha's disciples, now dwells in Tuṣita Heaven, awaiting the appropriate moment to be reborn on earth, where he will inaugurate an era of peace, prosperity, and salvation. As the Buddha of the future, Maitreya assumed many diverse roles. Among other things he became an object of worship, a focus of aspiration, and a center of religio-political interest both as a legitimator of royalty and as a rallying point for rebellion. [See especially Millenarianism, *article on* Chinese Millenarian Movements.]

The wish to be reborn in the presence of Maitreya, whether in Tuṣita Heaven or when he is reborn among humans, has been a sustaining hope of many Buddhists in the past, and it persists among Theravādins even today. The contemplation and recitation of the name of Maitreya inspired devotional cults in northwestern India, Central Asia, and China, especially between the fourth and seventh centuries CE. But in East Asia his devotional cult was superseded by that dedicated to Amitābha, a Buddha now existing in another cosmic world.

CELESTIAL AND COSMIC BUDDHAS

The recognition that there could be other Buddhas in other world systems described in Buddhist cosmology builds on implications already present in the idea of past and future Buddhas. Like the first Buddhas of the past, the first Buddhas associated with other worlds are largely anonymous, appearing in groups to celebrate the teaching of the Buddha Gautama. The many epithets of the Buddha were sometimes pressed into service as personal names for individual Buddhas who needed to be identified.

The idea of Buddhas existing in other worlds comes to the fore in the early Mahāyāna literature. It was first employed, as in the *Saddharmapūṇḍarīka Sūtra* (Lotus of the True Law), to authenticate new teachings, just as the tradition of former Buddhas had done for the teachings of the early community. In the course of time, some of these Buddhas came to be recognized individually as very powerful, their worlds as indescribably splendid and blissful. They were Buddhas in superhuman form, and their careers, which were dedicated to the saving of others, lasted for aeons. Their influence was effective beyond their own worlds, and they could provide assistance—through the infinite merit they had accumulated—to the inhabitants of other world systems, including our own. The traditions that have focused atten-

tion on these Buddhas have inevitably deemphasized the importance of Gautama Buddha by removing his singularity in human experience and by contrasting him with more powerful Buddhas who could make their assistance and influence immediately and directly available. [See also Pure and Impure Lands; Merit, *article on* Buddhist Concepts; and Cosmology, *article on* Buddhist Cosmology.]

While the number of such coexisting celestial Buddhas is, in principle, infinite, and a great number are named in Buddhist literature, distinct mythological, iconic, and devotional traditions have only developed in a few cases. Amitābha ("boundless light") is one of the most important of the Buddhas who did become the focus of a distinctive tradition. Originating in northwest India or Central Asia, his appeal subsequently spread to China, Tibet, and Japan. Amitābha rules over a paradise that contains all the excellences of other Buddha lands. He offers universal accessibility to this Pure Land (called Sukhāvātī), granting rebirth to those who practice the Buddha's determination to be reborn in it, and even to those who merely recite his name or think of him briefly but with faith. In the Amitābha/Pure Land traditions, which have had continuing success in China and Japan, we see a concentration on patterns of contemplation, visualization, and recitation first developed in connection with the epithets of the Buddha. [See Amitābha.]

Another celestial Buddha who came to hold a position of importance in the Buddhist tradition is Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Master of Medicine. Bhaiṣajyaguru rules over his own paradisiacal realm, which, in contrast to Amitābha's western paradise, is traditionally located in the east. Unlike Amitābha, he does not assist human beings in reaching final liberation, nor does he even offer rebirth in his land. Rather, the repetition or remembrance of his name relieves various kinds of suffering, such as sickness, hunger, and fear. The ritual worship of his statue brings all things that are desired. In the cult dedicated to Bhaiṣajyaguru—popular in China and Japan, where it was often influenced by Amitābha traditions—we see a magnification of the patterns of worship that had originally coalesced around the stupa and the Buddha image. [See Bhaiṣajyaguru.]

In other contexts, conceptions of integrated pantheons of Buddhas were developed and exerted widespread influence. For example, in the traditions of Esoteric Buddhism a strong emphasis was placed on a primordial, central Buddha. He was taken to be the essence or source of a set of Buddhas who were positioned in the form of a cosmic *mandala* ("circle") that was vividly depicted in iconography and ritual, for example, in the *tanka* paintings of Tibet. In certain Indo-Tibetan traditions the central Buddha was Vajradhara ("diamond holder") or sometimes, when the emphasis was more theistic, the Ādi ("primordial") Buddha. In other Indo-Tibetan traditions the central Buddha was Vairocana ("resplendent"), who also served as the preeminent Buddha in the Esoteric (Shingon) tradition of Japan, where he was identified with the all-important solar deity in the indigenous pantheon of *kami*. [See Mahāvairocana.] In both cases—the one associated with Vajradhara and the Ādi Buddha and the one associated with Vairocana—the pantheon encompassed other Buddhas (and sometimes their "families"), who were identified with subsidiary cosmic positions. These included the east, a position often occupied by Akṣobhya ("imperturbable"); the south, often occupied by Ratnasambhava ("jewel-born"); the west, often occupied by Amitābha; and the north, often occupied by Amoghasiddhi ("infallible success"). In both cases the pantheon had a macrocosmic reference to the universe as a whole and a microcosmic reference in which the Buddhas of the

pantheon were homologized with the mystic physiology of the human body. [See also Buddhism, Schools of, *article on* Esoteric Buddhism.]

LIVING BUDDHAS

In addition to the Buddha, *pratyekabuddhas*, previous Buddhas, the future Buddha, celestial Buddhas, and cosmic Buddhas, still another kind of Buddha was recognized by some Buddhists—what we shall call a “living Buddha.” Living Buddhas are persons in this world who have, in one way or another, achieved the status of a fully enlightened and compassionate being. In some cases these living Buddhas have attained Buddhahood through various, usually Esoteric, forms of practice; in others they are incarnations of a Buddha, ordinarily a celestial Buddha, already included in the established pantheon. The presence of living Buddhas tends, of course, to diminish to a new degree the significance of Gautama Buddha (except in rare cases where it is he who reappears). However, their presence also reiterates with new force two characteristic Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna emphases: that the message of the Buddhas continues to be efficaciously available in the world and that the community still has direct access to the kind of assistance that only a Buddha can provide.

Like the notions of previous Buddhas and the Buddhas of other worlds, the concept of living Buddhas began to be elaborated in a context in which a new kind of teaching and practice was being introduced. In this case the new teaching and practice was Esoteric in character and was focused on ritual activities that promised to provide a “fast path” to Buddhahood. Thus the new kind of Buddha—the living Buddha—was both a product of the new movement and a mode of authenticating it. The analogy between the earlier development of the notion of celestial Buddhas and the later development of the notion of living Buddhas can be carried further. Just as only a few celestial Buddhas received their own individual mythology, iconography, and devotional attention, so too a limited number of living Buddhas were similarly singled out. It is not surprising that many of these especially recognized and venerated living Buddhas were figures who initiated new strands of tradition by introducing practices, revealing hidden texts, converting new peoples, and the like. A classic example of a living Buddha in the Tibetan tradition is Padmasambhava, the famous missionary from India who is credited with subduing the demons in Tibet, converting the people to the Buddhist cause, and founding the Rñiñ-ma-pa order. [See *the biography of Padmasambhava*.] An example of the same type of figure in Japan is Kūkai, the founder of the Esoteric Shingon tradition, who has traditionally been venerated both as master and as savior. [See *the biography of Kūkai*.]

The notion of living Buddhas as incarnations of celestial Buddhas also came to the fore with the rise of Esoteric Buddhism. In this case there seems to have been an especially close connection with Buddhist conceptions of kingship and rule. In both the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna contexts, the notion of the king as a *bodhisattva*, or future Buddha, was ancient; in the case of the rather common royal identifications with Maitreya, the distinction between the king as an incarnation of the celestial *bodhisattva* and the king as a living Buddha had been very fluid. With the rise of the Esoteric Buddhist traditions a further step was taken. Thus, after the Esoteric tradition had been firmly established in the Khmer (Cambodian) capital of Angkor, the king came to be explicitly recognized and venerated as Bhaiṣajyaguru, Master of

Medicine. Somewhat later in Tibet, the Panchen Lamas, who have traditionally had both royal and monastic functions, were identified as successive incarnations of the Buddha Amitābha.

Buddhahood

The epithets, biographies, and images of Śākyamuni and other Buddhas weigh the distinctiveness of each Buddha against his inclusion within a series or assembly of similar beings. However, as the appellative character of the term *buddha* suggests, at the level of Buddhahood each tradition has affirmed the ultimate identity of all those they have recognized as Buddhas. Even the Theravādins, who have consistently given pride of place to Gautama, have acknowledged this final level at which differentiations are not relevant. The same is true for those movements that focus primary attention on Amitābha or Mahāvairocana. The consensus of Buddhists in this respect is voiced by the *Milindapañha* (The Questions of King Milinda), a Hīnayāna text dating from the beginning of the common era: “There is no distinction in form, morality, concentration, wisdom, freedom...among all the Buddhas because all Buddhas are the same in respect to their nature” (London, 1880, p. 285).

This initial consensus concerning the ultimate identity of all Buddhas notwithstanding, the actual delineation of Buddhahood has varied significantly from one Buddhist tradition to another. This third level of meaning of the term *buddha* has always been discussed in connection with questions concerning the nature and analysis of reality. Early Buddhists believed that a Buddha awoke to and displayed the causal process (*pratītya-samutpāda*, co-dependent origination) that perpetuates this world, allowing himself and others to use those processes to end further rebirth. [See *Pratītya-samutpāda*.] The early Mahāyāna, especially in the Prajñāpāramitā literature, saw Buddhahood as awakening to the absence of self-nature in all things (*śūnyatā*) and proclaimed this absence as the ultimate reality (*tathatā*). [See *Śūnyam and Śūnyatā and Tathatā*.] Later Mahāyāna schools, such as the Yogācārins, held a more idealistic worldview; for them Buddhahood was the recovery of an originally pure and undefiled mind. The Hua-yen (Jpn., Kegon) school, an East Asian tradition based on the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, posited the infinite mutual interaction of all things and developed a striking conception of a universal, cosmic Buddha who is allpervasive. In such contexts Buddhahood itself became an alternative way of describing reality. [See *Yogācāra and Hua-yen*.]

Between the consensus about the identity of all Buddhas and the diversity of interpretations, there are at least two different languages in which Buddhahood has traditionally been conceived and described. The first is the identification of Buddhahood in terms of the special characteristics associated with a Buddha. The second is the discussion of the Buddha bodies that make up Buddhahood. These two clusters of concepts allow us to see patterns of continuity in the midst of the very different ways in which Buddhahood has been understood.

Buddhist scholasticism developed subtle catalogs of the unique powers and qualities of a Buddha, culminating in lists of *āveṇika dharmas* (special characteristics). These special characteristics vary in number from 6 to 140, depending on the text and context. What interests us here is not the multitude of qualities and powers that

are mentioned but, rather, the fact that these qualities and powers are often grouped under four major headings. These four headings are conduct and realization, which apply to the attainment of Buddhahood, and wisdom and activity, which apply to the expression of Buddhahood.

Throughout Buddhist history these four dimensions of Buddhahood have been interpreted in different ways. For example, Hīnayānists have tended to emphasize motivated conduct as a means to the realization of Buddhahood, whereas Mahāyānists and Vajrayānists have tended to stress that Buddhahood (often in the form of Buddha nature) is in important respects a necessary prerequisite for such conduct. [See Buddhist Ethics.] Similarly, Hīnayānists have often recognized a certain distance between the attainment of wisdom and a commitment to compassionate activity, whereas in the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions the stress has been placed on the inseparable fusion of wisdom on the one hand and the expression of compassion on the other. [See Prajñā, Karuṇā, and Upāya.] These differences notwithstanding, the four basic dimensions are present in virtually all Buddhist conceptions of Buddhahood.

When we turn to the way Buddhahood has been expressed through the language of Buddha bodies, we discern the same sort of continuity in the midst of difference. In the early Buddhist literature (e.g., *Dīgha Nikāya*, vol. 3, p. 84) the Buddha is described as having a body "born of *dharmā*," that is, a *dharmakāya*. In this early period, and in the subsequent Theravāda development, the notion that Gautama possessed a *dharmakāya* seems to have served primarily as a metaphor that affirmed a continuity between the personal realizations that he had achieved and truth or reality itself. In some later Hīnayāna traditions such as the Sarvāstivāda, and in the Mahāyāna, the notion of *dharmakāya* took on a stronger meaning. It served as a primary means through which an increasingly transcendent vision of Buddhahood could subsume the inescapable fact of Gautama's death. According to such texts as the *Saddharmapundarīka*, the *dharmakāya* is the true meaning of Buddhahood; Buddhas such as Gautama who appear, teach, and die among human beings are mere manifestations. In this early Mahāyāna context, however, the correlated notions of Buddhahood and *dharmakāya* are still conditioned by their close association with philosophical conceptions such as *śūnyatā* ("emptiness") and *tathatā* ("suchness").

The *dharmakāya* is given a more ontological cast in other Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions. In these cases, *dharmakāya* denotes a "ground" or "source" that is the reality that gives rise to all other realities; this provides the basis for a new understanding of the whole range of Buddha bodies. Buddhahood comes to be explicated in terms of a theory of three bodies. The *trikāya* ("three bodies") are the *dharmakāya*, the primal body that is the source of the other two; the emanated *sambhogakāya* ("enjoyment body"), a glorious body seen in visions in which Buddhas of other worlds become manifest to devotees in this world; and the "magical" and ephemeral *nirmāṇakāya*, the physical body in which Gautama, for example, appeared among his disciples.

In some Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna contexts, this more ontological conception of the Buddhahood and *dharmakāya* was also connected with the important soteriological notion of a Buddha nature, or *tathāgata-garbha* (*tathāgata* is an epithet for a Buddha, *garbha* means "womb"), which is the source and cause of enlightenment as well as its fruit. In these traditions, Buddha nature, or *tathāgata-garbha*, is taken to be the *dharmakāya* covered with defilements. Enlightenment, and therefore Bud-

dhahood, is the recovery of this pure, original state of being that is identical with ultimate reality itself. In other Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna contexts, even the dichotomy between purity and defilement is transcended at the level of Buddhahood. [See *Tathāgata-garbha*.]

Conclusion

In the course of our discussion of *buddha* as an appellative term we have distinguished three basic levels of meaning—those associated with Gautama Buddha, with other Buddhas, and with Buddhahood as such. However, it is important to note that Buddhist usage has always held the three levels of meaning closely together, with the result that each level has had a continuing influence on the others. Thus, even though a distinction between the different denotations of *buddha* is helpful for purposes of interpretation and understanding, it cannot be drawn too sharply.

In fact, these three meanings represent three different modes of reference that, according to some Indian theories of denotation, are common to all names. The word *cow*, for example, refers to individual cows ("a cow"), the aggregation of cows, and the quality of "cowness" common to all cows. There are obvious parallels to the uses of *buddha*. It might be helpful for those unfamiliar with such theories to think of *buddha* in terms of set theory: individual Buddhas are members of subsets of the set of Buddhahood. Just as mathematical sets exist without members, so Buddhahood exists, according to the affirmation of Buddhists, even when it is not embodied by individual Buddhas.

[For further discussion of the nature of Buddhas and Buddhahood see Celestial Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Tathāgata. The religious career culminating in Buddhahood is treated in Bodhisattva Path. "Enlightenment" is discussed in Buddhist Philosophy and Nirvāṇa.]

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The most important recent research on the biographies of the Buddha is written in French. An argument for successive stages in the development of the Buddha biography is found in Étienne Lamotte's *Histoire du bouddhisme indien* (Louvain, 1958), pp. 707–759, in which Lamotte responds to Erich Frauwallner's thesis that there was a very early, complete biography. Frauwallner presented this thesis in *The Earliest Vinaya and the Beginnings of Buddhist Literature* (Rome, 1956). An indispensable aid to serious work on the Buddha biography is André Bareau's *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtrapitaka et les Vinayapitaka anciens*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1963–1971). In these volumes Bareau documents and improves upon Lamotte's arguments in favor of a gradual development of the biographical cycles.

Alfred Foucher presents a composite biography of the Buddha from the beginning of the common era in *The Life of the Buddha according to the Ancient Texts and Monuments of India*, abridged translation by Simone B. Boas (Middletown, Conn., 1963). Foucher also includes an introduction that is of particular importance because it highlights the significance of early Buddhist pilgrimages in the development of the biographical tradition.

Several of the autonomous biographies, as well as some later biographies from Tibet, China, and Southeast Asia, have been translated into European languages. The most readable is Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita, or, Acts of the Buddha*, 2 vols. in 1, edited and translated by Edward H. Johnston (Calcutta, 1935–1936; 2d ed., New Delhi, 1972). This translation should be supplemented by Samuel Beal's translation of the Chinese version of the same text, *The Fo-Sho-hing-tsan-king: A Life of Buddha by Asvaghosha Bodhisattva* (Oxford, 1883; reprint, Delhi, 1966).

The role of the stupa as a preeminent Buddha symbol in Buddhist thought and practice is introduced in the collection *The Stūpa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance*, edited by Anna Libera Dallapiccola in collaboration with Stephanie Zingel-Ave Lallemand (Wiesbaden, 1980). Gustav Roth's article in this collection, "Symbolism of the Buddhist Stupa," is especially significant for its investigation of the symbolic interpretation of the stupa in Buddhist literature. A convenient and beautiful survey and appraisal of the visual representations of the Buddha throughout the Buddhist world is *The Image of the Buddha*, edited by David L. Snellgrove (London, 1978).

Modern research on "other Buddhas" is much less extensive than the research focused on the biographies and symbols associated with Gautama. Those interested in short, well-done introductions to Aksobhya, Amitābha (Amita), and Bhaiṣajyaguru should consult the *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, edited by G. P. Malalasekera (Colombo, 1968). Vairocana is discussed by Ryūjun Tajima in his *Étude sur le Mabāvairocana sūtra (Dainichikyō)*, (Paris, 1936). Material on "living Buddhas" can be gleaned from various sections of Giuseppe Tucci's *The Religions of Tibet*, translated from the Italian and German by Geoffrey Samuel (Berkeley, 1980).

A work of monumental importance for the study of the concept of the Buddha and of Buddhism in general, is Paul Mus's *Barabādūr*, 2 vols. (1935; reprint, New York, 1978). It is perhaps the only academic work that exploits the full potential of the appellative character of the term *buddha*. It contains seminal discussions of Buddhology in early, Hīnayāna, and Mahāyāna traditions; of the symbolism of the stupa and the relics; of celestial and cosmic Buddhas; and of the origin of Pure Land symbolism and thought. Unfortunately, this ponderously long work has not been translated, and the French is extremely difficult.

Readers seeking more specialized references (e.g., available translations of biographical texts or studies of particular developments) should consult the annotated entries in Frank E. Reynolds's *Guide to Buddhist Religion* (Boston, 1981), especially section 8, "Ideal Beings, Hagiography and Biography," and section 9, "Mythology (including Sacred History), Cosmology and Basic Symbols."