

The Pregnancy of Māyā: II. Māyā as Healer

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INTRODUCTION

This article continues my discussion of the two main traditions concerning the gestation of the future Buddha Śākyamuni. My previous article centered on Māyā's *dohada*, that is, her cravings while pregnant.¹ These desires were caused by the miraculous embryo in her womb. This tradition was represented by the *Mūlasarvātivāda Vinaya*.

Here I will focus on the supernatural healing powers that this embryo imparted to his mother. This tradition is represented by the *Lalita-vistara*² and related texts. It is exemplified in this *gāthā* from the *Lalita-vistara*: "Being the king of physicians, he [the Buddha] became the remedy itself when he settled in a womb" (*Bhaiṣajya-bhūti*

¹ Durt, "The Pregnancy of Māyā: I. The five uncontrollable longings (*dohada*)," *Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies* [JICABS], V (2002), pp. 43-66.

² For the *Lalita-vistara*, I have used the critical edition by Hokazono Kōichi 外蘭幸一 *Lalitavistara* の研究, 上巻, Daitō shuppansha, 1994. The first installment of this edition covers Chapters 1-14 and thus includes Chapter 6, "The descent of the embryo" (*Garbhāvākṛānti*). The first and main volume of the French translation of the Sanskrit text of the *Lalita-vistara*, by Philippe Edouard Foucaux, originally issued in the *Annales du Musée Guimet* VI, XIX, Paris, Leroux, 1884, 1892, has been reprinted by Les deux océans (Paris, 1988).

vaidya-rāji kuṣṣi-sampratiṣṭhite).³ This verse highlights the fact that it is the embryo who, according to different possible interpretations of *bhaiṣajya-bhūti*, is both a living medicine and the supreme medicine, and that Māyās as a healer, a *curatrix*, is only a temporary intermediary for her son, a *mediatrix*.

The *Lalita-vistara* is not concerned with *dohada*. Rather, Māyā appears as a living tabernacle sheltering her son. His presence in her womb grants Māyā miraculous healing powers. We need to remember that the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* and the *Lalita-vistara* both show a process of purification of the Buddha's birth, in a larger programme of quasi-deification of the Buddha. Both texts—along with the entire Buddhist tradition—are eager to make the conception of the Buddha as “immaculate” as possible. This explains St. Jerome's misapprehension, mentioned in my earlier article, that the mother of the Buddha was a *virgo*.⁴

The two themes of *dohada* and healing seem to have been fused together in the general tradition which stresses the generosity of Māyā during her pregnancy. As mentioned in my previous article,⁵ there are beautiful verses extolling the care that Māyā took of the sick, the poor, the old and the captive. When Māyā was pregnant with the “great being,” her husband, the king, became like a father or a brother to her, while the people of the kingdom became like her own children.

Before embarking on this modest discussion of a very particular aspect of the life and deification of the Buddha, I wish to pay homage to two eminent scholars who passed away in the first weeks of the year

³ *Lalita-vistara*, VI, v. 31, Hokazono, p. 424.8.

⁴ Durt, “The Pregnancy of Māyā,” p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

2000: Jan Willem de Jong in Canberra and Maurizio Taddei in Rome. The memory of both of them has inspired my approach here, for which the *Lalita-vistara* and its illustration at Borobudur have been an important source. One of the first publications of Prof. de Jong, in the famous festschrift *Asiatica* published in 1954 in honour of Friedrich Weller, was a study of the Asita episode after the birth of the Buddha in the *Lalita-vistara*.⁶ During his last stay in Japan, in 1996, it was again on the *Lalita-vistara*, and on the new critical edition by Prof. Hokazono, that Prof. de Jong delivered a few lectures at the ICABS, which were later published in the first issue of our *Journal*.⁷

Prof. Maurizio Taddei was a leading force in the study of the archaeology of what is broadly called Gandhāra.⁸ His dynamism, generosity and acuteness made him a towering figure in the scholarly environs of Naples and Rome, and he was as much appreciated in Asia as in the West. He made personal contributions to the explanation of the Indo-Greek Buddhist reliefs found in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This iconography is another of our best sources of information on the "Life of the Buddha."

The Garbhāvākṛānti Chapter of the Lalita-vistara

In the sixth chapter of the *Lalita-vistara*, "The descent of the embryo into the womb" (*Garbhāvākṛānti-parivarta*), the Buddha (Baghavat) tells the *bhikṣus* about the gestation period, between his

⁶ Leipzig, 1954, pp. 312-325.

⁷ *JICABS* I (1998), pp. 39-56.

⁸ See "Maurizio Taddei, *Commemorazione tenuta da Gherardo Gnoli a Palazzo Brancaccio il giorno 6 marzo 2000*," Roma: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2000 [19 p.]; Giovanni Verardi, "Maurizio Taddei (1936-2000)," *Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale*, 60 (2000) [11 p.].

conception and his birth. The narration, in prose intermingled with verses (*gāthā*), is interrupted by a question from Ānanda, who is shocked to think of the Bodhisattva coming from the Tuṣita heavens into a stinking human body. The Buddha explains that, up until the moment of his birth, a miraculous palace, the Ratnavyūha, acted as a cushion between the embryo and the womb. The Buddha then commands Brahmā Sāhaṃpati to bring the Ratnavyūha back from his heaven and to make it visible. Thereafter, the narration proceeds again, dealing with several miraculous topics including the healing power of Māyā. Before the concluding *gāthās*, the Buddha speaks again to Ānanda and has the Ratnavyūha palace removed by Sāhaṃpati, who, in his heaven, had converted it into a place of worship (*caitya*).

As it is well known, the *Lalita-vistara*, or an Indian text very similar to the Sanskrit version now known under this title, was translated twice into Chinese. The earlier translation, *Puyao jing* 普曜經 (T. 186), is archaic and was the work, in the late third century, of Dharmarakṣa (active 265-313). The second translation, *Fanguang dazhuangyan jing* 方廣大莊嚴經 (T. 187), closer to the extant Sanskrit text, was made by Divākara (613-648) in the Tang period. Here I will follow the Sanskrit text, referring to the Chinese versions only for the passages related to Māyā as healer, also found in the Chinese version of a developed *Abhiṅkramaṇa-sūtra*, the *Fo benxingji jing* 佛本行集經 (T. 190), translated by the Gandhāran Jñānagupta or Jīnagupta (523-600).

Let us first consider the part played by Māyā in the narration. After the conception, when the elephant entered her body,⁹ as when she

⁹ *Lalita-vistara*, VI, v. 1 and 6, Hokazono, p. 386, pp. 388-390.

later served as a tabernacle for her unborn child,¹⁰ Māyā's physical and mental conditions are always perfect. On the contrary, at the beginning, it is her husband, King Śuddhodana, who suffers trouble after having been summoned by Māyā to the forest of the Aśoka trees.¹¹ First deities of pure abode (*śuddhāvāsa-kāyikā devatā*) inform him of the queen's pregnancy.¹² Then Māyā herself tells him the standard story of the elephant entering her womb (a leitmotif of Chapter VI)¹³ and asks him to consult brahmin soothsayers.¹⁴ Śuddhodana recovers later and stays in a penance-forest (*tapo-vana*) during the ten months of Māyā's pregnancy.¹⁵

In the detailed description of the physical and mental state of Māyādevī,¹⁶ which precedes the account of her miracles, there is no mention of the cravings of a pregnant woman (*dohada*). As I mentioned before, although the *dohada* have a positive meaning in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, a *dohada* was still generally considered to be symptomatic of female weakness. Nevertheless the most striking *dohada*, Māyā's desire to drink the waters of the four oceans, is completely absent from the *Lalita-vistara* narrative, but in an earlier chapter, a passage on the marriage of Māyā to Śuddhodana contains what may be a trace of a common substrate with the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. In stanzas addressed to her husband, Māyā asks him to free

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Hokazono, p. 416.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, VI, v. 3, Hokazono, p. 388.

¹² *Ibid.*, VI, v. 4, Hokazono, p. 388.

¹³ *Supra* note 9 and *Ibid.*, VI, v. 10, Hokazono, p. 390.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, v. 8, Hokazono, p. 390.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Hokazono, p. 420.3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Hokazono, p. 416.17 - 419.1, Foucaux (1988), pp. 68-69; T. 187, j. 2, p. 550c13-20.

the prisoners and to present gifts to the needy.¹⁷ On the other hand, when we see how much the *Lalita-vistara* emphasizes that the miraculous pregnancy of Māyā is devoid of any painful aspect, even those related to the female condition, such as female falsity (*strī-māyā*) and female passion (*strī-kleṣa*), we are reminded that the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, although describing her *dohada*, insists on the purity of Māyā.

In addition to the healing effect of Māyā's condition (discussed below), there is another happy result of the coming of a Buddha into the world: a kind of mass euphoria enjoyed by the inhabitants of Kapilavastu. Some authors state that this general joy extended to the population for the entire period of Māyā's pregnancy. In the *Lalita-vistara*¹⁸ the joy starts with Śuddhodana when he receives the auspicious prophecy of the Brahmins. The king then shares his joy through making offerings to the people of Kapilavastu. However, it is the following chapter, on the birth (*janma-parivarta*), that is especially devoted this theme.¹⁹ One of the manifestations of the general euphoria are births matching the birth of the future Buddha. These births occur both in the families of kings of other countries and among the ordinary people of Kapilavastu; horses, elephants and lions also have auspicious births. In its systematic way, the *Lalita-vistara* enumerates thirty-two auspicious phenomena connected to the moment of the birth of the future Buddha. Among them are the coming of 500 Himālayan lions and 500 white elephants.²⁰ This list, taken from the archaic

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, v. 10-12, Hokazono, pp. 352-354.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, Hokazono, p. 392.8-16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, VII, Hokazono, pp. 428-430.

²⁰ T. 53, no 2121, j. 3, p. 15b16-17.

Chinese version of the *Lalita-vistara*, is included in a famous sixth-century anthology, *Jinglu yixiang* 經律異相 (T. 2121).

In the *Sūtra of the Causes and Effects from the Past in the Present*, 過去現在因果經 (T. 189),²¹ generally called *Yinguo jing* 因果經, the time of bliss during Māyā's pregnancy, an untroubled period of abundance, is extended to the entire Trichiliomegachiliocosm. This "Life of the Buddha," translated by Guṇabhadra (394-468), is as popular in East Asia as the *Lalita-vistara* is in the Indian world. In China, in the early sixth century, the popular account of the life of the Buddha found in the *Yinguo jing* is incorporated almost in its entirety in the *Shijia pu* 釈迦譜 (T. 2040), one of the extant anthologies of Seng Yu 僧祐 (445-518). In Japan, illustrated versions of this *sūtra* (jpn. *Ingakyō*) have been produced since the Nara period.

Given the widespread popularity of the illustrated "Lives of the Buddha," it is no wonder that the blessed times before and at the moment of the birth of the Buddha are featured at Borobudur, inspired by the *Lalita-vistara* and magistrally explained by N. J. Krom.²² He alludes to other representations of events taking place between the conception and the birth of the Buddha existing in Amarāvātī, in Gan-

²¹ *Yinguo jing*, T. 3, no 189, j. 1, p. 624c1-3, reproduced in *Shijia pu*, T.50, no 2040, j. 1, p. 15b8-10 and in 釈迦如来応化録 by Baozheng 寶成 (Ming Dynasty), translated by Léon Wieger, *Les vies chinoises du Buddha* (Hokienfou, 1913), chapter 7, p. 15. The text of Wieger includes a final sentence about "great peace reigning in the country" (国大安樂) that does not appear in the Taishō edition of the *Yinguo jing*, nor in the *Shijia pu*.

²² *The Life of Buddha on the Stūpa of Barabudūr according to the Lalita-vistara Text*, Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1926; Indian reprint: Varansi: Bhartiya Publishing House, 1974, pp. 14-30. Same content in Krom, *Barabudūr: Archaeological Description in two volumes*, Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1927, I, p. 112-126.

dhāran art and in Ajaṅṭā They will be the object of further researches. I will only point out a remarkable painting of the Kamakura period, kept in the Entsūji 円通寺 (Wakayama Prefecture). This Japanese "birth of the Buddha with the miracle of the multiplication of births of divine children, lions and elephants" is probably associated with the *Lalita-vistara* tradition and with the revival of the interest for Śākyamuni inspired by Myōe Shōnin (1173-1232).²³

Phantasmagoria and the womb of Māyā

Returning to the *Lalita-vistara* version of the events following Māyā's dream of the elephant, the main topics are a residence (*gr̥ha*) worthy of the pregnant Māyā²⁴ and the subsequent tale of the mythical palace called Ratnavyūha²⁵ built for the enjoyment and the protection of the embryo during the ten months he spends in the womb. Representatives of each of the six classes of the gods of the desire realm and King Śuddhodana himself propose in succession to build a palace to shelter her and the embryo. But it is Brahmā Sāhaṃpati who creates the final palace, surpassing all the previous offerings. Although this palace later becomes a *caitya* in the heavens, it can be sent back to Jambudvīpa and exhibited to Ānanda and the gods of the desire realm.

The gift of this palace to the future Buddha is accompanied by two other gifts: a miraculous nutrient (a lotus distilling a powerful drop of

²³ Cf. Notice by Kobayashi Tatsurō 小林達朗 in the Catalogue of the exhibition *Bijutsu no naka no kodomotachi* 美術の中のこどもたち [Wonder and Joy: Children in Japanese Art], Tokyo National Museum, October 2001, #171, p. 168.

²⁴ *Lalita-vistara*, Hokazono, pp. 392.17 - 396.12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 396.25 - 404.11.

honey [*madhu-bindu*]²⁶ and miraculous clothing called the "treasure of the hundreds and thousands" (*śatasahasra-vyūha*).²⁷ The *madhu-bindu* is also a powerful medicine. These gifts are actually an effect of the nature of the things (*dharmatā*) and the results of ancient resolutions (*pūrvaka praṇidhāna*) made by the Bodhisattva.²⁸

We have to understand that the unborn Bodhisattva resides simultaneously in this macrocosmic palace and in the microcosmic womb of his mother. Although staying in this palace in her womb, the embryonic Bodhisattva is visible to his mother.²⁹ The unborn Bodhisattva preaches at every division of the day to multitudes of listeners who are strictly classified. The subject of his sermons is first presented as Mahāyāna,³⁰ although its benefits are extended to the listeners of the Three Vehicles.³¹

The theme of an almost infinite space inside the Buddha's mother's womb appears in several texts.³² In the *Lalita-vistara*, the Ratnavyūha

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 404.12 - 406.4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 406.8-12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 406.16.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 408.16-17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 416.13.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 420.16.

³² For example, the *Pusa-chutai jing* 菩薩處胎經 (T. 12, no 384), which E. Legittimo is studying, popularized the teaching by the Bodhisattva still in the womb. This *Mahāyāna-sūtra* was translated by Zhu Fo-nian 竺佛念 at the end of the fourth century. The phantasmagoria of this *sūtra* bears no similarity to the phantasmagoria of the *Lalita-vistara*. We are reminded in several of the 38 chapters of the *Pusa-chutai jing* that the embryonic Bodhisattva is like a Buddha under the Bodhi-tree preaching to an assembly of bodhisattvas. The accent is put on the extra-temporality of a Buddha: he is still unborn and yet has already achieved *nirvāṇa*, thereby transcending past-present-future distinctions. Significantly, the *Pusa-chutai jing* has been classified among the *Nirvāṇa-sūtras* (涅槃部).

palace is at first beyond the capacity of vision of the inferior gods but gradually becomes visible to everybody. There are slightly different traditions concerning the tight teaching schedule of the embryonic Bodhisattva. In the *Lalita-vistara*,³³ morning was for the four king-gods and their escort of *yakṣas*, noon for Śakra and his *Trāyastrimśa-devas*, evening for the *Brahmā-devas* and night for the Bodhisattvas. In the *Yinguo jing*, morning is reserved for the gods of the *Rūpadhātu*, noon for the gods of the *Kāmadhātu*, evening for the divinities (鬼神) of our world, and the three times of the night for the masses of living beings.³⁴ The popular sūtra adds a detail that is omitted in Seng Yu's anthology: the Bodhisattva was not only speaking but also listening to the talk of the people who came to worship him. He was unsatisfied when a lady vowed to become a *rāja cakravartin*, but he was overjoyed when on another occasion she vowed to achieve omniscience.³⁵

The transcending of the categories of time is especially evident in the 27th chapter of the *Pusa-chutai jing*. In this chapter, "The Metamorphosis of Mañjuśrī" 文殊身變化品, the Buddha preaches to Mañjuśrī, described as a "bodhisattva-disciple" (菩薩弟子) <p.1049c25-26, 1050b17-18>, but also as a Buddha of the past, even as a relic of the integral body [of a Buddha] preaching the Law in [his mother's] womb (在胎說法全身舍利) <1049c2-3>. This Buddha integrates his own Buddha-land, called "Flowery Light" (華光) into the assembly of bodhisattvas listening to Śākyamuni's sermon inside the body of his mother. "The integration of the two universes, Flowery Light of Mañjuśrī and Sahā-loka of Śākyamuni, was made without obstacle" (接華 [光] 世界內娑訶世界毗迦牟尼母胎會中：二佛世界相障礙) <1049c21-22>. The insertion of the mythology of the relics of the integral body (a theme of the 9th chapter of the *Pusa-chutai jing*) shows how different phantasmagorias can be combined.

³³ *Lalita-vistara*, Hokazono, pp. 410.3 - 416.16.

³⁴ T. 189, j.1, p. 624c17-23, reproduced in T. 2040, j. 1, p. 15b26-29.

³⁵ T. 189, j.1, p. 624c23-27.

The healing powers of Māyā

In the middle of the phantasmagoria of the *Lalita-vistara*, the focus is suddenly shifted to the mother of the Bodhisattva. She has already been described as virtuous and entirely free of any corruption. Moreover, she enjoys her pregnancy, having no pain (*paridāha*), no delirium (*vitarka*), and "she has no desire for any man nor does she attract them" (*Na ca bodhisattva-mātuḥ kvacit puruṣe (417) rāga-cittam utpadyate sma. Na api kasyacit puruṣasya bodhisattva-mātur anti-ke*).³⁶

We are now told³⁷ about three of the superpowers that Māyā acquired during the time that she carried in her womb the future saviour of all living beings:

1. Through the virtue of looking at her (*bodhisattva-mātuḥ sahadarśanād svasthāḥ*), people of any kind from anywhere, especially those possessed (*viṣṭa*) by malevolent spirits, enumerated as *devanāga-yakṣa-gandharva-asura-garuḍa-bhūtā* would recover their memory (*smṛti-pratilabdā bhavanti*) and non-humans would turn into humans (*te ca amanuṣyāḥ kṣipram eva prakrāmanti sma*).³⁸

2. People afflicted by sicknesses (*roga*), listed at length,³⁹ will be

³⁶ *Lalita-vistara*, Hokazono, pp. 416.17 - 418.1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 418.2-14.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 418.2-4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 418.5-9: Sicknesses 1) due to an (imbalanced) combination of wind, gall and phlegm (*vāta-pitta-śleṣma-samniṣṭajā rogā*); 2) troubles of the eyes (*caḥsur-rogā*), of the ears (*śrotra-rogā*), of the nose (*ghrāṇa-rogā*), of the tongue (*jihvā-rogā*), of the lips (*oṣṭha-rogā*), of the teeth (*danta-rogā*), of the throat (*kaṇṭha-rogā*), swollen neck (*galagaṇḍa-rogā*); 3) particular sicknesses whose names are: *uragaṇḍa* = swollen chest; *kuṣṭha*, *kilāsa* = two varieties of leprosy, *śoṣa* = tuberculosis, *unmada* = madness, *aṣasmāra* = epilepsy, *jvara* = fever, *gala* = oozing, *gaṇḍa* = goitre, *piṭaka* = blister, *visarṣa* = cellulitis, a skin infection, and *vicarcika* = scabs.

cured if she places her right hand on their head (*teṣām bodhisattva-mātā dakṣiṇa(m) pāṇim mūrdhni pratiṣṭhāpayati sma*) and, recovered from their sickness, go back home (*te saha-pratiṣṭhāpīte pānau vigatavyādhayo bhūtvā svakasvakāni gṛhāṇi gacchanti sma*).

3. Māyā can pick up (*abhyutkṣīpya*) even a handful (*api dharaṇī-talād*) of grass from the ground (*trṇa-gulmaka*) and offer it (*anuprayacchati*) to sick living beings (*glānebhyaḥ sattvebhyas*). Those who touch [this grass] become free from sickness without any trace of it (*te saha-pratīlambhād arogā nirvikārā bhavanti sma*).⁴⁰

Every Indian reader would have readily understood that it was because Māyā was pregnant with the future Buddha that she acquired these healing powers. The prose section of the *Lalita-vistara* presents these miracles as a narrative, but the verses provide an explicit explanation, quoted above:⁴¹ "being the king of physicians (*vaidya-rāji*), [the Buddha] became the remedy itself (*bhaiṣajya-bhūti*) when he settled in a womb" (*kukṣi-sampratiṣṭhite*). The vision of the Bodhisattva still in the womb ends as a conclusion the narrative on the healing power of Māyā. He is described as a source of joy: "As soon as Māyādevī inspects her right side, she sees the Bodhisattva who came into her womb. It is like the sight of the round shape of the face in the circle of a pure and auspicious mirror" (*Yadā ca Māyādevī svaṃ dakṣiṇaṃ pārśvam pratyavekṣate sma, tadā paśyati sma bodhisattvaṃ kukṣigataṃ. Tad yathāpi nāma su-pari-śuddha ādarśa-maṇḍale mukha-maṇḍalaṃ dr̥ṣyate*).⁴²

The archaic Chinese version of the *Lalita-vistara* already empha-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 418.12-14.

⁴¹ *Supra*, note 3.

⁴² *Ibid.* .p. 418.14-16.

sized the triple merits of Māyā the Queen (王后 or 后): *darśana*; healing by the placing of her hand on the sick person's head; the gift of a piece of grass.

"Men and women come from the four directions,
 perturbed by demons with deranged spirits.
 Looking (見) at the Queen, their mind is delivered.
 With their mind at peace, they return home.
 Suffering troubles from wind, cold, heat,
 Sicknesses of the eyes, ears, nose, mouth
 And any sort of torment,
 The Queen caresses their head (摩頭) and they get peace.
 If she takes a piece of grass (籌滯)
 And gives it to them, sickness disappears.
 Without pain and in peace, they return home,
 The embryo acting as the medicine King (醫王)."
 (T. 3, no 186, j. 2, p. 492c7-12)

In the Tang version of the *Lalita-vistara*, the style is more elaborate, but the content is similar:

"Men and women from the four directions,
 Bound by demons,
 Their heads without hats, their bodies naked, their spirits demented,
 If they look at (見) the Mother of the Buddha, she cures them.
 Whether it is jaundice accompanied by madness and convulsions,
 Blindness, deafness, muteness, idiocy or any other kind of trouble,
 The Mother of the Buddha extends her hand (舒手) and caresses the top
 of the head (摩頂).
 All the sickness at the right time is stopped and eliminated.
 If there is fear for someone staying far away,
 She cuts grass (折草), makes a stick (籌) and gives it.
 The stick reaches the sick person and works to restore him.

In the world, there are no more people not enlightened and all are saved.

Because the Medicine King of the Dharma inhabits her womb,
The suffering of living people is extinguished and there is peace and happiness." (T. 3, no 187, j. 3, p. 551b4-10).

The above-mentioned *Abhiniṣkramaṇa-sūtra* (T. 190), translated in the sixth century, presents some interesting variants in the depiction of Māyā as *curatrix*. In this work, Māyā's healing powers come first in a list of eleven miracles resulting from the presence of the Bodhisattva in the womb of his mother (pp. 684-685). Three types of patients are described. First are men and women suffering from evil spirits (鬼) who recover their mind (本心) through beholding Māyā (685b8-10). The second category is people is cured from several specific illnesses, similar to those listed in the Chinese versions of the *Lalita-vistara*, who pay homage to Māyā, reach her side and receive a caress on the top of their heads from her (685b10-16). Third, a new category, are very ill people who are not able to see Māyā in person, for whom she gathers herbs (草葉), leaves (樹葉) or stalks (草莖), rubs them with her right hand and sends them to the sick people who may eat them, touch them or apply them to their bodies and achieve (685b16-19) sanitation and serenity (安樂).

The healing powers of Māyā are a special feature of the *Lalita-vistara*. The tradition that was later more generally accepted in China is the account of the *Yinguojing*, already referred to above, which was included in several anthologies. In this account, Māyā is revered for bearing the Buddha, but there is no mention of her healing powers.

The placing of the right hand on the head (摩頂) is a topic that needs further study, but let me include here a few remarks. This gesture has a broad meaning in Buddhism, although it does not have such a "sacramental" aspect as the pouring of water on the head (*abhiṣeka*

灌頂), used for the consecration of a king. In most cases, the rubbing or caressing of the head conveys encouragement and tenderness and thereby offers at least some emotional or mental healing. If, in Chinese, the word used (*ma* 摩, "caress") implies an act of affection rather than ritual, the gesture nevertheless has a sacred element. It is said in the *Dazhidulun*⁴³ that the Buddhas of the ten directions caress the head of the bodhisattva reaching Awakening.

As for herbs (*oṣadhi*), their medicinal value is well known. The *Dazhidulun*⁴⁴ refers to a miraculous herb able to cure all illnesses. Its name, *sutoshanto* 蘇陀扇陀, seems to be a compound based on *śuddha* (pure) and *śānta* (cured and calm).

Māyā is here the intermediary, *mediatrix*, for the Buddha. Although not absent, the healing powers of the Buddha are not especially prominent in his legend. One famous scene of the Devadatta cycle is indicative. Cured by the Buddha of an illness, Devadatta claims that if the Buddha is good at medicine, it is because his "other science" (his doctrine) is not accepted by the world.⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

The comparison of the two traditions dealing with Māyā's pregnancy sheds some new light on the different processes of the deification

⁴³T. 25, no 1509, ch. 10, p. 132a; E. Lamotte, *Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse*, vol. I, Louvain, 1944, p. 589.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, ch. 6, p. 107b25; *Traité* I, p. 398.

⁴⁵See *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, edited by Raniero Gnoli and T. Venkatacharya, Part II, Roma: Istituto per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1978, pp. 93-94.; T. 24, no 1450, k. 14, p. 174b c, T. 4, no 202, k. 3, p. 366ab.

of the Buddha. In the first case, we find an accepted rule of Indian obstetrics, the *dohada*, i.e. the various uncontrollable desires produced in a pregnant woman determined by the character of the embryo. In the case of the future Buddha, the first three *dohadas* reflect his already unlimited wisdom and compassion, and the last two explain the choice of Lumbinī as a birthplace.

In the second case, Māyā's healing power is also a manifestation of the infinite compassion and infinite power of the future Buddha. Māyā possesses this power only during the time of her pregnancy. It is possible that the limited and circumstantial nature of the miraculous powers of the mother of the Buddha is the reason that she did not become an object of worship as a healing deity. Apparently such worship was never developed, although Māyā occasionally figures as a kind of goddess in Buddhist art.

Iconographical studies⁴⁶ have noted the fact that the much diffused image of Māyā giving birth to the Buddha with her hand grasping the branch of a tree has much in common with the representation of tree-goddesses and especially of those called *śāla-bhañjika*, "with an arm curved to reach a branch of *śāla*-tree."⁴⁷ These images represent Māyā giving birth. The image of Māyā conceiving the Buddha is also well known. She is depicted as reclining on a bed while a flying elephant in different forms approaches her. There is no iconography of the pregnant Māyā, except for one relief at Borobudur. As is well known, one part of the sculpture of Borobudur follows faithfully the narrative of

⁴⁶ Alfred Foucher, *L'Art Gréco-Bouddhique du Gandhāra*, vol. I, Paris: Leroux, 1905, pp. 300-302.

⁴⁷ Foucher, *op. cit.*, p.229, prefers to translate this image as "curving her body as a creeper" (*qui courbent en arc la liane de leur corps*).

the *Lalita-vistara*.⁴⁸ The episodes of the sixth chapter, *Garbhāvākṛānti*, are depicted in detail and include a beautiful image of the healing Māyā, raising her hand. Poor people receiving food from attendants of the queen and sick people are seen on the left part of the stone-relief.

Studies of mythology reveal a similar pattern. In several cases, Māyā is connected with Hārītī (jpn. Kishimojin 鬼子母神),⁴⁹ the mother-goddess of fertility. But we have no trace, except in a late Japanese amulet, of any worship of Māyā herself as a granter of children. This role is played by, among other goddesses, Hārītī, "mother of the demons" who became the "auspicious mother of children." Perhaps the ancient world was already saturated with mother-goddesses. Indian mythology was replete with goddesses such as Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī who were incorporated into Buddhism and, at least in Japan, have enjoyed considerable popularity.

These conditions does not exclude the paradoxical situation that, at a comparatively late date and only in East Asia, the bodhisattva

⁴⁸ Krom, *op. cit.* Pl. 22.

⁴⁹ An interesting convergence between Māyā and Hārītī is seen in two *sūtras* classified in the Taishō Canon as *Nīrvāṇa sūtras: the Sūtra of Mahāmāyā* (T. 383) and the *Sūtra of Face of Lotus* 蓮華面經 (T. 386) These two *sūtras*, translated into Chinese in the sixth century, establish a correlation between two mothers who have lost their child: Māyā, who was separated from her son seven days after childbirth, and the ogress Hārītī, who was eating plenty of human children but who fell into despair when the Buddha, wishing to correct her bad habit, hid her last child under his bowl. In the *Sūtra of Face of Lotus*, the tale of the conversion of the ogress Hārītī by the Buddha is told by Māyā in a review of the life of her son, centered on eight episodes related to his bowl. In the *Sūtra of Mahāmāyā*, her approach seems to be more eclectic (but perhaps related to vicissitudes of the female condition of some of the protagonists) as she refers, among other episodes, to the tale of Hārītī and to the murder of the *bhikṣuṇī* Utpalavarṇā by Devadatta.

Guanyin/Kannon 觀音 usurped the role of child-giver. Two recent and outstanding publications, by Iyanaga Nobumi⁵⁰ and Yu Chün-fang,⁵¹ discuss how a bodhisattva in female garb, Guanyin/Kannon, became so important in Far Eastern Buddhist religiosity.

The absence of a developed worship of Māyā is analyzed in a recently published posthumous paper by Bernard Frank.⁵² When making a pilgrimage to Lumbinī, Frank delivered a lecture in Nepal on the somewhat forgotten mother of the Buddha. This neglect of Māyā who is called Maya Bunin 摩耶夫人 in Japan, is perhaps due to the fact that the physical mother of the Buddha seems to have been supplanted by the "metaphysical" mother of the Buddha, first by the Supreme Wisdom *Prajñāpāramitā* and later by Tantric conceptions such as Buddha-eye Buddha-mother 佛眼佛母.⁵³

Nevertheless, Frank, an indefatigable pilgrim to Japanese temples, was delighted to discover a rather modest site of Māyā worship: the Mayasan temple in Kōbe. Moreover, he found an exceptional *o-fuda* that depicts Māyā with paraphernalia similar to those of the goddess Hārītī. In fact, the Mayasan of Kōbe is not unique. Such a mountain exists also in the sacred area of the Dewasan, but these few cases are not enough to attest to a widespread worship of Māyā Bunin in Japan.

⁵⁰ Iyanaga Nobumi 弥永信美, *Kannon henyō dan* 觀音變容談, Kyōto: Hōzōkan, 2002.

⁵¹ Chün-Fang Yu, *Kuanyin. The Chinese Transformation of Avalokiteśvara*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

⁵² "Māyā, mère du Buddha dans la tradition japonaise" in *Amour, colère, couleur- Essais sur le bouddhisme au Japon*, Bibliothèque de l'Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Japonaises, 2000, pp. 139-147. Japanese translation by Junko Frank: Nihon Bukkyō Mandara 日本仏教曼陀羅, Tōkyō: Fujiwara shobō, 2002, pp. 135-153.

⁵³ See *Hōbōgirin*, III, Paris, 1937, pp. 205-207, s.v. Butsugemmo.

We must thus conclude that except perhaps in Lumbinī, a pilgrimage place where the worship of Māyā cannot be separated from the worship of the birth of the Buddha, Māyā did not reach in Buddhism a place comparable to that of the *Theotokos* or the *Dei Genitrix* in Christianity. Nor does the study of Māyā occupy a position of interest comparable to "Mariology" in Roman Catholic theology. In any event, such comparisons come with their own hazards and limitations. As mentioned in my previous article, the historical Māyā and the "Mother of the Buddha" became separate entities.⁵⁴

What could be called the weak position of Māyā in Buddhism may be ascribed to several causes. The first is the dichotomy in the concept of the mother of the Buddha, as mentioned above. The second is her limited role, with her pregnancy being her "heure de gloire." Her sister, Mahāprajāpati Gautami, played two roles, one as the nursing mother and another as the first Buddhist nun, destined to become the higher authority in the women's Saṃgha. This dual position as both a mother and a daughter of the Buddha has been much appreciated in the Buddhist tradition. A third factor is the existence of other female deities who have played significant roles in Buddhist practice.

Finally, however, we must remember that Māyā had a postmortem existence known mostly through the Buddha's visit to her in the world of the *Trāyastriṃśadevas*. There are still other episodes connected with Māyā in Buddhist art and literature. I hope to deal with them in an analysis of the *Mahāmāyā-sūtra*.

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⁵⁴ JICABS V (2002), p. 43.

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