

The Natural Surroundings of the Buddha's
Last Trip:
Notes on environmental topics
in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*

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Introduction

The Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra (MPS) tells the story of the Buddha's last months of life. The text starts at Rājagṛha, the location of the opening scene, then tells how the Buddha travels to different villages and towns, until he reaches Kuśinagara, and there 'enters' parinirvāṇa. Thereafter the sūtra narrates his funeral, the dispute about his relics, the final agreement on their distribution and the building of the stūpas for the worship of the Buddha's relics. This paper will focus only on the

Buddha's last surroundings as they are handed down in the MPS until his nirvāṇa. Further it contains a study of the Buddha's last speeches related to environment and surrounding. The MPS contains some of the most valued teachings of early Buddhism. The doctrine expounded therein is straightforward and with a strongly moral "Leitfaden". The main material of the sūtra: the talks with Ānanda, the teachings expounded to the monks and laymen and other happenings, have all been left out, for the purpose of allowing a precise view on the type of environment which is said to have last surrounded the Buddha. To complete the picture I have tried to give particular attention not only to the real surroundings and places, but also to passages of the Buddha's talk, mentioning natural or extraordinary phenomena, or environment related topics.

After the introduction I have included a first section on the different versions, especially on those used in the present paper. The second section contains some inquiries into the formation of the sūtra. The third section contains a geographical and chronological outline of the places, forests, villages and towns visited by the Buddha in the last few months of his existence and of his speeches related to space and surrounding. This outline is made by indicating all relevant passages according to their succession in the MPS. Where it seemed necessary to set the chosen extracts into a context, it is done with a few explanatory words. However my subsequent literal translations from the Sanskrit version, put into quotation marks, suffice for most of the passages to give some sort of frame. Below in smaller lettering the extracts are then given in Sanskrit, Pāli and two Chinese versions. Some of the deviations are included in the footnotes. Different aspects contained in these passages will be treated separately and more in depth in the following sections. The fourth section deals with the surroundings, the

fifth with space and time, and the sixth with extraordinary phenomena related to the physical world.

Through these different approaches, we will see, that the Buddha is thought to have had clear preferences regarding environment, and that a particular view on time and space plays a dominant role for the setting of the Buddha's life and nirvāṇa. Moreover, we will gain an overview of the extraordinary phenomena related to environment, which according to the MPS, the Buddha is capable of performing and provoking.

1) Versions used in the present paper

This paper focuses on a Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (MPS) edited by Ernst Waldschmidt.¹ This Sanskrit text has been translated into German.² The passages selected for this paper are presented with my own English literal translation from the Sanskrit.

The Pāli *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* is taken into account as a second version. The concordance between the Sanskrit and the Pāli has been elaborated by E. Waldschmidt.³ The Pāli text was first edited by T. W.

¹ The main fragments of the Sk. MPS edited by E. Waldschmidt were found during the third German Turfan expedition at the Nāgarāja cave in Šorčuq. Cf. *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, Text in Sanskrit und Tibetisch, verglichen mit dem Pāli nebst einer Übersetzung der Chinesischen Entsprechung im Vinaya der Mūlasarvāstivādins, auf Grund von Turfan-Handschriften*, herausgegeben und bearbeitet von Ernst Waldschmidt, Teil I - III, 1950-51, Akademie-Verlag Berlin. It can be assumed that these Sanskrit fragments belong to the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins.

² Unfortunately I did not have access to this work yet: Claudia Weber, *Buddhistische Sutras: das Leben des Buddhas in Quellentexten*, 1999.

³ Cf. above.

Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter⁴ and it has been translated into several European languages.⁵ I will comment the Pāli *Mahāparinibbānasuttanta* where it shows essential or interesting divergences from the Sanskrit.

The Tibetan version closest to the Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* is contained in the *Dulva* and is a translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. It has not been considered in this paper, but it can be easily referred to by using E. Waldschmidt's MPS edition which contains the Tibetan text passages, and also indicates their concordance with the Sanskrit and the Pāli versions.

The Chinese version closest in content and in the passages' sequence to the Sanskrit MPS can be found in the *Vinayakṣudrakavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (MSAV). Passages of this version have been translated into German by E. Waldschmidt in his MPS edition. This Chinese MSAV is found in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* edition (T), in vol. 24, no. 1451, p. 382b-402c,⁶ and it is used in this paper as the third version. It sometimes offers some interesting views slightly differing from those of the Sanskrit version. As the Mūlasarvāstivādins' texts were originally written in Sanskrit, it can be assumed that the Chinese text was translated from a Sanskrit manuscript. The Sanskrit version used for the Chinese translation dif-

⁴ T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, *The Dīgha Nikāya, Vol. II, xvi, Mahā-Parinibbāna Suttanta*, Pali Text Society, London, 1903.

⁵ An English translation can be found in the series of the Pali Text Society and Otto Franke has made a German translation of it: *Dīghanikāya, das Buch der langen Texte des Buddhistischen Kanons*, Göttingen, 1913.

⁶ The columns of the Taishō edition are referred to with a-b-c and the lines are always counted as if the column was complete with 29 lines.

ferred however in some points from the manuscripts on which Waldschmidt's Sanskrit edition is based.⁷ The translation into Chinese was done by Yi-jing 義淨 (635-713) in 710. It is probable that until the end of the 7th century the text must have undergone some changes regarding language and content and that the translator himself, who studied in Nālanda, brought the Indian manuscript back to China.

The second Chinese version quoted in this paper is extracted from the *Ārghāgama-sūtra* 長阿含經 (DAS). The passages can be found in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* edition (T), vol. 1, no. 1, p. 11a-26c.⁸ This version belonged to the Dharmaguptaka school and has been translated into Chinese in 412-413 by Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍 and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念.⁹ The glossary of this version has been thoroughly analyzed by Seishi Karashima.¹⁰ The language of the original text (or of the oral

⁷ It should also be kept in mind that all the Sanskrit words in parenthesis are reconstructions tempted by E. Waldschmidt, based on other texts, on other passages of the same sūtra, or on the Tibetan version.

⁸ The DAS version has also been used by E. Waldschmidt in *Die Überlieferungen vom Lebensende des Buddha, eine vergleichende Analyse des Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra und seiner Textentsprechungen*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Teil I 1944, Teil II 1948, and by André Bareau in *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtrapīṭaka et les Vinayapīṭaka anciens: II. Les derniers mois, le Parinirvāṇa et les funérailles*, Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, volume LXXVII, tome I, Paris 1970; tome II, Paris 1971.

⁹ Zhu Fonian 竺佛念 was maybe called Buddhasmṛti in Sanskrit, cf. Paul Demiéville, Hubert Durt and Anna Seidel, *Répertoire du Canon Bouddhique Sino-Japonais*, Fascicule annexe du Hōbōgirin, Paris and Tokyo, 1978, p. 258.

¹⁰ Seishi Karashima 辛嶋静志, 'Researches on the vocabulary of the Jōagongyō - with a focus on the analysis of phonetic transcriptions' 『長阿含經』の原語の研究 - 音写語分析を中心として, Tokyo, 1994.

recitation) was mixed, and according to Karashima contained traces of Gandhāri, but also of other middle Indic Prakrits, as well as of local dialects and Sanskrit.¹¹ The fact, that Zhu Fonian must have known several “Western” languages further supports this idea. His biography in the *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集¹² says that he was a man from Liangzhou 涼州,¹³ and that he had studied all the sūtras and was able to recite them by heart. He also had some knowledge of the non-Buddhist teachings (i.e. the Chinese Classics).¹⁴ He was particularly strong in vocabulary and glossary¹⁵ and it is said that since his youth he liked to travel and observe customs wherever he went.¹⁶ Since his family was from Hexi 河西¹⁷ he had a deep understanding and great [knowledge] of the languages of those territories, and there were neither sounds nor meanings of the Chinese and the Western languages (i.e. those spoken by the non-Chinese populations West of China) which he could not simultaneously explain (i.e. solve the problem related to their translation).¹⁸ We will see that this DAS version which is based on some ‘unknown Prakrit’-manuscript is close to the Pāli version.

¹¹ In his study Karashima indicates the original ‘unknown Prakrit’-forms by ‘UPkt.’. It can be thought that the Chinese transcriptions were derived from these forms.

¹² *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集, ‘the fifth chapter on dharma master Fonian’ 佛念法師傳 第五, T 55, no. 2145, p. 111b.

¹³ In the present Kansu 甘肅 province in northwest China.

¹⁴ 諷習眾經粗涉外學.

¹⁵ 其倉雅詰訓尤所明練.

¹⁶ 少好遊方備貫風俗.

¹⁷ The text has 西河, which is probably a mistaken inversion copied from the *Chu san zang ji ji* into other later texts, cf. Robert Shih’s correction in *Biographies des moines éminents, de Houei-Kiao*, Louvain, 1968, p. 55.

¹⁸ 家世西河洞曉方語華戎音義莫不兼解.

There exist three further Chinese versions of the MPS. These are the (*Buddha*)*parinirvāṇa-sūtra* 佛般泥洹經 (T1, no. 5) translated by Bai Fazu 白法祖 between 290 and 306, the *Parinirvāṇasūtra* 般泥洹經 (T1, no. 6) by an anonymous translator of the fourth century, and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 大般涅槃經 (T1, no. 7) translated by Fa Xian 法顯 in 417. These three versions have not been considered in the present paper, as they would have burdened the research beyond its scope. However some of their passages have been used for comparative studies by E. Waldschmidt and André Bareau.¹⁹

Further I want to add briefly that the text used for this paper and its related versions are simply called *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and much differ from the text called *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, of which a few Sanskrit fragments have been found and recently published²⁰ and which exists in three different Chinese translations all under the name of 大般涅槃經.²¹ The *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* has very few mentions of natural environment and is a totally different composition. The Mahāyāna texts have therefore not been used for the present study.²²

¹⁹ E. Waldschmidt, *Die Überlieferungen vom Lebensende des Buddha*, and André Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha*.

²⁰ Akira Yuyama, *Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra, I. Koyasan Manuscript*, *Studia Philologica Buddhica*, The Reiyukai Library, Tokyo 1981, and G.M. Bongard-Levin, *New Sanskrit Fragments of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra (Central Asian Manuscript Collection at Leningrad)*, *Studia Philologica Buddhica*, The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo, 1986.

²¹ Cf. T12, no. 374-376.

²² In the (unpublished) notes to a speech on Buddhism and environmental problems 仏教と環境問題 held at the research meeting of the ICABS in Oct. 2000, I

2) Notes on the formation of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra

The succession of events of the Sanskrit *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the Pāli *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta* and the Chinese versions mostly coincide, which is an interesting feature of this sūtra. This might tempt one to see in it a valuable para-historical source. However, many of the passages are also contained somewhere else in the Tripiṭaka and the same events sometimes are said to have happened in some other place and/or in some other time than stated in the MPS. André Bareau suggests that the editors of the MPS have used passages from other texts with the intention of adapting them to the narration of the MPS regarding the Buddha's last few months of existence. He rather excludes the possibility that editors of other texts used passages of the MPS manipulating them to fit some obscure purpose.²³ Further the same author divides the narration of the MPS into the following nine parts: 1) in the area of Rājagṛha, 2) from Rājagṛha to Pāṭaligrāma, 3) in Pāṭaligrāma, 4) from Pāṭaligrāma to Vaiśālī, 5) in Vaiśālī, 6) in the area of Vaiśālī, 7) from Vaiśālī to Kuśinagara, 8) the Buddha's last moments (and parinirvāṇa) in Kuśinagara, and 9) his funerals. He further argues that these nine parts belong to two sections: the first one including the passages 1) - 5) and the second one, those of 6) - 9). According to him the later constitutes a sort of proto-MPS to which the first section was latter added. He sees part 8) as the core of the

have presented and commented some passages of the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 大般涅槃經 which relate to surrounding and natural environment. A more detailed research of such passages is left aside for future studies.

²³ Cf. André Bareau, *La composition et les étapes de la formation progressive du Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra ancien*, Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient no. 66, 1979, p. 46, a study which is based on: André Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha*.

whole sūtra, and thinks that the details about his funerals were added to this shortly afterwards. Then, says Bareau, the events, which happened in the area of Vaiśālī were added to provide an explanation for a caitya (religious site) called Cāpāla, and for connecting the events of these two different places, the passages contained in part 7) were further added.²⁴ As there existed other narrations of events which had previously taken place in Vaiśālī, these were placed as part 5) before the other passages. Further, it was considered that the Buddha was traveling hence from southeast to northwest and that he might have been coming from an even more distant place as Rājagṛha. Bareau therefore thinks that part 1) was the next to be added at the head of the sūtra, especially since it probably already constituted a fully assembled narration. Thereafter, for reasons of internal text coherence, the remaining sections were added in the following order: those, which happened in Pāṭaligrāma, then those from Pāṭaligrāma to Vaiśālī and finally those from Rājagṛha to Pāṭaligrāma.²⁵

Despite the *Mahāsudarśanasūtra*, which insists so much on Kuśinagara's importance as the chosen place for the parinirvāṇa, Bareau does not exclude that the Buddha might have been planning to reach Śrāvastī or even Kāpilavastu, his hometown, further north of Kuśinagara.²⁶ Regarding the formation or even creation of the MPS, it is worth noting the great importance Bareau gives to the monks of the prosperous town of Vaiśālī. He sees them as the main responsible initiators and manipulators of all the additions made to the core sections

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 48-50.

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 50-51.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52.

8) and 9). Bareau considers the pretext of giving a Buddhist meaning to the Cāpāla caitya in Vaiśālī as the main key point which caused the successive additions “... à savoir un tremblement de terre provoqué par le rejet par le Buddha de ses «compositions vitales». Cela seul suffirait à rendre suspects tous les épisodes des sept premières parties ...” Bareau describes the monks of the town of Vaiśālī as greedy, lazy and responsible for such great scandals that the second Buddhist council was held to deal with them. Such monks would surely not have had any scruples to alter historical facts in view of receiving substantial profits from the many pilgrims, who would come to visit their town attracted by the site where the Buddha is said to have caused an earthquake. “Cela est d’autant plus certain que l’on dut oublier très vite quelle route suivait le Bienheureux, et dans quel sens, quand il mourut à Kuśinagara, ...”²⁷

The author’s careful researches abound in numerous interesting details. He presents a highly critical and trustworthy analysis and comparison of the different passages as contained in the MPS and in other texts. Nevertheless, I have some difficulty in accepting the suggestion, that after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa everybody would soon have forgotten where he was coming from and where he was heading in his last few months, and, that all the other Buddhist communities would have unanimously permitted the monks of Vaiśālī to manipulate the narration as it well pleased them, especially since it is believed that later on some twenty versions of the MPS, mostly lost by now, might have existed among the twenty early schools of Buddhism. Besides the low degree of credibility one may accord to the narration of the Buddha «rejecting his vital compositions» in Vaiśālī, it is an uncontestable fact

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 52-54.

that one day or another had been the last time the Buddha sojourned in Vaiśālī. It cannot be excluded that he was coming from there before reaching Kuśinagara.

Bureau himself points out, when explaining the difficulties related to the history of the MPS's formation, that, like any research related to Indian history, the study of early Buddhism lacks well-defined chronological indicators. Moreover he assumes that the documents related to the MPS, which have come down to us, were edited for the first time only around the first century BC or later, after having been transmitted orally for a few centuries, and that this oral transmission might have caused some transformations. However, he adds that the comparative study of these texts proves that such changes were minimized by the prodigious memory of those who were in charge of preserving and transmitting the sūtra and vinaya, as well as by their faithfulness to what they considered the very words of their venerated master, the Buddha.²⁸ I like to think that the very first monks also had a good memory, and that they would not immediately forget or confuse important events, that they were also faithful to their master's words and would take great care in transmitting the events around the parinirvāṇa as precise as possible, that upright monks would try to correct misleading narrations invented by wicked ones, and that the majority would hardly have let a minority totally distort the Buddha's life end story. For sure, these assumptions can not be proven.

There is a remarkable and indeed instructive article on this topic by Gregory Schopen called *If You Can't Remember, How to Make It Up:*

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 46-47.

*Some Monastic Rules for Redacting Canonical Texts.*²⁹ In this paper the author presents some rules which apply in case monks should forget important recitations. He further introduces a passage of the Tog Tibetan version of the *Kṣudrakavastu* in which the Buddha is asked by Upāli how monks with a weak memory shall supply the name of the place, where a sūtra was taught, in case they have forgotten it. The Buddha answers: “Upāli, those who forget the name of the place, etc. (i.e. the name of the village or of the town in which a certain sūtra was taught) must declare it was one or another of the six great cities, or somewhere where the Tathāgata stayed many times. If he forgets the name of the king, he must declare it was Prasenajit; if (he forgets) the name of the householder, that it was Anāthapiṇḍada; (if he forgets the name) of the lay-sister, that it was Mṛgāramātā; ...” This last specification thus limits the choice even further. As G. Schopen states: “All three of these worthies are, however, from Śrāvastī and inextricably bound up with it.” This passage is therefore a convincing explanation why out of 1009 texts contained in the Pāli Canon 593 are set in Śrāvastī.³⁰ The aforementioned rules however do not seem to have found any application in case of the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra, since Śrāvastī is not mentioned during the Buddha’s last travels. But, as Schopen says, “the presence of such rules is not reassuring.” And we do not know if other similar rules, lost by now, could have influenced in one or another way the choice of the places where the Buddha is said to have last sojourned and their order. Nevertheless this paper will treat

²⁹ Gregory Schopen, p. 571-582, in *Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, edited by Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Jens-Uwe Hartmann, Swisttal-Odendorf, 1997.

³⁰ Schopen refers to the figures given by B. G. Gokhale in *Early Buddhism and the Urban Revolution*, *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, p. 7-22.

the events in the order handed down in the MPS's tradition and leave behind the historical aspects of the sūtra's formation.

3) Extracts of the geographical and chronological outline

The narration starts by stating that “one day the Buddha was staying in the kingdom of Magadha, in Rājagṛha³¹ and was dwelling on a mountain called the Vulture summit.”

Sk.: ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā(n) rājagṛhe vihara(ti) gṛdhrakūṭe parvate, ... māgadho ... [p. 102]³²

P.: ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā rājagahe viharati gijjhakūṭe pabbate, ... māgadho ... [1.1]³³

MSAV: 緣在王舍城住鷲峰山時摩揭陀... [p. 382b29]³⁴

DAS: 一時佛在羅閱城耆闍崛山中 [p. 11a8-9]³⁵

³¹ Rājagṛha, present day's Rajgir, district of Patna, state of Bihar, was the capital of the Magadha kingdom (cf. Otto Franke, *Dīghanikāya, das Buch der langen Texte des Buddhistischen Kanons*, Göttingen, 1913, p. 1). The area has become famous in Buddhism due to countless events which are said to have taken place there. A great number of sūtras indicate this site regarding their own setting. In contrast with most of the ancient Indian towns Rājagṛha is not located along a river in a plain, but in a valley surrounded by mountains, and the Gṛdhrakūṭa (Vulture summit) is one of those mountains. The town was well fortified, nearly 2km² large, and according to Dieter Schlingloff (cf. *Die altindische Stadt, Eine vergleichende Untersuchung*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse Jhrg. 1969, Nr. 5, Mainz, p. 14), it belonged to the oldest Indo-Aryan settlements. This description is however contrary to the so far known archaeological evidence. According to Herbert Härtel (cf. *Archaeological Research on Ancient Buddhist Sites, The Dating of the Historical Buddha, Part 1*, Göttingen, 1991 p. 65.), “... the time of the rise of Rājagṛha can at best be pushed down to 500 B.C. ... Whatever may come, Rājagṛha belongs basically to the younger ancient cities of India.”

³² The page number following the Sanskrit passage refers to E. Waldschmidt's

“There the Buddha tells the honorable Ānanda:³⁶ Ānanda I wish to go to the village of Pāṭali.”³⁷

MPS edition, which also indicates on the same page the Pāli version and on the next page the Tibetan version and the German translation of the Chinese MSAV version.

³³ The number indicates the location of the Pāli passage according to the *Mahā-Parinibbāna-Suttanta*, as edited in the *Dīgha-nikāya* by T.W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter, London, 1903.

³⁴ The page refers to the Chinese translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* (MSAV) 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (卷35), text no. 1451, of the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* vol. 24.

³⁵ The page refers to the Chinese translation of the *Dīrghāgama-sūtra* (DAS) 長阿含經 (卷2), text no. 1, of the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* vol. 1.

³⁶ Note that the Buddha's direct speeches contained in the following passages are mostly directed to Ānanda (and not to Mahākāśyapa as in other texts).

³⁷ The Chinese translation has 邑, which means: village, rural community or even town. Note that the Sk. name Pāṭaligrāmakahaḥ used in the MPS clearly defines the place as a village, which however does not exclude that it could have grown to the size of a small town during Buddha's days. Franke notes that the village later changed its name to Pāṭaliputta (Sk. Pāṭaliputra) and was called Παλιβοθηρα by the Greeks (Otto Franke, *Dīghanikāya*, p. 188). It was located were today's Patna, in Bihar, lays. In the MPS the building of the town, i.e. the enlargement of a village into a great town, is seen by the Buddha and the future town's prosperity is also predicted by him. “In unserem Falle scheint weniger eine historische Überlieferung den Anstoss zu der Legendenbildung gegeben zu haben, als vielmehr die Tendenz, die erstaunliche Grösse dieser Stadt mit einer Prophezeiung des Religionsstifters in Verbindung zu bringen, und darüberhinaus ihren Namen zu erklären: aus Pāṭali-Dorf (-grāma) wurde Pāṭali-Stadt (-putra). Gerade dies aber erschüttert die Glaubwürdigkeit der Legende, denn das zweite Glied des Stadtnamens *putra* (“Sohn“) kann niemals die Bedeutung “Stadt“ annehmen.” Further the derivation of the town's name from Pāṭali-trees (*Flueggea Leucopyrus*) is somehow puzzling as it can not be proven that these tree species has ever grown there (cf. Dieter Schlingloff, *Die altindische Stadt*, p. 29-43; and Franke, *Dīghanikāya*, p. 230).

Sk.: tatra bha(gavān āyusmantam ānan)dam (ā)mantrayate,
āgamayānanda yena pāṭaligrāmakāḥ. [p. 136]

P.: atha kho bhagavā nāṇḍāyaṃ³⁸ yathābhirantaṃ viharitvā
āyasmantaṃ ānandaṃ āmantesi. āyāṃ' ānanda yena pāṭaligāmo
ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti. [1.19]

MSAV: 爾時世尊告具壽阿難陀曰。我今欲往波吒離邑 [p. 384b10]

DAS: 爾時。世尊於羅閱祇隨宜住已。告阿難言。汝等皆嚴。吾欲詣竹園³⁹ [p. 12a17-18] ... 爾時。世尊於竹園隨宜住已。告阿難曰。汝等皆嚴。當詣巴陵弗城 [p. 12a24-25]

And after having sojourned in Pāṭali, seeing that it was going to be fortified, the Buddha praises the place saying: “There I saw, Ānanda, (while) going to the place (where) I stay during the day, that very mighty deities are settling down in Pāṭali, where I dwell at night. Ānanda, where very great and noble deities take a seat, there, great and noble people also wish to go to live.”⁴⁰

Sk.: (atrāham āna)ndādrākṣam āvasathe divāvihāropagat(aḥ
pāṭaligrāmake mahāsakyamahāśa)kyā devatā vas(tū)ni p(rat)i-
(grhṇatīḥ.)

(yasmin ānanda pradeśe mahāsakyamahāsakyā de)vatā vastūni
pratigrhṇanti mahāsakyānāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ tasmin pradeśe)
c(i)tt(aṃ) krāmati yad uta vā(sāya). [p. 148]

³⁸ In the Pāli version the Buddha travels from Rājagṛha to the Ambalaṭṭhikā park [1.13] and from there to the Pāvārika mango forest near Nāṇḍa [1.15], then from Nāṇḍa he goes to Pāṭaligāma.

³⁹ In the Chinese DAS version the Buddha goes from Rājagṛha to the Veluvana, a bamboo park situated just outside the town of Rājagṛha, and there stays in a hall 往堂上坐 [12a20] and expounds the teaching. From there he goes to Pāṭali.

⁴⁰ This passage clearly suggests that Buddha's daytime meditation spot lays outside Pāṭali, on an elevated location, and that on his way there, the Buddha could view the residential area and how it was being fortified. The Sk. version mentions neither the Buddha's divine eye, nor the thousands of gods.

P.: idhāhaṃ ānanda addasaṃ dibbena cakkhunā visuddhena atikkantamānusakena sambahulā devatāyo sahasass' eva pāṭaligāme vatthūni parigaṇhantiyo.

yasmim padese mahesakkhā devatā vatthūni parigaṇhanti mahesakkhānaṃ tattha raññaṃ rājamahāmatānaṃ cittāni namanti nivesanāni māpetuṃ. [1.28]

MSAV: 我於住處以天眼觀見諸大天神各求住處。阿難陀。但是勢力諸天欲住之處。於此城內福德大人。亦於其中而求住處 [p. 384c16-19]

DAS: 佛告阿難。造此城者。正得天意。吾於後夜明相出時。至閑靜處。以天眼見諸大神天各封宅地。中下諸神亦封宅地。阿難。當知諸大神天所封宅地。有人居者。安樂熾盛 [p. 12c2-6]

After leaving the town of Pātali the Buddha passes the river Gaṅgā⁴¹ in no time and without visible means; he ‘magically’ crosses the river from one side to the other (with all the monks):⁴² “Then the Honorable One accomplished such an intense concentration, that by (fully) contracting his mind he disappeared from this side (of the river, and) was standing on the opposite shore.”

Sk.: (... atha) bhagavāṃs tadrūpaṃ samādhiṃ samāpanno yathā samāhite citte 'pāriṃ tīre 'ntarhitaḥ pāriṃ tīre pratyasthāt. [p. 158]

P.: ... evaṃ gaṅgāya nadiyā orimatīre antarahito pārimatīre paccuṭṭhāsi saddhiṃ bhikkhusaṃghena. [1.33]

MSAV: 即入勝定隨其所念。并諸苾芻此沒彼出 [p. 385b4]

DAS: 爾時。世尊與諸大眾。譬如力士屈伸臂頃。忽至彼岸 [p. 12c25-26]

⁴¹ The Ganges is crossed from south to north. All the versions coincide in that this event takes places at the Ganges.

⁴² Only the Pāli and the DAS versions mention that he crosses the river together with all his monks.

Next he goes to Kuṭṭi⁴³ and “stays in the śiṃśapā forest,⁴⁴ which is located north of the Kuṭṭi village.”

Sk.: ... kuṭṭigrāmake viharaty uttareṇa grāmasya śiṃśapāvane.
[p. 160]

P.: ... bhagavā koṭṭigāme viharati.⁴⁵ [2.1]

MSAV: ... 小舍村北升攝波林 [p. 385b14-15]

DAS: 爾時。世尊從跋祇遊行至拘利村。在一林下告諸比丘 [p. 13a2-3]

From there the Buddha decides to move on to Nādikā,⁴⁶ and “when he reaches Nādikā he stays in the kuṅjikā-site.”⁴⁷

⁴³ The word kuṭṭi in Sk. can mean: 1. a curvature, 2. a cottage, hut or shop; 3. a tree. The word koṭṭi in Sk. means: the curved end of a bow, the edge, the highest point, and thus also eminence and excellence. The word koṭṭi in Pāli bears all sorts of meanings related to “end” or “edge”. The word kuṭṭi in Pāli also means “hut”. The MSAV’s rendering of the village’s name 小舍 suggests that it was understood as “cottage” or “hut”. For the transcription used in the DAS Karashima indicates the UPkt. “Kuli” and “Kūli”.

⁴⁴ Śiṃśapā is the Dalbergia Sissoo tree, cf. section 4.1.2. The Śiṃśapā forests’ of the present paper.

⁴⁵ The Pāli version does not mention any śiṃśapā forest.

⁴⁶ The MSAV’s name of the village 販葦聚落 means “reed trading village”, and Waldschmidt renders it as “Dorf, das Schilf handelt”; cf. *Überlieferungen vom Lebensende des Buddha*, p. 69.

⁴⁷ Kuṅjikā or kuṅcīkā (both f.) mostly refer to plants: the Fennel flower, the Abrus precatorius, the Trigonella faenum graecum, a reed, or a branch or shoot of a bamboo. Further, kuṅja, -as (m.) or -am (n.) is a place overgrown with plants or creepers, a bower, or an arbor. And in Pāli giṅjakā is a brick, and giṅjakāvāsatha therefore a house of bricks; however guṅjā is a plant, the aforementioned Abrus precatorius. Waldschmidt (*Die Überlieferungen vom Lebensende des Buddha*) indicates two Chinese versions which mention that the Buddha sits under a tree with just such a name. It can be assumed that the place’s name derives, as in other sites, from a plant’s or a tree’s name growing nearby, rather than from a brick building as in the Pāli version.

Sk.: āgamayānanda yena nādi(k)ā. ... nā(dikām) anuprāpto nādikāyāṃ viharati kuñjikāvasathe. [p. 162]

P.: āyāṃ' ānanda yena nādikā ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti ... nādike viharati giñjakāvasathe. [2.5]

MSAV: 我今欲往販葦聚落村外林中 [p. 385b21]

DAS: 爾時。世尊於拘利村隨宜住已。告阿難俱詣那陀村。阿難受教。即著衣持鉢。與大眾俱侍從世尊。路由跋祇。到那陀村。止撻椎處 [p. 13a9-12]

In the area many people have died due to an epidemic:⁴⁸ “Many monks who walked around Nādikā for their alms, heard that in this Nādikā many people had died with ‘bodies as black as pigment’. Likewise passed away the lay disciple Karkaṭaka ...”

Sk.: (aśrauṣuḥ saṃbahulā bhikṣavo nādikāṃ piṇḍāya carantaḥ. asyāṃ nādikāyāṃ mahān janakāyo mṛtaḥ. tathā hi karkaṭaka upāsakaḥ kālagato ...) [p. 164]

P.: ... ānando bhagavantam etad avoca: sāḥho nāma bhante bhikkhu Nādike kālakato, tassa kāgati ko abhisamparāyo? Nandā nāma bhante bhikkhunī Nādike kālakatā, tassā kā gati ko abhisamparāyo? Sudatto nāma ... [2.6]

MSAV: ... 聞此村中多有諸人遭疫而死 [p. 385b25-26]

DAS: 爾時。阿難 ... 白佛言。世尊。我向靜處。默自思惟。此那陀村十二居士伽伽羅等命終。復有五十人命終。又有五百人命終。斯生何處。唯願解說 [p. 13a20-23]

⁴⁸ The Pāli does not mention this calamity. However it mentions that some monks and nuns have died in Nādika; the focus is however on what they became, and where they have been reborn. In the DAS the people who died are far greater in number, but no cause is mentioned.

After a while the Buddha decides to go to Vaiśālī,⁴⁹ and “when he reaches Vaiśālī he dwells in the Āmrāpāli-forest.”⁵⁰

Sk.: ... āgamayānanda yena vaiśālī. ... vaiśālīm anuprāpto vaiśālyāṃ viharaty āmra(pālivane). [p. 172]

P.: āyāṃ' ānanda yena vesāli ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti. ...viharati ambapālivane. [2.11]

MSAV: 我今欲往廣嚴城 ... 佛及僧眾漸至城所住菴沒羅林 [p. 385c24-26]

DAS: 爾時。世尊隨宜住已。告阿難俱詣毘舍離國。即受教行。著衣持鉢。與大眾俱侍從世尊。路由跋祇。到毘舍離。坐一樹下。有一姪女。名菴婆婆梨。聞佛將諸弟子來至毘舍離。坐一樹下 ... [p. 13b17-21]

From Vaiśālī the Buddha goes to the Bamboo-village⁵¹ and “stays in the śiṃśapā⁵² forest, north of the village”. There was a famine⁵³ at that time. Hence the Buddha tells his disciples to disperse around several villages in the area: “Nowadays, monks, begging is hard; the calamity is distressful; and it is difficult for a beggar to obtain alms. You, monks, go spend the rainy season in the villages of the Vṛjīs adjacent to

⁴⁹ Vaiśālī was a rather small town, only 0.14 km² large, but very famous, probably due to numerous religious sites in its vicinity. It was the hometown of the Licchavis and of Mahāvīra, the founder of the Jaina religion, and is located 3 km northwest of today's Basarh in the Muzaffarpur district (cf. Dieter Schlingloff, *Die altindische Stadt*, p. 19-20).

⁵⁰ Āmrāpālivana is a mango grove said to belong to a courtesan called Āmrāpāli. This is the fem. form of āmrāpāla, “the lord of the mango”, i.e. “the one who owns the mangos”. Cf. section 4.1.4. The Mango forest.

⁵¹ The Bamboo-village is a bamboo forest in the Chin. version. This could be based on a copyist's error: 林 instead of 村, which is excusable, especially since the character follows the word bamboo.

⁵² The Pāli does not mention any śiṃśapā forest.

⁵³ No famine is mentioned in the shorter Pāli version. Could it be that this famine is related to Nādikā's epidemic, which is also missing in the Pāli text?

Vaiśālī. Everybody shall stay with somebody by whom he is well honored, nicely spoken to and kindly treated. I myself will spend the rainy season in the Bamboo-village in the company of the monk Ānanda. This way none shall lack alms.”

Sk.: āgamayānanda yena veṇugrāmakaḥ. ... veṇugrāmake viharaty uttarena grāmasya śiṃśapāvane. ... etarhi bhikṣavo durbhikṣaṃ kṛcchraḥ kāntāro durlabhaḥ piṇḍako yācanakena. eta yūyaṃ bhikṣavo yathāsaṃstutikayā yathāsaṃlaptikayā yathāsaṃpremikayā vaiśālīsama(n)takena vṛjigrāmakeṣu varṣāṃ upagacchata. aham apy asminn eva veṇugrāmake varṣāṃ upagamiṣyāmy ānandena bhikṣuṇopasthāyakena. mā sarva eva piṇḍakena k(lāma)tha. [p. 190-192]

P.: āyāṃ' ānanda yena beluvagāmako ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti. ... etha tumhe bhikkhave samantā vesāliṃ yathāmittaṃ yathāsandiṭṭhaṃ yathāsambhattaṃ vassaṃ upetha. ahaṃ pana idh' eva beluvagāmake vassaṃ upagacchāmīti. [2.21-22]

MSAV: 我今欲往竹林中 ... 即與大眾隨佛至竹林北住升攝波林 ... 今時飢儉。汝等宜可求同意者。於薛舍離諸方聚落隨便安居。我與阿難陀於此處住。若不如是求乞難得 [p. 387a11-17]

DAS: 爾時。世尊於毘舍離。隨宜住已。告阿難言。汝等皆嚴。吾欲詣竹林叢 ... 路由跋祇。至彼竹林 [p. 14c10-13] ... 爾時。世尊即從座起。詣於講堂。就座而坐。告諸比丘。此土飢饉。乞求難得。汝等宜各分部。隨所知識。詣毘舍離及越祇國。於彼安居。可以無乏。吾獨與阿難於此安居。所以然者。恐有短乏 [p. 15a12-16]⁵⁴

Then the Buddha tells Ānanda that a little while ago he felt very ill and was about to die, but that he resolved to remain alive and admonishes Ānanda that they (he and the other monks) shall take themselves as their island.⁵⁵ After he passes away, they shall take refuge in them-

⁵⁴ In the DAS the Buddha orders the monks to scatter while being in a certain hall 講堂.

⁵⁵ The Sk. *dvīpa* (from *dvī-āpa*: “double-watered”) means island, sandbank,

selves, they shall take refuge in the dharma and nowhere else.

Sk.: (tasmād) ānandaitarhi mam(a vā)tyayād ātmadvīpair
vihartavyam ātmaśaraṇair dharmadvīpair dha(rmaśaraṇair
ananyadvīpair ananyaśaraṇaiḥ. tat kasmād hetoḥ.) [p. 200]

P.: tasmāt ih'ānanda attadipā viharatha attasaraṇā
anaññasaraṇā dhammadīpā dhammasaraṇā anaññasaraṇā. [2.26]
MSAV: 是故當知。於我現在及我滅後。汝等自為洲渚自為歸依。法為
洲渚法為歸依。無別洲渚無別歸依 [p. 387b17-20]

DAS: 是故。阿難。當自熾燃。熾燃於法。勿他熾燃。當自歸依。歸依
於法。勿他歸依。云何自熾燃。熾燃於法。勿他熾燃。當自歸依。歸依
於法。勿他歸依 [p. 15b5-9]

Then the Buddha goes again to Vaiśālī and there “stays in a room of the Kūṭā-hall⁵⁶ on the shore of the Markkaṭa lake.⁵⁷ ... (then) he walks

continent or a place of refuge, the Sk. *dīpa* (from *dīp* or *dī*: to shine) means light or a lamp, in P. there is only the form *dīpa* for the abovementioned meanings of both roots. The MSAV unequivocally has 洲渚 which corresponds to *dvīpa*. I think that this is the correct meaning, since the two expressions ‘*dharmadvīpair*’ and ‘*dharmasaraṇair*’ go hand in hand, and have about the same meaning. The DAS however has the word for lamp 熾燃, which is a mistake due to some Prakrit form ‘*dīpa*’ or similar, from which etymologically the root could not be distinguished anymore.

⁵⁶ Kūṭāgāraśālā, Halle oder Haus mit Spitztonnendach, was either a term of such a building or the proper name of this hall near Vaiśālī (cf. SWTF, p. 101). The Sk. word *śālā* here means a hall, but otherwise it could also mean shelter. *Kūṭā* means horn or peak. The house thus had a roof in peak shape. Cf. the previous footnotes on the village called *kuṭi* and *koṭi*. In the MSAV *kūṭāgāraśālā* has become 重閣堂 which inevitably implies something quite grandiose: a large and high, palace-like hall-construction with several floors, possibly for public use. The DAS mentions an auditorium, a lecture hall 講堂, but only in a previous passage.

⁵⁷ The lake or pool is either named after a certain bird, an Indian crane, sojourning in its entourage, or after some monkeys.

to a caitya (shrine) called Cāpāla⁵⁸ and, once he reaches the place, he goes to the root of a tree and sits down to spend the daytime. There he speaks to Ānanda: Lovely, Ānanda, is Vaiśālī in the land of the Vṛjīs, the Cāpāla Caitya, the Saptāmṛaka,⁵⁹ the Bahupattraka,⁶⁰ the Gautamanyagrodha,⁶¹ the Śāla-forest in the land of the Mallas, where I will put down the burden (of existence), the Makuṭabandhaṇa Caitya.⁶² Manifold is Jambudvīpa, sweet is the life of humans.”

Sk.: āgamayānanda yena vaiśālī. ... vaiśālīm anuprāpto vaiśalyām viharati markkaṣahrad (atīre kū)ṭāgāraśālāyām. ... yena cāpālaṃ caityaṃ tenopajagāma. upetyānyataraṃ vṛkṣamū (laṃ niśritya niṣa)ṇṇo di (vā) vihārāya. tatra bhagavān āyusmantam ānandam āmantrayate: ramaṇīyānanda vaiśālī vṛjibhūmīś cāpālaṃ caityaṃ saptāmṛakaṃ bahupattrakaṃ g (autamanya)grodhaḥ śālavanaṃ dhurānikṣepaṇaṃ mallānāṃ makuṭabandhaṇaṃ caityaṃ. citro jambudvīpo madhuraṃ jīviṭaṃ manuṣyāṇām. [p. 202-204]

P.: atha kho bhagavā pubbaṇhasamayaṃ nivāsetvā pattacīvaram ādāya vesālīm piṇḍāya pāvīsi. ... āyasmantaṃ ānandaṃ āmantesi. gaṇhāhi ānanda nisīdanaṃ. yena cāpālaṃ cetiyaṃ ten' upasaṃkamissāmi divāvihārāyāti. ... ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho āyasmantaṃ ānandaṃ bhagavā etad avoca: ramaṇīyā ānanda vesālī ramaṇīyaṃ udenaṃ cetiyaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ gotamakaṃ cetiyaṃ

⁵⁸ On this caitya's name cf. the lecture given by Max Deeg on *The "Stupa of Laying Down the Bows"- A Pre-Buddhist Religious Monument and a Pan-Indian Legend* - The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo, February 18th, 2003. The MPS does not pretend that the name was given to the place after the Buddha's visit, but presents the narration as if the spot was already called that way before the Buddha provoked an earthquake.

⁵⁹ The site of the seven mango trees.

⁶⁰ The Pāli has *bahuputta* which Rhys Davids translates as the "Shrine of Many Sons". The Sanskrit version however has *bahupattra* which refers to "Many Leaves".

⁶¹ The banyan tree of Gautama.

⁶² "Crest-junction-shrine" or "Crown-holding-temple".

ramaṇīyaṃ sattambakaṃ cetiyaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ bahuputtaṃ
cetiyaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ sārandaṃ cetiyaṃ ramaṇīyaṃ cāpālaṃ
cetiyaṃ. [3.1-3.2]

MSAV: 我今欲往廣嚴城 ... 即隨佛後至廣嚴城住重閣堂 ... 佛即往詣
取弓制底樹下而坐。告阿難陀曰。此廣嚴城物產華麗芳林果樹在處敷榮。
塔廟清池甚可愛樂。瞻部洲內此最希奇 [p. 387c3-10]⁶³

DAS: 佛告阿難。俱至遮婆羅塔。對曰。唯然。如來即起。著衣持鉢。
詣一樹下。告阿難。敷座。吾患背痛。欲於此止。對曰。唯然。尋即敷
座 [15b16-18]⁶⁴

In that Cāpāla caitya the Buddha takes the decision⁶⁵ to remain alive for only three more months before entering parinirvāṇa, and concentrates his mind in meditation for the purpose of reaching this goal. At that time the earth trembles and other extraordinary astronomical events also occur: “the planet earth moved and it happened that meteors were falling; the quarters of heaven were glowing and all the space was filled with the sound of thunder.”

Sk.: atha bhagavāṃs tadrūpān ṛddhyabhisamṣkāraṇ
abhisamṣkaroti yathā samāhite citte jivita(samṣkāraṇ adhi)-
ṣṭhāyāyuhṣamṣkāraṇ utsṛjati, samananta(r)ots(r)ṣṭāyuh-
samskāreṣv atyarthaṃ tasmin samaye mahāpṛthivīcālaś
cābhūd ulkāpā(tā) d(i)śodā(h)ā (antarikṣe devadun)dubhayo'
bhinadanti. [p. 212]

P.: atha kho bhagavā cāpāle cetiye sato sampajāno āyusaṃkhāraṃ

⁶³ The compliments in the MSAV are only directed to the religious sites in and around Vaiśālī, which are ... “the most mysterious and wonderful ones within Jambudvīpa 瞻部洲”.

⁶⁴ The DAS contains no such eulogy to the world or to human life. In this version the Buddha complains about back-pain.

⁶⁵ He actually announces this as a promise to the evil one: *alpostsukas tvaṃ pāpīyan bhava na cirasyedāniṃ tathāgatasya trayāṇaṃ māsānāṃ atyayād anupadhiṣeṣe ni(r)v(ā)ṇadhātau parin(i)rvāṇaṃ bhaviṣyati.* [p. 210]

ossaji ossaṭṭhe ca bhagavato āyusaṃkhāre mahābhūmicālo ahoṣi
 bhīṃsanako lomahaṃsano devadundubhiyo ca phalīṃsu. [3.10]
 MSAV: 作是念已即便入定。留命行捨壽行。于時大地悉皆振動。四
 方熾然星光墮落。於虛空中天鼓自鳴 [p. 388a12-15]
 DAS: 佛即於遮婆羅塔。定意三昧。捨命住壽。當此之時。地大震動。
 舉國人民莫不驚怖。衣毛為豎。佛放大光。徹照無窮。幽冥之處。莫不
 蒙明。各得相見 [p. 15c19-23]⁶⁶

Asked by Ānanda why the earth has trembled, the Buddha explains that “there are eight causes, eight conditions, for a great earthquake.”

Sk.: (aṣṭāv ime) h(e)tavo ‘ṣṭau pratyayā (ma)hataḥ pṛthivī-
 c)ālasaya. [p. 212]
 P.: aṭṭha kho ime ānanda hetū aṭṭha paccayā mahato bhūmicālassa
 pātubhāvāya. [3.13]
 MSAV: 有八因緣大地振動 [p. 388a20]
 DAS: 佛告阿難。凡世地動。有八因緣 [p. 15c28]

The first cause, of cosmological nature, refers to physical conditions. “This great earth is based on water. Water is based on wind. Wind is based on space. There is a day, Ānanda, when opposing winds in space blow upon the waters stirring them up. The shaken waters make the earth move.”

⁶⁶ The DAS is far more dramatic than the other versions adding the following: “among the population of the whole country there was none which was not shocked and frightened; peoples’ cloths and hairs were standing up; from the Buddha (emanated) a great light which permeated and illuminated without exhaustion (even) the dim and dark places; everybody experienced this brightness, all were able to see it.”

Sk.: (i)yaṃ mahāpṛ(thivy) apsu pratiṣṭhitā. āpo vā(yau) pratiṣṭhitā. v(āy)u(r ākāśe pratiṣṭhitāḥ. bhavaty) ān(anda sama) yo yad ākāśe viṣamā vāyavo vānty āpaḥ (k)ṣ(o)bhayanti. āpaḥ kṣubdhāḥ pṛthivī(m) cālayanti. [p. 212-214]

P.: ayam ānanda mahāpaṭhavī udake patiṭṭhitā udakaṃ vāte patiṭṭhitam vāto ākāsaṭṭho hoti. so kho ānando samayo yaṃ mahāvātā vāyanti mahāvātā vāyantā udakaṃ kampenti udakaṃ kampitaṃ paṭhaviṃ kampeti. [3.13]

MSAV: 今此大地依水而住。水依風住。風依空住。阿難陀。有時空中現大猛風水即波動。水若搖動地即振動 [p. 388a21-23]

DAS: 夫地在水上。水止於風。風止於空。空中大風有時自起。則大水擾。大水擾則普地動。是為一也 [p. 15c29-16a2]

The second cause refers to mental performance. “Further, when there is a very powerful, noble-minded monk, who by intense meditation on earth overcomes it as insignificant, and (who also attains) the perception of the immeasurable (expanse of) water, he is expected to make the earth move.”⁶⁷

Sk.: punar aparaṃ bhikṣur maharddhiko bhavati mahānubhāvaḥ sa parittāṃ pṛthivisaṃjñāṃ adhiṭṭhaty apramāṇāṃ cāpsamjñāṃ sa āk(ān)kṣamāṇaḥ pṛthivīṃ cālayati. [p. 214]

P.: puna ca paraṃ ānanda samaṇo vā hoti brāhmaṇo vā iddhimā cetovasippatto devatā vā mahiddhikā mahānubhāvā yassa parittā paṭhavisaññā bhāvitā hoti appamāṇā āposaññā so imaṃ paṭhaviṃ kampeti saṃkampeti sampakampeti sampavedheti. [3.14]

MSAV: 復次阿難陀。苾芻有大威德具大功用。以神通力令此大地。

⁶⁷ The Pāli is close to this: “Further if a samana or brahmin, who is endowed with supernatural powers, and who by his mere thoughts has everything under his control, or if a god with his divine capacity and great powers produces in himself the idea (conception) of the smallness of the earth and the infinity of water, then he will cause this earth to move, to shake and tremble”.

為小塵想入無邊水想。欲令大地悉皆振動 [p. 388a25-27]

DAS: 復次阿難。有時得道比丘比丘尼及大神尊天。觀水性多。觀地性少。欲知試力則普地動。是為二也 [p. 16a2-4]

The remaining six causes (3rd to 8th)⁶⁸ relate to great events of the Buddha's life: 3.) his conception (i.e. the descent from the tuṣita-heaven into his mother's womb), 4.) his birth, 5.) his enlightenment, 6.) the turning of the dharma-wheel (i.e. the first successful preaching of the four truths), 7.) the abandonment of the remainder of his lifespan and 8.) the passing away into parinirvāṇa. In the above passage, it is the 7th cause, which causes the earthquake.

From Vaiśālī the Buddha decides to go to a village called Kuṣṭha.⁶⁹

Sk.: āgamayānanda yena kuṣṭhagrāmakaḥ. [p. 226]

MSAV: 我今欲往重患村中 [p. 388c20-21]

On his way he stops at a park northwest of Vaiśālī to get a last view of the town. At that time a monk is said to have composed the following verses about this episode:⁷⁰ “This is the very last intensive glance, Lord, you give to Vaiśālī; the well-faring Buddha will not come back to Vaiśālī again, being on his way to (enter) nirvāṇa in the country of the Mallas.”

⁶⁸ All the versions enumerate and describe these causes in similar way.

⁶⁹ The word *kuṣṭha* is used as name for several plants of the *Costus* and *Saussurea* family, but might also mean leprosy, a remedy for a certain disease or a sort of poison. Cf. the section 4.2.1. Bad and deadly places.

⁷⁰ The DAS does not narrate any such event and the Pāli has a much shorter version without concluding verses.

Sk.: i(dam apaścimakam nātha vaiśālyās tavadarśanam
na bhūyaḥ sugato buddho vaiśālīm āgamiṣyati
nirvāṇāya) paryāto ‘yaṃ mallānām upavartane. [p. 228]

P.: idaṃ pacchimakam ānanda tathāgatassa Vesālidassanaṃ
bhavissati ... [4.1]

MSAV: 最後迴顧望巖城 正覺不復還來此
今欲詣彼雙林處 壯士生地證無餘 [p. 389a1-2]

“Traveling with his monks the Buddha then reaches the Kuṣṭha village in the land of the Vṛji⁷¹ and stays in a śiṃśapā forest north of it.”⁷²

Sk.: atha bhaga(vān vṛjiṣu janapadaṣu caryāṃ caraṇ
kuṣṭhagrāmakam anuprāptaḥ kuṣṭhagrāmake viharaty uttareṇa
grāma)sya śiṃśapāvane. [p. 228]

MSAV: 世尊既至重患村已住升攝波林 [p. 389a3]

After having sojourned and preached in Kuṣṭha for a short while, the Buddha goes on to other villages: “In the same way (he preached) in Kuṣṭha, (he preaches) in the villages of Gaṇḍa,⁷³ Droṇa,⁷⁴ Śūrpa,⁷⁵ Āmra,⁷⁶ Jambu⁷⁷ and Hasti.⁷⁸ (Passing through these) villages of the

⁷¹ The land of the Vṛji might be the country called Vraja, which corresponds to the modern Braj, located West of Delhi and Agra. Their territories were conquered some time after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa by the kingdom of Magadha.

⁷² This passage is missing in the Pāli and DAS texts.

⁷³ Gaṇḍa can mean excrescence, cheek, rhinoceros, hero, joint or piece. The etymology and meaning of the village’s name seems unknown.

⁷⁴ Droṇa is a wooden vessel, a trough, a vessel for measuring.

⁷⁵ Śūrpa means winnowing basket, the etymology is uncertain, cf. M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, Heidelberg, 1963, who quotes Charpentier, JRAS 1927, p. 111: Śūrparaka as the name of certain people or a certain area.

⁷⁶ Āmra m. is the mango tree, āmra n. is the mango (fruit).

⁷⁷ Jambu is the rose apple tree.

Vr̥jis and Mallas, he reaches the little town called Bhoga,⁷⁹ where he dwells in a śiṃśapā forest north of it.”

Sk.: (yathā ku)ṣṭhagrāmaka evaṃ gaṇḍagrāmako droṇagrāmakaḥ
śūrpagrāmaka ā(mragrāmako jambugrāmako hastigrāmakaḥ.
vṛjigrāmakād mallagrāmakād bhoganagarakam anu)prāptaḥ.
bhoganagarake viharaty uttarena grāmasya śiṃśapāvane.

[p. 230]

P.: atha kho bhagavā bhaṇḍagāme yathābhirantaṃ viharitvā
āyasmantaṃ ānandaṃ āmantesi. āyāmaṃ ānanda yena hatthigāmo
... ambagāmo ... jambugāmo ... bhoganagaraṃ ten'
upasaṃkamissāmāti. [4.5]⁸⁰

MSAV: 如是次第經過十餘聚落。皆為眾生隨機說法。至受用城北林
而住 [p. 389a8-9]⁸¹

DAS: 世尊告阿難。俱詣香塔 ... 香塔左右現諸比丘。勅令集講堂

[p. 16c5-6] and

佛告阿難俱詣菴婆羅村 ... 在一山林 ... 佛告阿難。汝等皆嚴。當詣瞻
婆村。捷茶村。婆梨婆村及詣負彌城。對曰。唯然。即嚴衣鉢。與諸大
眾侍從世尊。路由跋祇漸至他城。於負彌城北。止尸舍婆林

[p. 17b18-29]⁸²

Then, in another passage,⁸³ the Buddha explains how he is able to adapt to different surroundings. As a first example he describes how he

⁷⁸ Hasti means elephant.

⁷⁹ Bhoga means enjoyment or pleasure.

⁸⁰ In the Pāli the Buddha goes from Vaiśālī to the following villages: Bhaṇḍa (same as Sk. Gaṇḍa), Hatthi, Amba, Jambu, Bhoga (Ānanda-shrine) and Pāva.

⁸¹ In the MSAV no village names are given, but it says: “passed through more than ten villages”.

⁸² In the DAS the Buddha holds a sermon in Gaṇḍa (in this version rather a stūpa 塔 than a village although the site seems to have a lecture hall 講堂), then he moves on to Āmra, Jambu, Gaṇḍa, Hasti, and to Bhoga (where he stays in a Śiṃśapā forest north of the village).

⁸³ In the Pāli and the DAS versions this passage occurs immediately after the

adapts to the customs, looks and character of the Kṣatriyas⁸⁴ while mingling among them during their congregations. He joins their meetings for the purpose of conferring understanding to them, i.e. for making them understand and accept the right teaching without stirring up suspicion: “Further I know that at several hundreds of Kṣatriya assemblies I totally changed my appearance turning it into theirs, I ... (adapted) my shape and heights to theirs, on me appeared the same numerous aspects of their outward looks,⁸⁵ and I (took over) the same way of pronunciation/accenuation (in speech) as they had.”

Sk.: abhijān(āmi khalu punar aham anekasataṃ kṣatriyaparisaḍaṃ darśanāyopasaṃkrami)tum upasaṃkrāntasya (ca me yā)d(ṛ)śas teṣāṃ ārohapaṇā(h)o (bhava)ti mamāpi tādrśa āro(hapaṇāho bhavati. yādrśī teṣāṃ varṇapuṣkalatā bhavati mam)āpi tādrśī varṇ(apu)ṣkalatā bhavati. yādrśī teṣāṃ sv(araguṇti)r bhavati mamāpi t(ā)drś(i) s(varaguṇtir bhavati.) [p. 234]

P.: abhijānāmi kho panāhaṃ ānanda anekasataṃ khattiyaparisaṃ upasaṃkamitvā tatra pi mayā sannisinnapubbañ c’eva sallapitapubbañ ca sākacchā ca samāpajjitapubbā. tattha yādisako tesam vaṇṇo hoti tādisako mayham vaṇṇo hoti. yādisako tesam saro hoti tādisako mayham saro hoti. [3.22]

SAV: 阿難陀。我昔曾於無量百千刹帝利眾令彼瞻睹我於爾時隨其形量長短分齊。我即與彼形相共同。顏色音聲亦皆相似 [p. 389a29-b3]

DAS: 我自憶念。昔者。往來與刹帝利眾坐起言語。不可稱數。以精進定力。在所能現。彼有好色。我色勝彼。彼有妙聲。我聲勝彼 [p. 16b21-23]⁸⁶

explanation of the eight causes of earthquakes.

⁸⁴ The Kṣatriyas are those belonging to the aristocratic or warrior cast.

⁸⁵ Outward look (*varṇa*): body shape, skin complexion, etc.

⁸⁶ Note that in the DAS the Buddha does not merely adapt, but excels and surpasses 勝 the respective members in their own representative marks.

The Buddha then gives a list of the other meetings he attended, where he adapted himself to the respective members, who ranged from Brahmans up to the highest gods.

After Bhoga the Buddha wants to go to the village of Pāpā.

Sk.: (āgamayānanda yena pāpāgrāmakaḥ.) [p. 252]
P.: āyāṃ' ānanda yena pāvā ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti. [4.13]
MSAV: 我今欲往波波聚落 (波波此云罪惡) [p. 390b5-6]
DAS: 告賢者阿難俱詣波婆城 [p. 18a23-24]

On his way to Kuśīna, the homeland of the Mallas, “he reaches Pāpā and dwells there in the Jalūkā forest.”⁸⁷

Sk.: (... pāpām anuprāptaḥ pāpāyāṃ viharati jalūkāvanaṣaṇḍe.)
[p. 252]
P.: ...pāvāyaṃ viharati cundassa kammāraputtassa ambavane.
[4.13]
MSAV: 漸至波波邑。依折鹿迦林而住 [p. 390b7]
DAS: 路由末羅至波婆城闍頭園中 [p. 18a25]

Thereupon the Buddha expresses his wish to move on to the town of Kuśīnagara.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ For the names Pāpā and Jalūkā refer to section 4.2.1. Bad and deadly places.

⁸⁸ It could be that the DAS has lost the passage narrating the departure from Cunda's place. The text says that the Buddha rejoiced Cunda with his dharma exposition, that they were surrounded by a big crowd who waited upon the Buddha and followed him when he left 爾時。周那取一小座於佛前坐。漸為說法。示教利喜已。大眾圍遶。侍從而還 [18c7-8]. Immediately afterwards it narrates how the Buddha, who is on the road, wishes to make a stop. Cf. the next extract.

Sk.: āgamayān(anda yena kuśinagarī). [p. 264]

P.: āyām' ānanda yena kusiṇārā ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti. [4.20]

MSAV: 我今欲往拘尸那城 [p. 390c28]

On the way ... “not far from the golden river,⁸⁹ (the Buddha) who had gotten back to his journey (again) stepped aside from the road ...”⁹⁰

Sk.: ... ant(a)rā ca nadīm hi(raṇyavatīm adhvapratipanno mārḡād avakramy) ... pṛṣṭhī ma āvilāyati ... [p. 264]

P.: atha kho bhagavā maggā okkamma yen' aññataraṃ rukkhamūlaṃ ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamtivā ... kilanto 'smi ānanda nisīdissāmāti. [4.21]

MSAV: (即隨佛後漸向波波邑)。⁹¹ 未到金河於此中間路邊暫住。告阿難陀。我今背痛 [p. 390c29-391a2]

DAS: 中路止一樹下。告阿難言。吾患背痛 [18c8-9]

Thereupon the Buddha expresses his wish to go to the golden river,⁹² where he takes a bath, sprinkles his body, drinks some water,⁹³ then

⁸⁹ The Hiraṇyavāhā river (here: nadī hiraṇyavatī) is another name for the Śoṇa river. Megasthenes called it Εραυνοβόας in Greek. In ancient times the rivers used to flow differently: the Śoṇa river is said to have moved some 25km westwards. Cf. Dieter Schlingloff, *Die altindische Stadt*, p. 29-43; and Franke, *Dīghanikāya*, p. 230. The Pāli and the DAS do not yet mention the golden river here. The location of the stop is only specified by the words “at a tree’s root” or “under a tree”.

⁹⁰ The interruption was due to back pain following the Sk., the MSAV, and the DAS versions. In the Pāli text the Buddha merely says: “I am tired Ānanda, I want to sit down.”

⁹¹ The preceding passage in brackets contains an obvious mistake; the MSAV says that the Buddha and his followers are approaching Pāpā, although they are supposed to have just passed it.

⁹² Note that the Pāli and DAS extracts have him bathing and crossing the Kakutthā river, whereas the Hiraṇyavatī is mentioned in a later passage.

⁹³ Only in the Pāli and the DAS version.

comes out again and lays down to dry off.⁹⁴

Sk.: āga(mayānanda yena nadī hiraṇyavatī.) ... atha bhagavān yena nadī hiraṇyavatī tenopajagām(opetya nadyā hiraṇyavatyaś tīre nivāsanam ekānte sthāpayitvā nadīm hiraṇy(a)vatīm abhyavagāhya gātrāṇi pariśicya nadīm hiraṇyavatīm praty-u(tth) ā(ya nyaśīdad gātrāṇi viśoṣayan.) [p. 282]

P.: āyām' ānanda yena kakutthā nadī ten' upasaṃkamissāmāti ... atha kho bhagavā mahatā bhikkhusaṃghena saddhiṃ yena kakutthā nadī ten' upasaṃkami. upasaṃkamtivā kakutthaṃ nadīm ajjhogahetvā nahātvā ca pivitvā ca pacuttaritvā yena ambavanam ten' upasaṃkami. [4.38-39]

MSAV: 我往金河。阿難陀聞佛教已。即隨佛後至彼河所。佛即脫衣置於岸上。唯著洗衣入河洗浴。出已拭身 [p. 391c8-10]

DAS: 爾時。世尊即詣拘孫河。飲已澡浴。與眾而去。中路止息在一樹下 [p. 20a3-4]

After a while he announces once more his wish to move on to Kuśinagara.⁹⁵

Sk.: (āgamayānanda yena kuśinagarī.) [p. 286]

P.: āyām' ānanda yena hiraññavatiyā nadiyā pārimatīraṃ yena

⁹⁴ In the Sk. and MSAV versions he has taken off his upper robe and left it in a secure place near the river side, which presupposes that he will return to the same shore from where he entered the river. In the Pāli version, however, it seems that he returns to land on the opposite shore, having thus already crossed the river. Further he is said to relax near some mango trees (cf. Franke's note on p. 228).

⁹⁵ The Pāli text has an insert about Cunda who served the last meal to the Buddha. Kuśinagara is mentioned a little later, but much more precise: "Ānanda, we shall go to the other side of the river Hiraññavati, (then reach) the Upavattana of Kusinārā, the sāla forest of the Mallas." The DAS specifies that the place the Buddha wants to go is between the sāla trees (belonging to) the Mallas.

kusinārā-upavattanaṃ mallānaṃ sāla-vanaṃ ten'
upasaṃkamissāmāti. [5.1]

MSAV: 我今欲往拘尸那城 [p. 391c]

DAS: 俱詣拘尸城。末羅雙樹間 [p. 20c1-2]

“Then, halfway between the golden river and Kuśi, the homeland of the Mallas, moving with his monks, he, who had resumed his journey, (again) stepped aside from the road,” and tells Ānanda ...⁹⁶

Sk: atha bhagavān antar(ā) ca nadi(m) hiraṇyavatīm antarā ca kuśi(nagarīm malleṣu janapadeṣu caryāṃ carann atrāntarādhva-pratipanno mārgād avakramyāyusmantam ānandam āmantrayate.) [p. 286]

P: ... yena ambavanaṃ ten' upasaṃkami, upasaṃkamtivā āyasmantaṃ cundakaṃ āmantesi ... [4.39]

MSAV: 既渡金河去城不遠。於路邊住 [p. 391c]

DAS: 中路止息在一樹下。告周那曰 [p. 20a4]

After a short break the Buddha sets out on the last part of his journey. “Then the Honorable together with his disciples reaches the town of Kuśi in the homeland (i.e. the birthplaces) of the Mallas, and there

⁹⁶ In the Pāli this (or a similar) rest takes place just after the bath in a mango-grove; in that version however the Buddha speaks to Cundaka. The DAS also mentions a rest after the bath, but on the road, under a tree, and there the Buddha is also speaking to Cunda(ka) 周那 and not to Ānanda. It seems that these two versions both have the same confusion about Cunda(ka) the monk, to whom the Buddha is supposed to be talking, and Cunda 周那, the lay disciple, who gave the last meal. The transcriptions of the DAS do not allow any differentiation of these two names. The contents of the speech refers to the lay disciple, and before and after that passage Ānanda is always the main interlocutor, so it seems improbable that exactly before the Buddha spoke about Cunda, the lay disciple, he would address Cunda(ka), the monk, instead of Ānanda.

dwells in a site⁹⁷ in the forest of the twin śāla trees.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ According to the note in the SWTF, p. 393, *upavartana* (n.) means Land, Gebiet, and appears exclusively in relation to the Buddha's place of nirvāṇa; further, only the Pāli version seems to interpret it as a proper name. Edgerton, BHS, p. 140f, opts for an original meaning of ‘uncultivated, barren’ land, which would have been later interpreted by the Pāli commentators as a proper name, he also argues that the Chinese translations supports this explanation. In this sense he is probably referring to the compound 生地 found in the MSAV as well as in other Chinese versions. I think however that 生地 is the translation for *janapada*. This Chinese compound can indeed mean uncultivated (i.e. raw) land, but it mostly means: place of origin (i.e. place of birth) and homeland. This meaning is further supported by its position which connects it directly to the Mallas 壯士, rather than to the forest. The DAS has a slightly different formulation: At that time the Honorable one entered the town of Kuśi and proceeded to the original birthplace, between the twin trees of the Mallas. Here it rather seems that ‘the homeland’ or ‘birthplace’ refers to the Buddha. The Chinese versions don't seem to give any correspondence for *upavartana*. But if we keep in mind that *upavartana* etymologically is derived from *upa-vṛt* (to step or walk upon, to move or come near, to approach, to return), we notice that the DAS has indeed translated it but by the unspectacular verb 向 (to proceed, to approach, or to turn towards). The MSAV however does not give any correspondence for *upavartana*, neither precise, nor vague. Based on both these translations, I might argue that the term was either considered insignificant, that it was not understood, or that it was missing in the text from which the MSAV was translated. None of these suppositions points to *upavartana* as the proper name of the famous site where the Buddha's parinirvāṇa took place.

⁹⁸ The śāla tree mentioned in the MPS text is the *Shorea robusta*. Cf. the section 6.6. Plants capable of respect. It is likely that the forest was named ‘forest of the twin śāla trees’ only after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa took place there. The word ‘twin’ is referring to trees, and therefore probably just means ‘two’ or ‘two which look alike’. But since a forest can not be named ‘forest of the two śāla trees’ when it is full of such trees, the word *yamaka* (twin) was used in Sanskrit. When the parinirvāṇa scene is depicted in reliefs, we can usually see two trees, one at each end of the Buddha's bed. Rhys Davids, DN p. 149, says that based on the commentators, the twin śāla trees were so called because the

Sk.: (atha bhagavān malleṣu janapadeṣu caryāṃ caraṇī
kuśīnagarīm anuprāptaḥ . kuśī)nagaryāṃ viharati mallānāṃ
upavartane yamakaśālavane. [p. 294]

P.: atha kho bhagavā mahatā bhikkhusaṃghena saddhiṃ yena
hiraññavatiyā nadiyā pārimatīraṃ yena kusinārā-upavattanaṃ
mallānaṃ sālavanaṃ ten' upasaṃkama. [5.1]

MSAV: 即隨佛後至於壯士生地。住娑羅林將欲涅槃 [p. 392b11-12]

DAS: 爾時。世尊入拘尸城。向本生處末羅雙樹間 [p. 21a2]

There the Buddha requests: “Ānanda, prepare the Tathāgata's bed with the head towards the north⁹⁹ between the twin śāla trees; today during the middle watch of the night, without the slightest remain of attachment (towards life) my complete nirvāṇa will take place in the sphere of nirvāṇa.”¹⁰⁰

Sk.: (prajñāpayānanda tathā)gatasyāntareṇa yamakaśālayor
uttarāśīrṣaṃ mañcam adya tathāgatasya rātryā (madhyame
yāme 'nupadhīṣeṣe) nirvāṇadhātau parinirvāṇaṃ bhaviṣyatīti.
[p. 294]

P.: iñgha me tvam ānanda antarena yamakasālānam uttarasīsakam

two trees were equally grown in respect of the roots, trunks, branches, and leaves. In this passage both Chinese versions have 雙樹, the twin trees, without mentioning the forest, and the verses of the MSAV version [p. 389a] have 雙林, the twin forest, without mentioning the trees. Further, in the above passage the MSAV version says 娑羅林, the śāla-forest, the name being given phonetically. Hence the Chinese versions do not make use of a fixed name when referring to this forest.

⁹⁹ Note that the DAS texts of the editions of the Song 宋, Yuan 元 and Ming 明 dynasties say that the head shall be directed towards the south 南首 and the face towards the north 北 instead of the West 西. Immediately after this passage the DAS has an insert saying “this is an obvious thing (because when) my teaching spreads, it will remain in the north for a long time”.

¹⁰⁰ The Pāli and the DAS version omit the second part of this passage.

mañcakam paññāpehi kilanto 'smi ānanda nipajjissāmīti. [5.1]
MSAV: 汝今為我於雙樹間安置床敷。我當於彼北首而臥。今日中夜
必入涅槃 [p. 392b12-14]
DAS: 汝為如來於雙樹間敷置牀座。使頭北首。面向西方。所以然者。
吾法流布。當久住北方 [p. 21a3-5]

Thus, between those two trees end the geographical travels of the Buddha. He does not move on to any other location.

Ānanda's heartbreaking sadness motivates the Buddha to cheer him up by praising him and to sooth his suffering by expounding the teaching of the inherent impermanency of all created beings and things: "Hence Ānanda, you shall not grieve and shall not exhaust yourself. Why is that? Because everything, which succeeded to be born, which exists, which is created and of composite nature as previously (explained) will disintegrate."

Sk.: (mā) tasmāt tvam ān(anda śoca mā klāma. kasmād eva tat?
kuta etal labhyaṃ ya)t taj jātaṃ bhūtaṃ kṛtaṃ saṃskṛtaṃ
pūrv(avad yāvad viśaṃyogaḥ). [p. 298-300]

P.: alaṃ ānanda mā soci mā paridevi. taṃ kut' ettha ānanda
labbhā. yaṃ taṃ jātaṃ bhūtaṃ saṅkhatam palokadhammaṃ taṃ
vata mā palujjīti n'etaṃ thānaṃ vijjati. [5.14]

MSAV: 阿難陀。世相如是皆不久停。畢歸磨滅無常住者。以是義故。
汝今不應悲啼涕泣生大苦惱。不見世間從緣生法常住不壞 [p. 392c4-6]

DAS: 佛告阿難。止。止。勿憂莫悲泣也 ... [p. 25c7-8]¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ In the DAS version the Buddha does not mention impermanence when consoling Ānanda. However similar words are pronounced in a previous passage by Ānanda when he consoles the weeping Mallas: 是時。阿難慰勞諸末羅言。止。止。勿悲。天地萬物。無生不終。欲使有為而常存者。無有是處。佛不云乎。合會有離。生必有盡 [24c13-16].

Once calmed down, Ānanda inquires why the Buddha's parinirvāṇa will take place in such a desolate place as Kuśinagara, rather than in a great town. Further he suggests and enumerates some of the most important towns of his time.¹⁰² Significant for the purpose of this paper is that the Buddha apparently does not show any interest in Ānanda's proposal and instead goes on expounding, in the most detailed manner, past events that justify his choice of Kuśinagara, which in former times was a great royal capital called Kuśāvati. The Buddha's long narration makes up the *Mahāsudarśanasūtra* (MSS), which forms a constituent part of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.¹⁰³ The ancient town of Kuśāvati is highly idealized and praised by the Buddha and is presented as the perfect royal capital, and its king as the ideal virtuous king. Everything is most shiny and luxurious. The flora and fauna are also utterly refined and artificial: highly artistic and stylized trees, made from precious metals and stones, decorate the palaces and avenues. The most beautiful flowers grow naturally and remain in a permanently blooming state.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² The passage containing the enumeration of the ancient greatest towns has been thoroughly studied by different scholars. Cf. Waldschmidt's summarizing notes in the MPS, p. 304-5, and those in *Die Überlieferungen vom Lebensende des Buddha*, p. 203-205.

¹⁰³ Such is the case in the (reconstructed) Sk. version, the MSAV, the DAS, as well as in the Tibetan version (used by Waldschmidt). It is not clear why the Pāli tradition places the MSS as a separate sūtra in its full length after the MPS. Cf. Waldschmidt's research mentioned in the previous footnote, and Rhys Davids' DN, p. 192. Note that the DAS places the MSS before the scene in which the Buddha is consoling the crying Ānanda.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. MPS, p. 306-310, 328 and 332. These surroundings belong according to the MPS to some remote and 'mythological' past, and will hence not be treated here. Their description is however interesting and strongly contrasts with the previously mentioned environment of the MPS. Such shiny and luxurious places can

The Buddha was himself Mahāsudarśana, the king of Kuśāvati, and was ruling over a vast area, the homeland of the Mallas. In this land, he says, he gave up his life already six times. His parinirvāṇa will be the seventh and the last time he gives up his life.

Nowhere in the ten celestial spheres is there a place where he could give up life an eighth time,¹⁰⁵ because he has totally overcome the thirst (i.e. the desire) for existence ...

Sk.: tac c(ānandārhataḥ samyaksaṃbuddhasya nāhaṃ taṃ loke) pṛthivīpradeśaṃ samanupaśyāmi (naiva) pūrvasyān diśi dakṣiṇasyāṃ paścimasyāṃ uttarasyāṃ diśi yatra tathāga(tasyāḥ amaḥ śarīranikṣepaḥ.) [p. 354]

P.: na kho pañāhaṃ ānanda taṃ padesaṃ samanupassāmi sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamaṇabrāhmaṇiyā pajāya sadevamanussāya yattha tathāgato aṭṭhamaṃ sarīraṃ nikkhipeyyāti. [MSS 2.15]

MSAV: 又復如來應正等覺。於十方界更無第八捨身命處。何以故。我生已盡斷諸惑業。更不於餘受後有故 [p. 394b11-13]

DAS: 今我成無上正覺。復捨性命。措身於此。自今已後。生死永絕。無有方土。措吾身處。此最後邊。更不受有 [p. 24b23-25]

The Buddha requests his monks not to indulge, after his nirvāṇa, in such thoughts as: “now we have no master anymore”, and asks them to uphold the Prātimokṣa¹⁰⁶ and to regard it, as if it was him, their mas-

be found in other texts and mostly correspond to devas' heavens, paradises and pure lands.

¹⁰⁵ In the DAS version the Buddha does not give such clear numbers regarding his previous life, but he also mentions that he will have no different, i.e. no further, life.

¹⁰⁶ The Sk. version has *prātimokṣa*, the MSAV phonetically renders this term as 波羅底木叉 (a more standard transcription would be 波羅提木叉). The Pāli

ter, who was still present ...

Sk.: syā(t kha)l(u yu)ṣ(m)ākaṃ bhikṣavo mamātyayāt.
parinirvṛto 'smākaṃ śāst(ā). n(ā)sty etarhy asmākaṃ (śāstā)
niḥsaraṇa(ṃ) vā. na khalv evaṃ draṣṭavyam. yo vo
mayānvardhamāsaṃ p(r)ā(t)i(mokṣa uddeśitaḥ sa vo 'dyāgr)eṇa
śās(t)ā sa ca v(o niḥsaraṇam). [p. 386]

P.: atha kho bhagavā āyasmantaṃ ānandaṃ āmantesi. siyā kho
pan' ānanda tumhākaṃ evam assa. atītasatthukaṃ pāvacaṇaṃ
n'atthi no satthā ti. yo vo ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca
desito paññatto so vo mam' accayena satthā. [6.1]

MSAV: 汝等苾芻我涅槃後。作如是念我於今日無有大師。汝等不應
起如是見。我令汝等每於半月。說波羅底木叉。當知此則是汝大師是汝
依處。若我住世無有異也 [p. 389c29-399a3]

DAS: 佛言。當自檢心。阿難。汝謂佛滅度後。無復覆護。失所持耶。
勿造斯觀。我成佛來所說經戒。即是汝護。是汝所持 [p. 26a25-28]

In an interesting passage¹⁰⁷ the Buddha mentions himself the four main places, where he will be worshiped in the future: “where the

however is more general or more global, and has “dhammo ca vinayo ca”. Similarly the DAS mentions “Sūtra and Vinaya” 經戒. Here the affinities between the Sk. and MSAV on one side and the Pāli and DAS on the other appear very clearly. It seems too much of a reduction or simplification to replace the Buddha (and/or his teachings) with the *prātimokṣa*-ceremony, i.e. the ritual of evoking all the rules and showing repentance, which is included in the *vinaya*. The combination ‘sūtra and vinaya’ seems more appropriate and complete to represent the Buddha and his teaching (especially since abhidharma as a separate category can be considered a later development). It is not excluded that some analytical minds blow up the mention ‘prātimokṣa’ to the expression ‘sūtra and vinaya’ for the sake of completeness. But it can also not be excluded that after a few centuries some tradition decided to emphasize the *prātimokṣa* as the core of the teaching.

¹⁰⁷ In the DAS the four places of future worship of the Buddha are mentioned when Ānanda was pouring tears, just after the Buddha's consolation

Bhagavat¹⁰⁸ was born, where he realized his highest enlightenment becoming a Buddha, where the Bhagavat set in motion the dharma-wheel¹⁰⁹ by turning it three times (producing) the appropriate twelve ākāra, (and) where the Bhagavat totally expired into the realm of extinction in which nothing is left behind.”¹¹⁰

Sk.: iha bhagavāñ jātaḥ. iha bha(gavān anuttarāṃ samyaksambodhim abhisambuddhaḥ. iha bhagavatā triparivartaṃ dvādaśākāraṃ dhārmyaṃ dharmacakraṃ) pravartitam. iha

(comparison between Ānanda and a cakravartin), and there it is the Buddha's response to Ānanda's worry and sorrow [佛告阿難。汝勿憂也。諸族姓子常有四念。何等四 ...] that so many people used to come to see the Buddha and that in future nobody will come again. The Buddha says: “don't say that ...”. In the Pāli, although the position differs, the passage is also told by the Buddha as a response to Ānanda's sorrow that after the rainy season there will be no great audience at the Buddha's place anymore. The Buddha answers: “there are four places, Ānanda, which the believing clansman, should visit with feelings of reverence ...”. Slightly intriguing is the fact that whereas Ānanda was saying he will miss the monks who used to gather at the Buddha's place after the rainy season, the Buddha's answer refers to worship-places for laymen.

¹⁰⁸ In the Sanskrit version of this passage the Buddha calls himself 'Bhagavan', i.e. the Magnificent.

¹⁰⁹ Referring to the Buddha's first sermon, note that only the Sk. version mentions the standard formula about the wheel being turned trice (for each of four truths) and the resulting twelve ākāra (the twelve steps of assimilation of the four truths).

¹¹⁰ The four places of future worship are: 1. Lumbinī, 2. Buddhagayā, 3. Sārnāth (near Benares), and 4. Kuśinagara. These places coincide with four of the six aforementioned causes of an earthquake related to great events of the Buddha's life. The two events in the Buddha's life which are said to have caused an earthquake but are not mentioned in this list as places of future worship are 'the place' of his descent into his mother's womb, and the place where he abandoned the remainder of his life.

bhagavān anupadhiśeṣe nirvā(ṇadhātau parinirvṛtaḥ.) [p. 388]

P.: idha tathāgato jāto ti ānanda saddhassa kulaputtassa dassanīyaṃsaṃvejanīyaṃ ṭhānaṃ. idha tathāgato anuttaraṃ sammāsambodhiṃ abhisambuddho ti ānanda idha tathāgatena anuttaraṃ dhammacakkaṃ pavattitaṃ ti ānanda idha tathāgato anupādisesāya nibbānadhātuyā parinibbuto ti ānanda [5.8]

MSAV: 一謂佛生處。二成正覺處。三轉法輪處。四入大涅槃處 [p. 399a11-13]

DAS: 一曰念佛生處。歡喜欲見。憶念不忘。生戀慕心。二曰念佛初得道處。歡喜欲見。憶念不忘。生戀慕心。三曰念佛轉法輪處。歡喜欲見。憶念不忘。生戀慕心。四曰念佛般泥洹處。歡喜欲見。憶念不忘。生戀慕心 [p. 26a3-9]

The Buddha's last words¹¹¹ refer once more to the composite, impermanent nature of all things.¹¹²

Sk.: aṅga bhikṣavas tūṣṇiṃ bhavata vyayadharmāḥ sarvasaṃskārāḥ. iyaṃ tatra tathāgatasya paścimā (vācā). [p. 394]

P.: handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo. vāyadhammā saṃkhārā appamādena sampādehāti. ayaṃ tathāgatassa paccimā vācā. [6.7]

MSAV: 佛言。法皆如是諸行無常。是我最後之所教誨 [p. 399b1-2]

DAS: 一切萬物無常存者。此是如來末後所說 [p. 26b20-21]

¹¹¹ The MSAV version refers to these last words more specifically as the last “teaching and instruction” and the DAS as the last “explanation”. Both Chinese versions use the same term 無常. The MSAV refers to all the dharma 法, whereas the DAS uses the character for thing/things 物, which is no special doctrinal or philosophical term.

¹¹² Cf. Waldschmidt's discussion on the relation between this last utterance and the preceding event of the Buddha exhibiting his upper body as proof of the almightiness of impermanence, *Beiträge zur Textgeschichte des MPS, I. Der letzte Ausspruch des Buddha*, p. 56-63.

Thereupon, the Buddha attained nirvāṇa after passing through various stages of meditation. “At the time immediately after the magnificent Buddha extinguished, there was an extraordinary great earthquake, fiery meteors flow around lightning up the sky, (and) in the atmosphere¹¹³ resounded divine drums (i.e. thunder).”¹¹⁴

Sk.: (samanantaraparinirvṛte buddhe bhagavaty atyarthaṃ tasmin samaye mahāpṛthivīcālo ‘bhūd ulkāpātā diśodāhā antarīkṣe devadundubhayo nadanti). [p. 398]

P.: parinibbute bhagavati saha parinibbānā mahābhūmicālo ahoṣi bhīṃsanako lomahaṃso devadundubhiyo ca phalīṃsu. [6.10]

MSAV: 爾時世尊纔涅槃後。大地震動流星晝現諸方熾然。於虛空中諸天擊鼓 [p. 399b20-21]

DAS: 佛般涅槃。當於爾時。地大震動。諸天。世人皆大驚怖。諸有幽冥日月光明所不照處。皆蒙大明。各得相見。迭相謂言。彼人生此。彼人生此。其光普遍。過諸天光 [p. 26c7-11]¹¹⁵

Further, the twin trees let their flowers fall on the Buddha, covering his body. “Immediately after the magnificent Buddha extinguished in the twin-śāla-forest, the two trees scattered (their) śāla-flowers on the lion-like-posture of the Tathāgata.”

¹¹³ Antarīkṣaḥ is the intermediate space between heaven and earth, i.e. the heavenly quarters.

¹¹⁴ In the wording these events are described similarly to those which took place when he entered the meditation for fixing the remaining life-span.

¹¹⁵ The DAS is more detailed and dramatic than the other versions and resembles the previous passage on earthquake (15c19-23). The extraordinary events produced at the moment of nirvāṇa are however described in a more universal-cosmic manner than the moment of the fixation of the remaining life span. Thus the people of all the countries are replaced by all the beings of heaven and earth, etc. but some wordings are exactly the same.

Sk.: (samanantaraparinirvṛte buddhe bhagavaty ubhau yamakaśālanasya durmottamau tathāgatasya śiṃhaśayyāṃ śālapuṣpair avāki)ratām. [p. 398]

P: tena kho pana samayena yamaka-sālā sabba-phāli-phullā honti akāla-pupphehi. te tathāgatassa sarīraṃ okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti tathāgatassa pūjāya. dibbāni pi mandārava-pupphāni antalikkhā papatanti, tāni tathāgatassa sarīraṃ okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti tathāgatassa pūjāya. dibbāni pi candana-cuṇṇāni antalikkhā papatanti, tāni tathāgatassa sarīraṃ okiranti ajjhokiranti abhippakiranti tathāgatassa pūjāya. dibbāni pi turiyāni antalikkhe vajjenti tathāgatassa pūjāya. dibbāni pi saṅgītāni antalikkhe vattanti tathāgatassa pūjāya.

[5.2-5.3]

MSAV: 爾時如來入涅槃時。娑羅雙樹名華下散彌覆金軀 [p. 399c]

DAS: 時。雙樹間所有鬼神篤信佛者。以非時花布散于地 [p. 21a7-8]

The MPS continues with a series of poems composed in honor of the Buddha, a description of the monks' lamentation, the details of the funeral held by the Mallas, the quarrel about the relics and the final agreement on the distribution of the relics. This study of the Buddha's last surroundings, however, ends here under the śāla twin trees. Of the many poems, I shall mention here only the end of the last one: "His consciousness was released, as a lamp goes out."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ This last verse in the Sanskrit version is spoken by Aniruddha. The Pāli and the MSAV versions are very close to it, and the MSAV uses even the phonetic transcription for mokṣa 木叉, (in Jap. still pronounced MOKUSHA). The DAS however has still dozens of verses following those of Aniruddha 阿那律 and the wording of the quoted verse differs: "Because he originally comes from nirvāṇa, his spiritual light sinks (back into nirvāṇa again, i.e. extinguishes)". It could be that 曜 was mistakenly written for 耀. Usually the term 靈光 is used in later Buddhism for 'the Buddha's nature'. The DAS version of this poem seems to have come under māhayānistic influence and inspiration. It could be

Sk. (... pradyotasyeva nirvāṇaṃ vimokṣas tasya cetasaḥ.) [p. 400]

P. ... pajjotass' eva nibbānaṃ vimokho cetaso ahū. [6.10]

MSAV: ... 佛證真木叉 譬如燈焰滅 [400a13]

DAS: ... 本由寂滅來 靈曜於是沒 [26c28]

4) Notes on the Buddha's last surroundings

The background of the last events in the Buddha's life mostly consists of natural sceneries, mountains, forests or rivers, and of habitations: villages or towns. The focus will first be directed towards the natural environment in which the Buddha resides, and thereafter the places where people live will be discussed.

4.1. Nature

Although the Buddha passes through villages and towns, where he begs for alms and preaches to villagers and townsmen, he mostly sojourns outside the zone of habitation in a natural environment as we will see in this section.¹¹⁷

that in later periods some of the 'original' poems were adapted to some more 'advanced' doctrines and since the DAS has far more poems as the other versions, that some were added later, to the 'Indian' or the Chinese version.

¹¹⁷ Note that Johannes Bronkhorst, *The two Sources of Indian Asceticism*, Schweizer Asiatische Studien, Bern 1993, distinguishes between Vedic and non-Vedic sources of asceticism (p. 9, 18) and mentions two different types of ascetics belonging to non-Vedic traditions: the parivrāja, a wandering ascetic, who lives in chastity, obtains support of life in a village and who's religious practice consists of insight into the true nature of the self, and the vānaprastha, a forest-dweller, who also lives in chastity, but supports his life with roots, fruits, leaves and grass, who eventually will fast himself to death, and who's religious practice consists of inaction (p. 12-15, 17). The author further explains that among the four āśramas mentioned in the *Gautama Dharmasūtra* of the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*, the bhikṣu begs and is therefore allowed to enter a village (p. 30), and that he hence resembles the parivrāja, without searching for

4.1.1. Mountains and forests: the ideal places for religious retreat

The narration starts with the Buddha sojourning on a mountain. Isolated mountain areas must have been thought auspicious for religious practice, the same goes for lonely forests. Actually, when Indian Buddhist texts describe sites for meditation and dwelling places for monks, most of the retreats take place in forests. This was probably due to the actual reality of the landscape, especially in the Ganges valley. In China however, Buddhist retreats would rather take place in inaccessible mountain areas, which indicates that such places were perhaps the only choice for those seeking quietude for meditation in China.¹¹⁸

It is interesting to note that according to the MPS numerous forests were located north of the villages, and thus perhaps laid above the villages, if the mentioned sites were located on grounds rising towards the Himalaya. However, it cannot be excluded that the expression "... they resided in the ... forest north of the village" became a formulated expression, used whenever the real memory of such details was lost.¹¹⁹ In either way, whether real location or stereotyped formula of replacement, it seems that the north as a direction played a specific and important role.

the self, he aims directly at liberation (p. 32). As Buddha is said to have called his disciples bhikṣu (beggars), this presupposes that although monks perform religious practice in the nature, from the very beginning the Buddha expected them to interact with the common people from whom they would receive a daily meal at lunch time.

¹¹⁸ Cf. hereto also Bill Porter, *Road to Heaven, Encounters with Chinese Hermits*, 1993.

¹¹⁹ Even regarding such details there maybe existed some rules similar to those treated by G. Schopen.

4.1.2. The Śiṃśapā forests

The Buddha stays in a śiṃśapā forest near Kuṭi, Veṇugrāmaka (Bamboo village), Kuṣṭha, and the little town called Bhoga. Since śiṃśapā is definitely the name of a type of tree,¹²⁰ this could indicate that sissoo forests were quite widespread in the area north of the Ganges during the Buddha's lifetime.

4.1.3. The Kuñjikā-site

The site's name probably refers to the plants growing in its vicinity: the Fennel flower.¹²¹ When the MPS refers to locations, it gives first the

¹²⁰ Śiṃśapā (f.) or rarely śiṃśapa (m.) is the Dalbergia Sissoo tree, also called Aśoka tree or Shisham tree (from the Leguminosae family). It can grow up to 30m in height and 80cm in diameter, but is usually smaller and has a light crown. Flowers are whitish to pink, and appear in dense clusters. Nowadays Sissoo is native to the foothills of the Himalayas in India, Pakistan and Nepal. It primarily grows along river banks below 900m of altitude, but can be found up to 1500m. It well tolerates light frosts, as well as dry seasons of several months (cf. M.I. Sheikh, Director General, Pakistan Forest Institute, Peshawar, *A publication of the Forest, Farm, and Community Tree Network (FACT Net)*, www.winrock.org/forestry/factnet.htm).

¹²¹ The Fennel flower is the *Nigella indica*, also called *Nigella sativa*, *Abrus precatorius* or *Trigonella faenum graecum* (from the Ranunculaceae family). It has deep black, sharp-cornered seed grains, which are used as spice. Its origin is probably Western Asia. From Iran, it spread to Northern India. Today, the plant is cultivated from the Near East to India, as well as in Central and South Asia. The *Abrus precatorius* (from the Fabaceae family) is a plant bearing round, hard and shiny, red and black seeds used as weights or for necklaces, which are extremely poisonous if cracked. This plant is native to the tropics and grows by the seashore among the undergrowth and in hedges. The *Trigonella faenum graecum*, (from the Fabaceae family), has brownish-yellow seeds which are used as spice since ancient times. Its fresh leaves are prepared like spinach and eaten as a tasty vegetable. This plant grows from the Mediterranean sea until China (cf. Gernot Katzer, <http://www-ang.kfunigraz.ac.at/~katzer/>

name of the village or town, and then it mentions the actual dwelling place, which is usually located outside the inhabited area, and which often is designated by the type of its forest. In this case, however, because the plants might be too small or too scarce in number to be called a forest, they were referred to by adding *vasathe*.¹²²

4.1.4. The Mango forest

Within the narration of the MPS, it is only while he visits Vaiśālī, that the Buddha is said to dwell in a mango forest (*āmrāpālivana*). This place should rather be taken as a cultivated mango grove, than a forest of wild mango trees, especially since it is located close to the town and mango have been cultivated in India since very ancient times.¹²³ If the precise wording of this passage is taken into account, we note, that the Buddhist community stays in a privately owned forest or park without

[index.html](#)).

¹²² The word *vasatha* (m.), probably from $\sqrt{\text{vas}}$, *vasati* (living, staying), here means place or site.

¹²³ The Mango tree (Anacardiaceae family) can grow 10-30m high, with a broad crown of 30-38m. The tree is long-lived; some specimens are known to be 300 years old and still fruiting. It is a nearly evergreen tree, and its leaves and fruits appear alternatively on a few branches at a time. The mango tree grows naturally in tropical lowlands and up to 900m of altitude. It originally comes from Southeast Asia. The wild Mango tree is believed to have first appeared in India during the quaternary period. Cultivation started some 4,000 to 6,000 years ago. The mango fruits are very nutritious and therefore highly appreciated. In Buddhist literature the tree is sometimes mentioned as part of a story. And it is even thought that Buddhist monks were responsible for its spread to the Malaysian Archipelago and to East-Asia (cf. Daniel G. Douthett, *The Mango: Asia's King of Fruits*, S. I. Univ. Carbondale, Ethnobotanical Leaflets, <http://www.siu.edu/~ebl/>; and Julia F. Morton, *Mango, Fruits of warm climates*, p. 221-239, Miami 1987, http://newcrop.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/nexus/Mangifera_indica_nex.html).

previously seeking the owner's permission. For sure, the owner, a courtesan called Āmrāpālī,¹²⁴ who afterwards warmly welcomes the community even at her private domicile, does not seem to mind them staying there. On the contrary it appears clearly that she feels honored and pleased. It could also be that the permission had been given on a previous visit and was valid for multiple uses.¹²⁵ If we have a close look at the DAS version, we read that the Buddha, upon reaching Vaiśālī at first does not stay in a park but merely under a tree.¹²⁶ Āmrāpālī comes to meet him there and invites him to come and stay in her park at sunset.¹²⁷ Only thereafter the DAS mentions that the Buddha is staying in the Āmrāpālī-park.

We thus may conclude that within the sphere of what may be called the natural residential sites of the Buddha, some may have been in natural wilderness (real forests) but that others were rather cultivated and privately owned parks closer to urban centers.

¹²⁴ Āmrāpālī is written 菴婆婆梨 in the DAS, for which Karashima gives the UPkt.-form Ambabālī.

¹²⁵ Nevertheless, it would be interesting to research whether it was an accepted custom that religious ascetics or pilgrims may reside, uninvited, in someone's territory. Especially in case of a large group, no matter how great the care taken by the visitors, the place would surely have suffered some kind of deterioration. Such studies can however not be based on the sole MPS and are therefore left aside for future studies. Also the Buddha is often said to have traveled with 500 monks, which is an unbelievable statement. The size of the group becomes especially dubious if one considers the lunch invitations to private homes made to him and to those traveling with him by lay-followers such as Cunda and Āmrāpālī.

¹²⁶ 到毘舍離 坐一樹下 [T1, p. 13b19].

¹²⁷ 唯願世尊及諸弟子明受我請。即於今暮止宿我園 [T1, p. 13b28-13c1].

4.2. Human sites

Whereas natural sites have neither evil nor virtuous characteristics, human sites, which represent the civilized and cultured aspect of the world, do bear, for better and for worse, the signs and consequences of humanization.

4.2.1. Bad and deadly places

Some major calamities are narrated in the MPS.

Many people died in Nādikā in an epidemic. The Sanskrit version says that the victims' bodies were 'as black as pigment'.¹²⁸ Although the different versions bear some divergences, in all of them a certain amount of people died in Nādikā, either because of an epidemic (MSAV) or for an unknown/unmentioned reason (Pāli/DAS). The DAS figures the highest number of dead. In all the versions the Buddha is asked about the destiny, i.e. the place of rebirth, of these victims. These question-and-answer-passages are more or less extensive but in all the versions, after having given the required explanations, the Buddha rebukes Ānanda or the inquiring monks for bothering him with such questions. Thus in the Nādikā-affair the focus is first given to the whereabouts of the deceased, rather than to their cause of death, however this priority of interest is strongly criticized by the Buddha. We do not know whether the criticism indicates how purposeless inquiries about the destinies of deceased people are, or whether the criticism more precisely refers to the exaggerated interest in results and effects without consid-

¹²⁸ This symptom could point to leprosy. However, leprosy does not cause sudden death, and would most probably have been called by its proper name. The description rather points to a plague-like disease, maybe the "black death", so called due to the black spots appearing all over the body of the infected person, who would die after a few days.

ering their causes, eg., the inquirers could have asked why these people died, what their previous bad deeds had been to have caused such sudden death. The essence of this passage remains unclear, but it shows unequivocally that the epidemic or other causes which ended so many peoples' lives is not its main concern. Neither the villagers nor the monks are said to have been scared, although it might have been a contagious illness and the area might still have been infected. None of the versions mentions a direct connection between the surroundings and the death of those persons.

In the Veṇu (Bamboo) village some further calamity has provoked a famine, which must have been so hard that it was difficult to survive on begging.

Further the Sanskrit and the MSAV versions mention a village called Kuṣṭha, unknown to the Pāli and DAS versions. The word *kuṣṭha* is used as a name for several plants of the Costus family,¹²⁹ but might also

¹²⁹ The different plants named *kuṣṭha* are: 1.) *Costus speciosus*, called crepe or wild ginger, it grows up to 20cm high and has white translucent flowers resembling white crepe paper. Several forms of it originated in India and in Southeast Asia and still grow there; the Rhizomes are used to make medicines in India (Cf. Benjamin Stone, *The flora of Guam*, Micronesia, 1970, and Dave Skinner <http://www.nettally.com/skinnerd/ombrage.html>, California, 2001); 2.) *Costus arabicus* or *Kostos arabikos*, is a plant described by the Greek physician Dioscorides (c. 40 -90 AD), which can grow from one to three meters high, it is easily identified by its snowy white flowers, often tinged with purple and is found in moist forests and on river banks; 3.) *Saussurea auriculata* or *Saussurea lappa* (from Asteraceae family), commonly called Costus, Costus root or by its pharmaceutical name of *Radix Saussurea*, it bears single globular purple flowers in midsummer, grows in eastern Nepal on steep slopes at about 4000m altitude, and is used in India for antiseptic, fungicide, aphrodisiac,

mean leprosy, a medicine or a poison. The MSAV version has 重患村, literally “the village of repeated (or heavy) sufferings”. Regardless of the original Indian meaning of the village’s name, the Chinese translator obviously understands it as a terrible illness, since 患 is especially used for sufferings related to illness. There is no proof that the translator of the MSAV is correct in his understanding, but it could even be that Kuṣṭha is not the real name of the village, but rather a descriptive name of a village, where many people died. If Kuṣṭha was ‘a village of suffering’ this might have prompted the Buddha to stress the value of śīla in the discourses¹³⁰ he held there and in the neighboring villages. The Buddha’s choice of moral subjects in those villages could indicate that several calamities had hit the area, and that accordingly he taught the surest means of obtaining liberation from those sufferings. Calamities could be considered the direct results of immoral conduct, thus, according to Buddhism they can be controlled by good moral conduct.

Again another village is called *Pāpā* in Sanskrit, but *Pāva* in Pāli. The MSAV follows the Sanskrit version with 波波 and the DAS is closer to the Pāli with 波婆 for which Karashima indicates the UPkt.-form *Pāvā*. Whereas *pāpā* surely connotes something evil or some sort of suffering, *pāva* could be derived from *pāleti/pālayati* bearing such meanings

fumigant, hair-black, perfume and shampoo (cf. <http://www.crug-farm.co.uk> and <http://www.rain-tree.com/costus.htm>). The other meanings such as medicine or poison most probably derive from one of these plants.

¹³⁰ (Sk.) śīlaprabhāvitaḥ samādhiś cirasthitiko bhavati. prajñāparibhāvitaṃ cittaṃ samyag eva vimucyate rāgadveṣamohebhyaḥ [p. 228]: “By practicing moral conduct samādhi (power of concentration) is long lasting. A mind practicing wisdom will be rightly freed from attachment, hatred and ignorance”.

as protect, protected, and preserved.¹³¹ Both names *pāpā* as well as *pāva* could exist in both languages, Pāli and Sanskrit. There is no way to know whether one tradition has cleansed an ill-sounding name or the other one has purposely or mistakenly given an ill meaning to that village. It could also be that none of these names are original, and that they are both derived from an unknown local dialect.

In the same passage the Sanskrit version has the Buddha staying in some *Jalūkā* forest (evt. meaning 'leech forest'). The MSAV has 折鹿迦林, which is the phonetic transcription of *Jalūkā* although maybe not its most direct one. The DAS has him stay in some park called 闍頭, the UPkt. given by Karashima is *Jadū*, which is surely connected to the name *Jalūkā* in one or the other way. The Pāli text however has him stay in Cunda's mango grove. Note that Cunda, the smith, appears in all the versions as the interlocutor of the Buddha in the passage.

Some textual "cleansing" probably occurred in the Pāli. The fact that the Pāli version mentions neither the kuṣṭha village, nor an epidemic, nor a famine, nor an evil village, or other unpleasant details, might be due to a conscious process of embellishing the life story of the Buddha's last days. Certain phenomena and events were maybe considered as too disturbing. It seems difficult to imagine that such unpleasant details would have been added to the Sanskrit version later on. It is indeed worth noting that very unpleasant happenings and evil sounding names are included in the Sanskrit and sometimes in the Chinese

¹³¹ Cf. *pāti* in M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, Heidelberg, 1963, AV tanū-pāna = Br. tanū-pāvan, die Person schirmend, shield/protect the person.

versions. Contrasting lovely places, these details add some seemingly realistic, although crude, viewpoints to the story. It could however be that it felt like this in previous times as well, i.e. this apparent balance between good and bad events might also have appealed to previous generations, and thus there is no certitude that an ill-sounding place or unwholesome event must be true merely based on the fact that it is unwholesome.

4.2.2. Delightful and pleasant sites

Sometimes the Buddha stayed in extremely nice places, for example in the sites in or around Vaiśālī. First he sojourned in the beautiful mango grove belonging to Āmrapālī. Then he dwelled at the shore of the Markkaṭa lake, or pond, assumingly a charming site, from where during daytime he would go to the Cāpāla caitya for meditation. One day, while meditating there, the Buddha expressed his appreciation of various sites and concluded his homage by saying “manifold is Jampudvīpa, sweet is the life of humans”. These words are somehow puzzling, because the Buddha generally taught that life is suffering and that seeking liberation from suffering and rebirth is the main goal. Particularly the sentence “sweet is life” differs greatly from the general tone of the MPS, which tends to avoid sentimentalism. Since these words are said to have been pronounced by the Buddha himself they do merit some special attention. I think that the following conception can be deduced from the full statement: the manifoldness of India’s beautiful and religiously valuable sites enables the Buddha to consider life as pleasant or sweet. The implied ideas that the diversity and religious value of surroundings and sites make up their beauty and interest, and that their uniqueness enhances their appreciation, are admirably well combined. The statement effectively points out that life is sweet thanks to various religious sites. The Buddha does not indulge

in praising what is considered pleasant by the ordinary people.

The narration also depicts a very touching moment in the Buddha's story. When departing from Vaiśālī, the Buddha reaches a park overlooking the town and gives a last glance to Vaiśālī. In fact, the moving aspect of this passage, which lays in the Buddha feeling some nostalgia for this place, is somehow overthrown by the following passages in which he is described as a majestic elephant-world-ruler¹³² who turns back with his full body (and not just with his head) and that the event is repeated 'forth and back' by description, question, answer and concluding verses. The text therefore lays much stress on this elephant-like-turning of the body and also states that it is indeed the last time he looks at Vaiśālī, that he will not return there, because he will soon enter parinirvāṇa. No indication can be found in the text that the last look is tainted by sentimentalism or nostalgia, but still I think that under the cover of firm neck bones¹³³ lays a spontaneous move full of emotions regarding a dear place.

The comments on Pāṭali also qualify the town as a special and remarkable place. It is the proper environment for great people because great gods live there. It is said that the value of a city is determined by the deities residing in it and by its residents. It becomes very clear that great gods and excellent people are not supposed to live just anywhere.

¹³² The first descriptive passage says: (bha)gavān vaiśālīsāmantakenātikraman dakṣiṇena sarvakāyena nāgāvalokitenāvalok(ayati) [p. 226].

¹³³ The DN by Rhys Davids, p. 131, has a note quoting Buddhaghosa who says that "the Buddhas were accustomed on looking backwards to turn the whole body round as an elephant does; because the bones in their neck were firmly fixed, more so than those of ordinary men!"

Instead, they seem to mutually influence each other's choice of residence.

4.3. Preferences on location and direction

According to the MPS there are thus different sorts of places to which the Buddha gives preference. On one hand the Buddhist community sought mainly natural places, usually forests, as its dwelling places, but on the other hand, as we have seen in the aforementioned passages, the Buddha also resided in urban centers. Among those he used to visit, he seems to have preferred Pāṭali and Vaiśālī, and as we shall see in section five, also Kuśinagara, the ancient Kuśāvati.

Directions are also consciously taken into account in the MPS. At Kuśinagara the Buddha expressly requests to have his bed installed with the head of the bed pointing towards the north. The positioning of the main gate of certain monuments towards the north sometimes indicates that these are graves. The north is positively connoted as the direction of deathlessness (*amṛtam*). The text itself does not give any particular reason for this position, either because the reason was evidently understood at the time, or because it was never questioned. A later censure of an earlier comment seems unlikely.

A manipulation of the directions by some Chinese editors is however quite likely and would explain the differences appearing in some of the DAS versions. All cultures give a certain importance to directions, and like to attribute certain meanings to them, even if very differing ones. The direction of the Buddha's head would surely not have been left to chance. The Chinese editors of the Song 宋, Yuan 元 and Ming 明 dynasties (10th - 17th century) seemed to have preferred the south for the Buddha's head direction. This 'correction' has probably been made

in the Song period by the first editors to fit 'official Chinese world view' and copied thereafter. In the deviating versions of the DAS there is a puzzling detail, which is the direction of the Buddha's face. The general tradition, not only the MPS, tells us that he was resting on his right side in the 'lion's posture'. If his head pointed towards the north he was necessarily facing west. Now, if the south replaces the north, then the east should replace the west if the Buddha was laying in the aforementioned position. The Song, Yuan and Ming editions of the DAS say however that he faces north, although his head is said to be directed south.¹³⁴ In the following sentence which explains that this is so because the teaching will spread towards the north all versions of the DAS coincide.

Directional preferences seem to be indeed very culture-bound. It would be interesting to research whether related concepts contained in the MPS antedate, postdate or are at all related to the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. It is not excluded that regarding this topic the text contains general pan-Indian beliefs and that in later stages it might have been tainted by compilers' or editors' worldviews or ideologies.¹³⁵

Even if I have mentioned in this section the Buddha's preference for one or the other place, and for the direction of the north rather than for any of the other cardinal points, I should underline the fact that within

¹³⁴ There is a Japanese Zen Buddhism saying, which most probably is unrelated to this text passage, but which mentions something similar: '南にむかって北斗をみる' derived from 面南看北斗, 'to face the south while looking up to the north'. This saying is used however to refer to an impossible thing. Cf. *The Japanese English Zen Buddhist Dictionary* by Yūhō Yokoi, Tokyo, 1991, p. 454.

¹³⁵ I hope to research this topic on the preference of directions more in depth in some future study based on a larger choice of Buddhist and other texts.

the whole MPS such indications are rare and that the main accent regarding the topic of liking or disliking is clearly put somewhere else: if one understands the inherent impermanence of all things, one should not produce the ideas of preference and liking. Obviously in the MPS, especially towards the end, impermanence is mentioned with reference to the Buddha who has become old and weary, and who will soon reach parinirvāṇa. The Buddha reminds Ānanda that everything which exists will disintegrate. It seems that impermanence is mostly discussed when people are caring or worrying about other people's death, as for example described in the passage on the events of Nāḍika. However the concept can generally be applied to living beings as well as to anything else. The MPS also contains some changes regarding environment: those of Patali are described for the better. The Buddha seems to appreciate the enlargement and fortification of the town. The changes which occurred in Kuśāvati, from the ancient times of King Mahāsudarśana until the time the Buddha reaches the place then called Kuśinagara, are not directly lamented or deplored, but the magnificent description of the ancient Kuśāvati leaves no doubt that a deterioration has taken place, although the Buddha's narration does rather focus on the ancient glory than on the desolate state at the time of the Buddha. Thus I may say that according to the MPS the concept of impermanence applies even to environment. It does not however apply to space as such. As we will see the dimension of space is treated as something beyond the reach of impermanency.

5) Notes on time and space

5.1. Kuśinagara and Kuśāvati

According to the MPS the Buddha does not choose Kuśinagara as the site of his nirvāṇa because of its present state, but for what it had

previously been. Hence there is a sort of mutually dependent or transitive aspect of priority among space and time. On one hand, past time prevails upon present time, as well as upon location, since a place of little present value is chosen due to its ancient value. On the other hand, although the ancient value has actually disappeared, because the Buddha chooses the place, location seems to prevail upon time. Thus it seems that the Buddha values Kuśinagara's past and his own past experiences there more than any present, thriving place. However, he is not supposed to be a man of nostalgia. There is no obvious hint in the text why past events are considered when choosing the site of nirvāṇa. Although the text states that the Buddha will give up his life in Kuśinagara for the seventh and final time, the reason, why he should enter nirvāṇa where he previously passed away, is not explained. Since the Buddha is not going to be reborn anymore, the choice of the site can not be for the sake of positioning his future rebirth on earth. The narration of the MPS continues, as if the Buddha's purpose for coming all the way to Kuśinagara, and for enduring this travel, which was not an easy one, since he suffered from back pain and had to interrupt his journey on several occasions for a rest, is to be found in the *Mahāsudarśanasūtra* (MSS). The MSS is told by the Buddha in the forest of the twin śāla trees and is therefore included in the MPS. The MSS is the story of Buddha's past life in Kuśāvātī, the jewel town of antiquity. Its narration starts exactly at the place and time when the geographical and chronological travel of the Buddha ends. Although the MSS relates past events, it is told in view of the future event of parinirvāṇa.

It cannot be excluded that the Buddha passed away in Kuśinagara per accident, and that the tradition thereafter made a great effort to correlate the greatness of his personality with the ancient significance of the

place! If the Buddha had died there on his way to somewhere else, then in a pan-Indian context this might be interpreted as lack of power or as an improper death for a great person. Great sages are supposed to be able to decide themselves the precise moment of their death. In the MPS this aspect is well documented at the Cāpāla caitya near Vaiśālī where the Buddha is said to have fixed his remaining life span.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Another point which should be considered is that the Buddha might have been on his way to his birthplace, but did not make it because of back-pain and maybe even food poisoning. There seems to exist in the Buddhist tradition some tendency towards considering the place of his nirvāṇa and his birthplace as one and the same place. In one or another way some ideas prevailed that the Buddha reached nirvāṇa where he had been born. If that had indeed been his intention, there are two possible ways of correcting the unfortunate early death at Kuśinagara: one was to change the a priori intention and say that he had chosen Kuśinagara on purpose, as the MPS does, and to enhance this choice by the aforementioned events and descriptions, the other way might was to keep the belief that he had reached his birthplace. This last way of amending the events seems however much more blurred and unclear and not well documented. Why should the Buddha have chosen his birthplace? The instructions he gives on his own cremation and cremation ritual, make it clear that this is a matter related to the lay society, and that the Buddha in an ideal case should have been cremated by the members of his own clan and family according to his social status. Without entering here the discussion on the worship of relics and whether this is or is not a specific feature of lay Buddhism, according to the MPS, the Buddha's dead body should not be handled by the clerics but by the lay saṃgha and more specifically by his own clansmen. It seems that from the time he left home and became an ascetic, or especially since his enlightenment until his nirvāṇa the Buddha is a person beyond the caste system, beyond any common social structure. But he demands that after his nirvāṇa his body shall be handled according to the prevalent social traditions! These are mere general thoughts on passages regarding the Buddha's parinirvāṇa and his cremation, which have not been treated in this paper. I hope to present more in-depth research in future papers.

All the different sites visited by the Buddha on his final journey have been treated in this paper and I may conclude, that much attention is given in the MPS to the right surrounding. The right location is indeed very important while alive, but apparently most important when leaving life behind! Hence Kuśinagara, i.e. Kuśāvātī, is the culminating top environment of the MPS; placed outside the notion of time, it is located somewhere between the natural and supernatural worlds. A lengthy chapter has been dedicated to depict what this city was like in previous times. Meticulously described are its splendors and its prosperity, the virtues of its king, who is a cakravartin, a world monarch, the majesty of the halls and palaces build for him, his dedication to the *srāmaṇas*, and so on. The natural environment in the ancient capital of Kuśāvātī is far beyond reality for it is inorganically luxurious. All the palaces and roads are made of gold, precious metals and jewels, as are the trees, their leaves and fruits. This imagery is also used in other Buddhist sūtras and is basically inspired by common beliefs and conceived on the images of gods' heavens and paradises. The MPS does not glorify the manifold treasures for their own sake, but rather uses that luxury as an effective contrast for showing the king's modesty, austerity and ascetic life style. He is said to have even renounced his wife and harem. The treasures also serve to emphasize the majesty of the king's virtues; the outer surroundings seem to compete in brightness, value and preciousness with his inner values. Most important for the thread of the narration in the MPS is that the Buddha, who says he was this ancient king, earnestly wished to return to this place for his *parinirvāṇa*. Surely he does this not because of those treasures, which are all long gone, but for some other significant reason. Although puzzling, the MPS suggests that the Buddha's desire to return to Kuśāvātī derives from the fact that this place is important to him because of the past virtuous deeds he himself performed there in previous existences.

5.2. The Buddha as an all-encompassing surrounding

In the MPS the Buddha himself is represented as a sort of higher reference. He provides the context for his community, since he is its foundation and its essence. He clearly tells his followers where to go, what to do, how to do it, which people to avoid, and so forth. By disappearing from the world he would leave behind a sort of vacuum; his monks would be left without practical, ethical and religious guidance. According to the MPS this problem has been anticipated by the Buddha. Knowing that the monks might experience loss after his nirvāṇa he gave them three remedies for the time after he passes away: first, where to take refuge; second, how to consider their master; and third, where to worship him. As we have seen the monks are asked to take themselves as their island (i.e. refuge), and also to take refuge in the dharma. More precisely the Buddha admonishes them to uphold the Prātimokṣa (or in certain versions his teachings and the Vinaya) and to consider this as if he was still among them. Further since words alone might not suffice, he indicates the four main places where he shall be worshipped in future: his birthplace, the place of enlightenment, the location of this first teaching, and where he reached nirvāṇa. Since in one or another way all of the abovementioned admonitions are observed even in present times, it can be said that the Buddha is still functioning as guide to the Buddhist community and that his traces are manifold in the world.

5.3. Mokṣa

Among the poems composed in the MPS on the occasion of Buddha's nirvāṇa, the last one clearly describes the Buddha's very last environment as mokṣa (liberation). Hence what or where he extinguishes is nirvāṇa and what he leaves behind is the dharma, that is, the teaching on how to reach mokṣa. Recalling thus his last words in the MPS, that

all things are without permanent nature, I may conclude that everything is without permanence, except space and nirvāṇa.¹³⁷

6) Notes on supernatural phenomena related to the physical world

This section contains the events during the Buddha's last days which bear extraordinary characteristics. The distinction between natural and supernatural phenomena is always founded on a set of preconceived beliefs, in case such a distinction is at all undertaken. Although, what might be considered extraordinary today, may not have been considered so in previous times, and vice versa, the events grouped together in this section might have been considered at any time at least to some extent, miraculous. The term supernatural of this section's title shall indicate wonders and extraordinary events.

6.1. Two examples of the Buddha's extraordinary performances

6.1.1. Physiognomic adaptation to surroundings as upāya

Buddha's means (upāya) of leading sentient beings to the truth are varied and countless in number. In the Jātaka stories he is often said to have been reborn in the shape of an animal. In the MPS he tells how he adapts his looks to a distinct human type and attends the important meetings of that type of being. As it is generally known, people trust those of their own social class and environment, and they may distrust what is new or alien to them. Thus, by his mutations, the Buddha en-

¹³⁷ In later Buddhist treatises this idea is stated very clearly. In works as the *Abhidharmakośa*, time and two different types of nirvāṇa are the three *asaṃskṛta dharmā* (of non-composite nature) and thus beyond the reach of impermanency. In the MPS such thoughts are not explicitly expressed, but its narration is in favor of such interpretations.

sures that his teachings efficiently reach multitudes. Noteworthy is the fact that he gains their immediate trust by looking, behaving and speaking like them. Although he adapts himself to others' customs, he preaches a doctrine which is new to them. Essentially he always teaches his own doctrine.

6.1.2. The passing over the Ganges

Extraordinary is not merely the event described in the MPS when the Buddha transports himself (and in some versions, all his monks as well) from one side of a river to the other without visible means and in no time, but also the fact that he performs this feat at the river Ganges. It is extraordinary, because the Ganges is the holiest river in India. Why would the Buddha choose a means of getting over this river without touching a single drop of its holy water? Because the Ganges, due to its ascribed holiness and supernatural powers, might have been seen as an ideal background for a wonder performed by the Buddha. The fact that the spot was a particularly difficult one to cross, and that other people were said to be struggling to cross, could have prompted such a miracle. Further, this wonder is related to the question of time and space; that is, it gives a picture of space being crossed in no time. The description of the simultaneity of the event is particularly worth noting: ... *tīre 'ntarhitāḥ pāṛime tīre pratyasthāt*, which literally means "from (this) side disappeared was standing on the other side".¹³⁸ The Buddha accomplished this fact by means of a very intense

¹³⁸ Bronkhorst in his description of Vedic forest-dwellers mentions, that they eventually gain supernatural powers, which enable them to get any wish accomplished and to move as quick as thought (*The two Sources of Indian Asceticism*, p. 16-17). This is particularly interesting as "moving through space as quick as thought" is exactly what has happened in this episode.

concentration and a total contraction of the mind.¹³⁹ In this episode then, mind can be said to make bodies move through space instantaneously. In the following paragraphs, however, mind is said to make the earth itself move.

6.2. Earthquakes and astronomical phenomena

Earthquakes are an important means of indicating the extraordinariness of certain events in Buddhist literature.¹⁴⁰ In the MPS the Buddha explains eight possible reasons for earthquakes. Two reasons, which are unrelated to the Buddha himself, will be explained further on (6.2.2. and 6.2.3.). Out of the total eight causes, six are related to important episodes in the Buddha's life.

6.2.1. Buddha provoked earthquakes

Out of these six memorable moments, two are contained in the MPS. The first occurrence is when the Buddha, having scheduled his nirvāṇa for three months ahead, enters the corresponding meditation, which will keep him alive exactly for another three months. The second is at the moment of nirvāṇa.

In the Sanskrit MPS and in the Chinese MSAV version the earth shakes however three times, since a further earthquake is said to have

¹³⁹ Such performances and special powers (ṛddhi and abhijñā powers) are gained by the great sages who have accumulated numerous ascetic practices.

¹⁴⁰ This is an indeed interesting subject for comparative studies based on pre-Buddhist Indian literature and on Indian and Chinese Buddhist texts. The topic has already been researched mostly by Japanese scholars, and unfortunately it cannot be undertaken here.

happened in Bhoga, after the one in Vaiśālī and shortly before nirvāṇa.¹⁴¹

When the earth moves, meteors fly through the illuminated sky and divine drums, i.e thunders, are heard. The moving of the earth in such cases is a side effect accompanying some events, which basically are without direct relation to the earth itself. The moving can thus be considered as a wonder.

6.2.2. Making the earth shake by concentration: psychically caused earthquake

The Buddha explains in the MPS that a monk, a nun, or a worthy person, when extremely noble-minded and powerful, can also cause the earth to move. This type of earthquake occurs because the said person enters into a special type of meditation, which includes visualizations of the world and of water. Depending on the textual version, the earth for sure will move, when the earnestly practicing person has reached the relevant stage in his meditation, or the earth will only move when this person explicitly wishes it to move. The visualizations also differ, but in all cases they are focused on the world and on water. The object of the meditation thus coincides with the object which is shaken.

¹⁴¹ The earthquake in Bhoga and the one in Vaiśālī most probably refer to the same event, but happened to be confused, i.e. separated into two different episodes, at the time when the sūtra was collated before its final formation. The Bhoga event is not justified by other passages. On the contrary the text clearly states that the earth had already trembled in Vaiśālī. Nowhere is it said that the fixation of the remaining life-span could take place twice or at two different places. The Pāli and the Chinese DAS version completely ignore such an event at Bhoga.

6.2.3. Genuine cosmology: physically caused earthquake

In the MPS the Buddha also indicates geophysical causes as a possible reason for earthquakes. He explains that the earth is based on water, water on wind, and wind on space. This represents a purely cosmological interpretation. He further explains that when opposed winds blow in space, they stir up the waters and that the stirred up waters cause the earth to move. Thus this is a highly logical and coherent explanation based on physical and cosmological interpretations. There is however some unusual feature in the explanation. When four great elements (*catvāri mahā-bhūtāni* 四大種) are mentioned in Buddhist texts, these elements are usually earth, water, fire and wind (*pr̥thivī, ap, tejas, vāyu* 地水火風). They are mentioned together because of their mutual connection. It is said that anything which exists is composed from these four elements. Further, they are called great because they constitute all things. They are explained in such treatises as the *Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya* and the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*. When five (great) elements are mentioned, these are said to be earth, water, fire, wind and space (*pr̥thivy āpas tejo vājur ākāśam iti etāni pañca mahābhūtāni*) as explained in the *Gauḍapādabhāṣya*, *Sāṃkhya-kārikā 15*, or in the Chinese 金七十論. Although fire is included in Buddhist physiological doctrine as a constituent element contained in everything, when earthquakes are explained in the MPS, none of its versions mentions fire in its cosmological worldview. This lack may be due to the fact that the MPS's explanation is with respect to "real earth", "real water", etc. and not referring to the elements called earth, water, etc.

6.3. Plants capable of respect

The MPS proclaims that because the apparition of a Buddha is so rare and precious, thousands of gods have come to see this Buddha before he

enters nirvāṇa. In later pictorial or sculptural representations of this scene, many animals of the forest, large and small ones, gather in great number to have a last glance of the Buddha. According to the Sanskrit and the Chinese MSAV versions the last extraordinary event related to nature is the scene of the śāla trees¹⁴² bending down towards the Buddha while their flowers fall on his body as he enters nirvāṇa. Trees and flowers are usually not considered the same as living beings because, it is said, they do not possess any intrinsic Buddha nature.¹⁴³ Even if they had an intrinsic Buddha nature, their capacity of producing a

¹⁴² The trees described are the *Shorea robusta* or *Vatica robusta* trees (from the dipterocarpaceae family). It is a certain type of timber tree which can attain a height of 30m to 35m in about 100 years time under favorable conditions. It is fire resistant and is often found in forests which are annually swept by fire. The śāla flowers, whitish in color, appear in early summer. They fruit during summer; the seeds ripen and germinate while still on the tree. Hence the flowers fall down soon after appearance. The śāla tree is found in North and Northeast India and neighboring countries and grows well in low height plains and foothills at about 200m to 1200m altitude. The śāla tree has become an object of worship in India and the adjoining countries. This could be due to the Buddha's nirvāṇa which took place among these trees, but its veneration could also derive from its multiple use: its high quality timber wood is used for constructions, its white resin is burned as incense, fat is extracted from its seeds, oil for earthen lamps is obtained from the śāla fruits, and during famine people grind the fruit into flour and eat it to ward off starvation. Cf. Haryana: <http://www.haryana-online.com>, and The Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Fire Ecology Research Group, c/o Freiburg University, Germany: <http://www2.ruf.uni-freiburg.de/fireglobe>.

¹⁴³ Actually the delicate subject of a possible intrinsic Buddha nature of plants has become one of the core problems of present day Buddhist environmentalists' discussions. Ideas like a possible intrinsic Buddha nature postdate however texts like the MPS, and are well beyond the scope of this paper. Please refer to Lambert Schmithausen, who has published excellent research based on early Buddhist texts, eg. the following two publications: *The Problem of the Sentience*

virtuous deed would lay well behind that of animals, humans or gods. In the passage contained in the Sanskrit and the Chinese MSAV versions however, these two trees show their deep respect to the Buddha:¹⁴⁴ they present him with a last offering, which somehow becomes a moving act of self-sacrifice as they cover his body with their blossoms.

In the Pāli and the DAS versions however this scene takes place as soon as the Buddha lays down under the trees, not at the moment of nirvāṇa. Further, the Buddha comments on this event and discusses it with Ānanda. He actually criticizes this unnatural way of being shown honor and reverence. The Pāli has the following passages:¹⁴⁵

Now at that time the twin Sāla trees were all one mass of bloom with flowers out of season; and all over the body of the Tathāgata these dropped and sprinkled and scattered themselves, out of reverence for the successor of the Buddhas of old. And heavenly Mandārava flowers, too, and heavenly sandalwood powder came falling from the sky, and all over the body of the Tathāgata they descended and sprinkled and scattered themselves, out of reverence for the successor of the Buddhas of old. And heavenly music was sounded in the sky, out of reverence for the successor of the

of Plants in Earliest Buddhism and Buddhism and Nature, The Lecture delivered on the Occasion of the EXPO 1990, An Enlarged Version with Notes. Both works appeared in the Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series, number VI and VII, The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo, 1991.

¹⁴⁴ On the bases of later doctrinal developments not contained within the MPS, one may argue that by this act of respect the trees must have acquired some merit, and that if they are capable of acquiring merit, then, according to Buddhist teachings and logic, they must possess, in one way or an other, the prerequisites for future enlightenment.

¹⁴⁵ Rhys Davids, DN, p. 149-151.

Buddhas of old. And heavenly songs came wafted from the skies, out of reverence for the successor of the Buddhas of old! Then the Exalted One addressed the venerable Ānanda and said: 'The twin śāla trees are all one mass of bloom ... (ditto like above).

'Now it is not thus, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata is rightly honored, revered, venerated, held sacred or revered. But the brother or the sister, the devout man or the devout woman, who continually fulfils all the greater and the lesser duties, who is correct in life, walking according to the precepts - it is he who rightly honors, reverences, venerates, holds sacred, and reveres the Tathāgata with the worthiest homage. Therefore, O Ānanda, be ye constant in the fulfillment of the greater and of the lesser duties, and be ye correct in life, walking according to the precepts; and thus Ānanda, should it be taught.'

The DAS version is very close to this, but little bit shorter, and at the end it adds a few verses.¹⁴⁶ This version explicitly states that this phenomenon is due to the trees' spirits 雙樹神 or to a sort of divinity residing among them who believes in the Buddha.¹⁴⁷ Thus the DAS seems to have avoided the abovementioned problem of how plants could possibly show autonomy regarding deeds of reverence and respect.

¹⁴⁶ 爾時。世尊告阿難曰。此雙樹神以非時華供養於我。此非供養如來阿難白言。云何名為供養如來語阿難。人能受法。能行法者。斯乃名曰供養如來 [21a8-12]。佛觀此義。而說頌曰 佛在雙樹間 偃臥心不亂 樹神心清淨 以花散佛上 阿難白佛言 齋何名供養 受法而能行 覺華而為供 紫金華如輪 散佛未為供 陰界入無我 乃名第一供 [21a12-18]。

¹⁴⁷ 雙樹間所有鬼神篤信佛者 [21a7-8]。

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