

The Offering of the Children of Prince Viśvantara/ Sudāna in the Chinese Tradition

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INTRODUCTION

My previous article¹⁾ started with a quotation from the *Lotus Sūtra* that illustrates a well-known topic in Mahāyāna literature:

*Then I see bodhisattvas by whom bodily flesh, hands and feet,
Even wives and children are presented in quest of the Unexcelled Path.*

Cases of the offering of bodily flesh were studied in that article. Now I would like to investigate another controversial offering: the offering of wives and children. Here I will focus on the children and leave the wives for a later study. In the Buddhist literary tradition of the *Jātakas*, we find a *bodhisattva* who not only made a vow to perform such an offering but who enacted it in dramatic circumstances.

In the *Li huo lun* 理惑論²⁾, the first text collected in the Buddhist apologetical anthology of the early sixth century, *Hong-ming ji* 弘明集³⁾, and thus the text that was presumably considered the oldest document, a sage, Mou Zi 牟子, speaks in defense of Buddhism. In section 15, on filial piety 孝 and benevolence 仁, he makes a rather weak defense of a Sudāna 須大拏 [var. 拏] whose conduct is revolting in the eyes of his Confucian adversaries. Sudāna gave 1) his father's goods to strangers 遠人, 2) the elephant national treasure 國之寶象 to enemies 怨家, and 3) even his own wife and children to others. Sudāna, "Good gift," is the name, used in only a few of the Chinese versions of this story⁴⁾, of the outrageously sublime hero famous in the *Jātaka* literature in Pāli: Prince

Vessantara. He is considered to be the penultimate human reincarnation of the Buddha of our age. It was Viśvantara, to use his Sanskrit name, who, reborn in the Tuṣita heaven, waited there for the time to become, after a final human birth in Lumbinī and the reaching of the supreme enlightenment in Bodhgayā, the Buddha Śākyamuni.

The story of Viśvantara / Vessantara is famous through literature and art all over Asia. Its many versions are known in several languages⁵⁾. There are indications in the introductory sentence of the Viśvaṃtara tale in the *Jātakamālā* that, already in the Indian world, this story was as controversial then as it still is today⁶⁾. A tone of incredulity is perceptible in the two lengthy passages of the *Milindapañha* related to Vessantara. The first is concerned by prodigious generosity (*mahādāna-anubhāva*) as the causes of earthquakes⁷⁾ and the second is related to the question of excessive gifts (*atidānam*)⁸⁾. In the countries where Pāli is used, especially in Southeast Asia, the *Vessantara Jātaka* became a Buddhist epic and the object of ceremonial recitations and of pictorial representations, both emphasizing the sentimental aspect of the story⁹⁾.

The Pāli *Vessantara-jātaka*, the main source of the story, is the longest and the last of the 547 *Jātakas*.¹⁰⁾ Its present redaction consists of verses alternating with narrative and commentarial prose. The verses are of mixed origin, filled with repetitions and sometimes interpolations. Any attempt to determine their age is difficult as they contain archaic elements, perhaps predating Buddhism¹¹⁾, and more recent elements, such as a reference to Rāma and Sītā (p. 557, v. 541). We can detect here a desire to turn the family drama of Vessantara into an appendage of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, in a Buddhist, i.e., less fantastic and more homely, way.

The importance of the *Vessantara-jātaka* is clear from the fact that there are two references to minor episodes of this final *Jātaka* inserted into some versions of the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni himself. First, before achieving *bodhi*, at the time of his victory over Māra, he

took the earth as his witness that in his last existence he had made the "gift of the seven hundreds¹²⁾," a minor episode in the *Vessantara-jātaka*, taking place between the banishment and the departure of the prince from the capital of his kingdom. Second, after having obtained *bodhi*, when the Buddha made his dramatic first visit back to his native place, Kapilavatthu, in reference to a miraculous "lotus-leaf shower" (*pokkhara-vassa*)¹³⁾. We may add here, as a note, that the well-known monographic *sūtra* in Chinese devoted to Prince Sudāna is presented as having been preached by the Buddha in the Jetavana of Śrāvastī¹⁴⁾.

In the legend of the Buddha, the visit to his homeland was a critical moment for his family relations, as the Buddha had to confront his father, his stepmother, his wife, his son and his clan, the Śākya. Several traditions record that the Buddha needed miracles to subdue the pride of his relatives¹⁵⁾. In one account, a shower of lotus-leaves rained from the sky when he preached to the Śākya. This shower was an opportunity for the Buddha to recall that once before, when he had been prince Vessantara, it had rained on him and his parents. This story is found in the penultimate chapter of the *Jātaka*, the "Six Khattiyas," which refers to the six members of the noble cast of the kings and warriors, i.e., himself, his wife, his father and mother, and his two children. The joy of being reunited was so great that they collapsed on the ground. The six royal personages were then revived by rain sent by the god Sakka, with the rain wetting only those who desired such a treatment. In the Nigrodhārāma of Kapilavatthu, the shower of rain, refreshing all and falling only on those who wanted it, became thus an appropriate occasion for the Buddha to preach the *Vessantara-jātaka* to his haughty relatives who expressed their wonder.

We have alluded only to the similarities between the Vessantara story and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It may also be supposed that the correlation that has been established between the Buddha and a figure such as

Vessantara was motivated by the dramatic and irrevocable sacrifice made by Vessantara as well as by other parallels. Vessantara, like the Buddha, leaves his kingdom to live in solitude, but the Buddha does so of his own will and leaves his wife and child. He practices extreme asceticism before reaching *bodhi*. In contrast, the crown prince Vessantara, who shares the same *bodhisattva* ideal (often expressed in very mahayanic terms), is banished from his kingdom, which, according to most of the tradition, he will later recover, after his ordeals. He is accompanied by his wife and two children when living in seclusion. His commitment to an uncompromising practice of both generosity and asceticism in such circumstances leads to the dramatic events depicted in the tales and the art.

Given the many versions of this tale¹⁶⁾ and the abundance of its artistic representations all over South, East and Central Asia, it is clear that it was a well-known story and that each narrator or illustrator could choose more or less *ad libitum* the details that seemed most impressive or most horrendous.

In the Chinese Buddhist scriptures, there are several versions of the story. Some of them must come from Indic sources that are no longer known to us. While the frame of the tale is remarkably consistent in all the traditions, there are many interesting variants that may only be studied synoptically. The surviving Sanskrit versions (*Jātakamālā*, *Avadānakalpalatā*,¹⁷⁾ and, in a Hindu context, *Kathāsaritsāgara*)¹⁸⁾ are closer than the *Vessantara-jātaka* to the Chinese versions. It is only in the case of the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin* that we have both the Sanskrit original and its Chinese translation. This tale was duplicated in this *Vinaya*. It is told in relation to the evil cousin of the Buddha, Devadatta, in two parts of the work: *Bhaiṣajyavastu* and *Samghabhedavastu*¹⁹⁾. For this tale, we treat only the Sanskrit text of the *Samghabhedavastu*. Based on Gilgit manuscripts, it has been published,

in Germany and in Italy, in two almost contemporaneous editions, the second more complete than the first. There must have also been slight differences between the versions of the tale in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* and *Samghabhedavastu*, as can be inferred through comparison with their respective translations into Chinese and Tibetan. In this article, limiting ourselves to the ordeal of the children of Viśvantara in the Chinese sources, we observe that in the narrative of this *Vinaya*, there was much more attention paid to the reaction of the mother than to the reaction of the children. The short treatment of this aspect of the drama in Yi Jing's translations (T. 1448 and T. 1450) will be discussed in Part III of this article.

Structurally speaking, there are two types of presentation of this highly sentimental case: the first could be called "epic" and the second more psychological. First, there are the more "epic" accounts in which the narrative and descriptive elements take up the longest part of the text: the Pāli *Vessantara-jātaka* is the best representative of that type, but the two well-known Chinese versions (T. 152, n° 14 and T. 171) are also interesting in this respect. Their treatment of the children's reactions will be the subject of Part II of this article.

The second format makes more use of dialogues. This is a more "theatrical" way, reducing to a minimum the narrative and the descriptive elements. It is represented by a Chinese version (T. 153, n° 3) based on an Indian, most probably a Sanskrit original, remarkable for its rigorous argumentation. The presentation of this version of the tale and especially of the episodes related to the children will constitute Part I of this article. Let me add here that the Tibetan drama, *Dri med kun dan*, translated and commented upon by Jacques Bacot⁽²⁰⁾ needs a special study.

Part I

The sacrifices of prince Viśvantara
in Saṃghasena's tradition

The first part of my inquiry will be devoted to the most linear (i. e., more or less free of adventitious elements such as descriptions and external episodes), argumentative and radical version of the story of Viśvantara. As mentioned above, it is preserved in Chinese, in the third tale of the collection *Pu-sa ben yuan jing* 菩薩本緣經 (T. 153). The redaction of this particular **Bodhisattva-avadāna* is attributed to an Indian writer, 僧伽斯那 Saṃghasena, about whom almost nothing is known, although Sanskrit fragments from Central Asia may be attributed to him²¹⁾. It has to be taken as a literary composition of the type of the *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra. Its translation is attributed to an archaic translator, the Parthian Zhijian 支謙, active in the first half of the third century. The smoothness of its Chinese style may lead one to think that, as is often the case for so-called archaic translations, this attribution is spurious. More research has to be done on that subject, but a general impression may lead us to suppose that this tale might have been translated during the first classical age of the translations, i. e., the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth century.

Let me mention here that in Chinese, there are better known versions of the story. I mentioned above the fourteenth tale of the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (T. 152), which was translated by the Sogdian Kang Seng Hui 康僧会, active in the second half of the third century. The style of this translation presents obvious archaic features. We will deal with this influential text in Part II of this article, where it will be compared with the monographic sūtra devoted to the story of Sudāna, the *Tai-zi Xu-da-*

na jing 太子須大拏經 (T.171), translated by Sheng Jian 聖堅, who was active precisely between 388 and 408, during the “classical age” mentioned above. This last text has been translated into Tibetan²²⁾ and into French by Edouard Chavannes.²³⁾ It is to this last translation that most Western scholarship refers when mentioning the Vessantara tale in Chinese. The other versions of the tale extant at some length are the two extracts very close to each other (in T. 1448 and T. 1450) from the translation of the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin* by Yi Jing 義淨 (635-713), to be studied in Part III.

Among these five main translations of the Sudāna / Viśvantara story that will be considered here, the rather neglected version of the tale by Saṃghasena, the *Pu-sa ben yuan jing*, is interesting for its rigorous presentation of the legendary offerings.

Before looking more closely at the matter of the gift of the children in the Chinese versions, I will, for the clarity of the account, give an outline of the narrative as told by Saṃghasena, pointing out some characteristic features of that interesting third tale (among a total of eight) of the three-juan *Pu-sa ben yuan jing* (T. 153, j. 2, p. 57c6 - j. 3, p. 61b27).

As is generally the case, the tale can be divided into several scenes that will be called here “sections”: 1) the youth of the prince and his first gifts, 2) the gift of the elephant, 3) the resulting scandal, the prince’s banishment, his confrontation with his father, 4) the resolution of his wife, 5) the departure of the family from the capital and their settlement in the forest, 6) the gift of the children to a vagrant brahmin, 7) a short indication of the happy ending of the drama of the children, 8) the sorrow of their mother, 9) her being given to a first pseudo-brahmin (the god Śakra in disguise), and, only in the present narrative, as a *point d’orgue*: 10) the interrupted gift by the prince of his two eyes to a second pseudo-brahmin (again Śakra), leading to a short conclusion. As a

leitmotif at several stages of the narrative, references are made to the firm resolve of the prince-*bodhisattva* to reach the supreme enlightenment and to save all living beings. On the other hand, there is no mention of the earthquakes that follow each of the heroic commitments of the prince. They are a kind of rhythmical feature of cosmological nature in most of the tradition and are even mentioned in the *Milindapañha*.²⁴⁾ Another element, of a ritual nature, punctuating the different gifts, is a water libation performed by the giver on the hands of the receiver.

I. Description of the generous prince Viśvantara 一切持 (57c6-58a12).

This dramatic narrative, strictly limited to the psychological developments affecting the protagonists, is completely silent on the name of the country in which the story takes place and on the name of the king. Only when they are needed for the narrative do we learn of the existence of the wife and of the children of the prince, whose name, Viśvantara, appears in only two passages, here in the introduction, and later, in Section VII, when the brahmin has to identify the children in order to sell them to their grandfather. All the details, so abundant in other traditions, on the youth of the prince in his palace are absent here. The description centers on the moral qualities of the young prince. This tendency, constant in the tale by Saṃghasena, gives his account the character of an *épure*, not without a discreet but sharp humor, which is centered on the inner conflicts affecting the prince, but also his father, his wife and his children. Among the metaphors abundant in such a tale, the parental comparisons are especially frequent. In this description, we are told that the prince looks upon the beggars as a loving mother upon her child, that he serves living beings like a disciple serving his master, that he loves them like a father and a mother taking care of their new-born child, and that he teaches them correct behaviour like a great doctor 大博士. The ministers who blame the prince for his generosity and deplore the loss of riches

caused by his offerings follow a down-to-earth wisdom expressed in gnomic stanzas such as, "The goods that are not consumed remain for the future."

II. Gift of the elephant (58a12-b16). The section begins with a few words devoted to the victorious elephant "stepping on the lotus flowers" and to the envy of an enemy king. As the general tone of Saṃghasena's account is not as anti-brahmin as most of the Viśvantara tales, the unscrupulous scoundrels begging for the elephant are depicted here as counterfeit ascetic brahmins. The meeting with these beggars takes place outside the city, when the prince is making an outing on the back of the elephant. This is different from the rest of the tradition where the gift is described as happening in the city, an element which adds indeed to the provocative character of the gesture of the beggars. The prince is torn between his resolution 本要 to be generous and his longing to avoid causing displeasure to his father and to his people. Another original element in the present section of the tale is that the supreme argument of the pseudo-brahmins to force the prince to give them the elephant is that they wish to use the elephant for a trip to get a flower to offer to the gods in order that the living beings should be reborn among the gods or reach *nirvāṇa*. The profit of others is their wish as it is the prince's wish. As a conclusion, in giving in to their demand and thus in knowing that he will displease the ministers and the people of his kingdom, the prince expresses his rejection of fame or of birth among the men and the gods and his desire to cut off the passions of living beings through his gift's good effect 因緣. Without being specifically mentioned, his *bodhisattva* ideal is already apparent. Having left the elephant to the beggars, the prince returns on horseback to the city where a fury is waiting him.

III. The scandal, the prince's banishment, his confrontation with his

father (58b16-59a15). The criticisms that the ministers address to the king are down-to-earth: like any bad son, drunkard, game-player, debauched or prodigal, the generous prince has to be punished by a father too permissive. The king's reprimand of his son (58b24-c4) and the attempt of the prince to justify his deeds constitute a document of real literary value. Not without humour, the king presents himself as a bride afraid of her in-laws, but he understands the crucial conflict of his son. He considers him as having to challenge his eye on the right with his sight on the left 挑其右目以治左眼. The challenge is between the practice of the correct (i.e., religious) law 正法 which supposes life in the mountain, with grass as dress and water and fruits as food, and the law of the gentleman, which consists first in keeping peace with his own family, and then in caring for others 夫為人法先安其親 然後乃當及餘他人.

The answer of the prince (58c16-59a14) is a eulogy for the gift. He relativizes his obligations towards family, lasting until the time of death, and extols an absolute adherence to the spirit of giving 施心, which helps to explain his later attitude. We may note here that two narrative elements are very common in the *Vessantara-jātaka* tradition. The first is the use of anticipations: for example, a threatening allusion to the possibility of the prince's using his wife or his children as gifts creates a tension that prepares the reader for the later shocking materialisation of this threat. The second element is the frequent comparisons to a situation of privation. In the Pāli *Jātaka*, as in the *Vinaya* or in the *Sudāna* / *Viśvantara* tales in Chinese, there are famous metaphors describing the condition of a woman deprived of her husband. Here, in his own defence, the prince describes himself as earth without solidity, fire without warmth, fish thrown on the ground, etc., if he should be forbidden to follow his spirit of giving. He also reminds the king that his present riches are the results of acts of giving in the past and that the gift follows the giver in his transmigrations like the calf follows his

mother. We understand that his resolution to adopt a hermit life is irrevocable when he takes leave of his father and then of his mother. In other traditions, his separation from his mother is much more important than in the present section.

IV. The resolution of the wife of Viśvantara (59a15-b14). We learn only in this section of his wife's existence. No name is given for a heroine who in all the traditions (both Buddhist and Hindu) is known as Mādri (Maddī in Pāli). The prince, presenting his wish to lead a hermit existence with wild beasts as his companions 侶 without alluding to his banishment, asks her to remain at home. The habitual mention of her duties toward the prince's parents and toward her children is absent here. Instead, the king insists she is too delicate for the hermit life.

The answer of the hurt princess is sharp: "What is your fault 罪?" This strong expression is mitigated later in "What is the small cause 小因緣 which angered your good father?" On the other hand, she implies that it is the prince himself who is soft like a *campā* flower. One has to observe that she does not herself express, as she does in other traditions, a desire to follow her husband into the solitude.

The prince acknowledges that he is subjugated by the wisdom and the energy of his wife who will be for him a good companion 善伴, but he wonders at her coarse language 麁言. She should know that all the kings are in a situation of conflict 共相戰諍. Instead of becoming a "prefect" 知國事 for his father, he is authorized by the king, who is still ruling, to escape from the turpitudes of the world 世間過咎.

It is with a third reprimand that the wife answers her husband: Since she became engaged 初婚 to him, she took the solemn vow not to be separated from him, days and months until [climbing ?] on his [funeral] pyre 及以猛火 (the Chinese translation does not preclude the possibility that she intends to follow her husband on the pyre), why did

he attempt to go alone and to leave her?

V. Departure from the capital and settlement in the forest (59b14-22).

To the delight of painters and sculptors, most of the tradition provides lengthy descriptions of the last gifts of the prince: the “seven hundreds²⁵⁾”, and later, on the way, his horses and his chariot, requested by greedy brahmins. In the present version, we are shortly informed that the prince distributed to the needy his last possessions and that, with his wife, he left for the snowy mountains (the Himālaya of the Pāli tradition), carrying his two children (first mentioned here and never named) on his shoulders.

Most of the tradition delights in picturesque descriptions of the life in the wilderness contrasted with the luxury of the life in the palace. Here, we know only that they live, as alluded to before by the king, on water and fruit and that the wife gathers the food. Emphasis is put on the pleasure of practicing the religious life with special attention paid to compassion for living beings. Such is the setting for the following scene, the climax, which will need our special attention.

VI. The gift of the children to the brahmin (59b22-60a29)

a. *The dialogue with the brahmin* (59b23-c18)

Most of the tradition has made large use of the repellent image of the old brahmin begging for the children of Vessantara. The brahmin is said to have twelve or eighteen types of ugliness. He is rather hilariously mistreated by his young wife who asks for servants. The brahmin himself treats the children brutally, even in the presence of their father. In the present section, it seems that Saṃghasena wished to eliminate most of these elements, and he constructed instead a dialogue between the brahmin, who calls the prince “great hermit” 大仙, and the prince, who is called by the narrator *bodhisattva*. Viśvantara had been called prince *bodhisattva*

王子菩薩 in the first Section, when his qualities were eulogized. He will be called *bodhisattva* (or “prince-*bodhisattva*” in 61a5) until the end of the tale, except once: “prince” 王子 only is again used when he is hoping to find an expedient 方便 to get rid of the brahmin who has gone so far as to say : “I will die if I do not get the children.” (60c18-19). The prince had first misjudged the brahmin, thinking that he was intending to practice the Way. The brahmin answers bluntly that he is still a man of desire and describes his infirmities and his need for two slaves. Both the brahmin and the prince remember the time when the prince could never say no²⁶⁾ when asked for a gift (according to the words of the prince) and had a fondness 凡見 for beggars (according to the brahmin). If the prince seems to be in doubt, it is not because he fears that the brahmin is not a true brahmin (according to the words of the brahmin), but because nothing is left of the riches he had possessed when he was living a family life 在家(*grhapati*)²⁷⁾.

b. *The decision of the prince* (59c18-60a4)

The prince wishes to make clear that the gift of his two beloved children 所愛二子, unprepared for physical suffering, for separation from their father and mother or for the slave's state is a condition 因緣, 緣計 that is not empty 不空, but requires difficult and painful acts 難行苦行. This practice 修行 does not produce the result 果報 of a rebirth among the gods, but rather: for himself, the attainment of the supreme *bodhi* and for living beings, the production of merit 功德 leading to the supreme way. In this section, although claiming that these two children are like his own life, it is the prince himself who asks the brahmin to leave quickly because he fears the return of the children's mother. This callousness seems to occur only in our text. In all the other tales, it is the brahmin who cruelly denies the children a last meeting with their mother²⁸⁾, because he does not want the mother to interfere with the prince's intention and

to be moved by the children's pleas. When giving his children to the brahmin, the prince expresses a concern that will be soon dramatically proclaimed by the children themselves: that his children are babies 幼稚, ignorant 無知, not yet able to understand human language 未解脫人語, not yet having any knowledge even though they look like humans 雖複似人未有所識.

c. *The reaction of the children* (60a4-29)

The children had been described before as playing in the mountain, obedient when called by their father and when he picked them up to give them to the brahmin. Grabbing onto the dress of their father, they now protest. This entire passage is translated as follows:

"Father, for what motive are you giving us, brother and sister, to this evil brahmin? From now on, we will be forever separated from our father and mother. By age, we are still babies with no knowledge²⁹⁾. With no shelter, no protection, how can we live? Due to what cause must we endure that suffering? Falling under the hand of an alien, our life is doomed 不全. Transgressing the law of the king brings penalty 刑罰, but us, small and silly, have not yet transgressed anything. Why must we today meet such a pain? Committing a true transgression, one can hope for forgiveness and deliverance 恕放. When one has not transgressed anything, should one hold a different view? Although it seems that our father has cut off his love for us, even only according the human law 人法, this is improper. Wise or stupid can pity one who is small or old. Father, why are you holding a painful and venomous particular view? Acting as if law should be abandoned 假使為法而見捨者, moreover losing sympathy 喪失慈惻, is that the law? We, although babies, have at least listened to the teaching of the law of the brahmins: if one supports and

protects his wife and children, he will get rebirth in the heaven of Brahmā”

To this complaint, the prince-*bodhisattva* reacts by hurting the common feelings. Readers might have thought that the extreme of outrageous conduct had been reached when the prince exhorted the brahmin to leave with the children quickly for fear that they would meet their mother. But here the radical spirit of the prince culminates in an accusation against his children that they are unfilial 非子 and in a declaration that he is prepared to accept their death. First, he blames himself for having been moved by the words of his children, then he tells them his motive: since everyone is subject to *samsāra*, there can be no absence of wrath or unfiliality. They are blind and thoughtless. He orders them to follow their master: "Why all this trouble? If one reaches the point of death, what can be done?" 若死至時 當云何乎. Regaining his stability after this reprimand, he orders the brahmin to go quickly, but his children again start to express their distress. They wish to take leave of their mother. The prince refuses, because she would wish to follow them. The children are then carried away by the brahmin. On their way, they look back, weeping, in the direction of their father. He does not lose this occasion to reprimand them for a last time: "Don't be moved, but consider that to take form (to be born) means the burning of old age and death." Later he concedes that renouncing his children was an ordeal, but he hopes that it will help him to reach the supreme *bodhi* and to free living beings from their bondage.

The wish to bid adieu to their mother is a common feature in most of the versions of the story. In the *Jātakamālā*, which I use here as an example because of its brevity, but whose content here does not differ from the Pāli *Jātaka*, it is the brahmin who denies the children a last meeting with her and who binds their hands together in order to

drag them off. Words are then expressed by the girl (v. 65-66) who complains to her father that, as the brahmins are righteous, the man must be an ogre in the guise of a brahmin. "He carries us off to eat us," she says. Her elder brother laments on account of his mother: "I do not suffer so much from the violence of the brahmin as from the absence of mother." (v. 67). Full of delicate sentiments toward his mother (v. 68-70), the boy concludes that it will be difficult to meet his parents again (v. 71). He tells his sister, "Let us die. Of what use is life to us?" And he reassures her, "It is to a brahmin in want of money that we have been delivered by the prince." (v. 72). In other versions, especially in the Pāli *Jātaka* but also, as we will see, in the translations of Kang Seng Hui and of Sheng Jian, the narrative of the departure of the children is much more developed.

VII. Happy ending of the drama of the children (60a29-b9). The rescue of the children by their grandfather, the king, is the compulsory happy ending, common in Indian tales. It is described differently in several versions. In our text, just after the departure of the children and before the return of their mother, a few lines tell us that the brahmin, grateful for the generosity of the prince, decides to bring the children to their grandfather in order to sell them back to him. The ransom of the children is paid to the brahmin by the king, still blaming his son's excessive love of the *Dharma* 太過愛法, who has reached the point of not regretting his beloved children. In our text, there is never a word about a reconciliation between the king and his son. On the other hand, this text avoids any mention of karmic retribution or "justice immanente" for the brahmin, who is described as going home, after having acquired much wealth from the sale of the children. In the *Jātakamālā*, as again in the Pāli *Jātaka*, it is the prince himself who suggests to the brahmin that he sell the children to their grandfather, the king, but the brahmin is reluctant

fearing that the children will be torn away from him by force, with a punishment inflicted on him (v. 62). Anyway the power of Śakra leads the brahmin to let the children be redeemed by their grandfather (v. 100). In the Pāli *Jātaka*, we read dramatic descriptions (abundantly illustrated in paintings) of their two attempts to escape. As we will see later, the oldest of the Chinese translations sets these two escapes in a slightly different composition. In Pāli, during the first of them, they hide in a pond concealed under the leaves of water lilies. After the second escape attempt, they are beaten by the brahmin in the presence of their father, who does not intervene. The brahmin finally sells them to their grandfather, but, having been richly paid by the king, he dies of overeating. This final detail, karmic sanction close to the “justice immanente,” is very famous in South Asia, but unknown in the Chinese tradition.

VIII. The sorrow of the mother after the loss of her children (60b12-61a6). The sorrow of the mother is an important element in the Vessantara tale. The despair of the children followed by the sorrow of their mother constitutes the climax of the tale. It will be studied in more detail in the second part of this study, centered on the offering of the wife, to be published in the next issue of this journal. We will give here only an outline of the events following the departure of the children, in which the mother plays a predominant role.

In this section of the tale as told by Saṃghasena, the mother, having gone to the forest in order to pick fruits to feed her family, experiences evil omens, but does not find her way blocked by three animals, which is a famous feature of most of the tradition (60b9-15). The next events are her return to the family's abode, the drawn-out way in which her husband tells her of the loss of their children and her then fainting (60b15-25). This is a common feature, although with many variants, of most of the tradition. In the passionate stanzas (60b26-c12) that she

addresses to her husband, although referring to his difficult practices 苦行 for the Correct Law, she asks him if he has a heart made of iron 剛鐵³⁰⁾, when renouncing love 離愛, and if he is without human feeling 無人情. She alludes to the beauty of her children and to the despair of the surrounding nature, a topic much mentioned in most of the tradition.

In his answer (60c16-61a5), the prince, although praising, in the same terms as before (59b2), the wisdom and energy of his wife, regrets that she is still not yet emancipated from the affliction of transmigration 不能解生死過患 and not feeling joy instead of fury at the departure, pain, even the possible death, of their children. He refers to stanzas (for which the Chinese translator made use of a more solemn meter) of the "Holy book of the Ṛṣi" 諸仙聖書 (60c24-61a2) dealing with impermanence. In conclusion, as he needs serenity 安樂 after discarding their children 捨子, she must get rid of her great affliction 大苦惱. This conclusion is accepted by her silence.

IX. The prince gives his wife to a first pseudo-brahmin (61a6-b2). The acquiescence of the wife to her husband's arguments is immediately followed by two apparitions of the god Śakra taking the disguise of a brahmin. In the first apparition (61a6-b2), this brahmin asks for, obtains and returns his wife to the prince. This scene will also be discussed in my next article. For the regrets that the god expresses about the absence of love and regret 愛惜 from the prince-*bodhisattva*, we are led to believe that Śakra contrived this *mise en scène* to save the prince from offering his wife to anybody. The new situation is that he has to keep her as belonging to a brahmin who cannot fulfill his responsibility 任意 toward her. Although similar explanations are given in other versions of the tale, it is only here, in our radical version of the events, that the prince expresses his disappointment: he wished to obtain complete freedom, and instead he must be captive and bound again.

X. The prince gives his eyes to a second pseudo-brahmin (61b2-20)
and the conclusion of the tale (61b20-27). In his second apparition as a brahmin, Śakra asks for the eyes of the prince (61b2-22). This episode is only narrated in Saṃghasena's version of the tale of Viśvantara, reinforcing his radical aspect, but it was not unknown of the Buddhist tradition³¹⁾, although in most of the Buddhist tradition, the gift of the eyes is one of the offerings attributed to the king of the Śibis³²⁾. In the present tale, the prince-*bodhisattva* expresses his more complete vow of perfection of giving (*dāna-pāramitā*): the gift of his children frees living beings from love 愛習, the gift of his wife frees them from lust 貪欲, the gift of his eyes grants them the pure eye of the *Dharma* 法眼. Here again the gift is not completely consummated as the brahmin stops the hand of the prince as he is bringing a stick of acacia (*khadira*) to his eyes. Here again the brahmin obliges the prince to keep his eyes and to consider them as a deposit 囑 belonging to the brahmin and not to be given to other people. The prince complains that on the same day he has received two dependences 寄: his wife and his eyes.

Next occurs a minor apotheosis: Śakra makes himself visible and confirms that the prince should consider both his wife and his eyes as a deposit 付囑 belonging to the god. As he goes back to the heaven, celestial voices proclaim that this man (the prince) has enlarged 增長 the tree of the way to *bodhi* (way and *bodhi* can be considered as synonymous), that in the not distant future, he will achieve *anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi*, that he is a *bodhisattva mahā-sattva* practicing the *dāna-pāramitā* whose action 事 will not be met with indifference 無所不捨. Confirming the radical aspect of our text, we observe that there is no mention here of reconciliation between the prince and his father, nor of the visit to his mountainous abode by his parents and his two children (making possible the reunion of the "Six Nobles" referred to in the introduction of this

article), nor of the triumphal return of the prince-*bodhisattva* to his kingdom in order to exercise kingship. Moreover, his close connection to Śākyamuni is never mentioned.

Part II

The Children's Odyssey in other Chinese *Avadānas*

Beside the story of Viśvantara, as it was told in the collection of edifying tales attributed to Saṃghasena (T. 153), described in Part I, we will consider other complete versions of the tale found in the Chinese Canon. Two of them will be the subject of Part II. They are better known than Saṃghasena's recension for several reasons: both of them have been selected for inclusion in famous compilations of Buddhist doctrines, the older of the two (T. 151) in a compilation of the early sixth century, *Jing lü yi xiang* 經律異相 (T. 2121), the most recent one, the "Monographic *Sūtra*" (T. 171), in a compilation of the late seventh century, *Fa yuan zhu lin* 法苑珠林 (T. 2122). Moreover, their plots are rather similar and allow for interesting comparisons. Nevertheless, in each of them appear certain episodes that are not shared by the other. The older account has been translated into modern Japanese³³⁾, the most recent one into French by Chavannes in his modern collection of Chinese Buddhist edifying tales.

The first text to be considered here will be the fourteenth tale of the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (T. 152) **Satpāramitā-saṃnipāta-sūtra* (T. 152, j. 2, p. 7c-11a), collection of *Avadāna* which was translated by the Sogdian Kang Seng Hui 康僧会, active between 251 and 280. The style of this translation presents obvious archaic features. The tale is reproduced integrally in the 7th tale of the roll (*juan*) 31 of the *Jing lü yi xiang* (T. 2121, p. 164c12-166c16). When necessary, this archaic translation of

the tale of Prince Sudāna by Kang Seng Hui will be referred to as the *Archaic version*.

The second text is the *Tai-zi Xu-da-na jing* 太子須大拏經, the *Sūtra of Prince Sudāna* (T. 171, p.418c-424a). It seems to correspond to the Tibetan *Rgyal-bu Don-grub-kyi mdo*, **Ārya-Jinaputra-arthasiddhisūtra*³⁴⁾, but this reconstruction of its Sanskrit title should be reexamined considering other elements³⁵⁾. This *Monographic Sūtra* or *Monograph* is reproduced in a shortened version in the fourth tale of the roll 80 of the compilation of the late seventh century (Tang period) called *Fa yuan zhu lin* (T. 2122, p. 879b25-882b19). It is a Chinese translation from the "classical age" of translations, by Sheng Jian 聖堅 between 388 and 407. It was the text that Chavannes selected as representative of the Vessantara story in Chinese and, by parallelism with the Pāli *Jātaka* collection, as the last entry in the *Cinq-cents contes et apologues tirés du Canon bouddhique chinois*³⁶⁾. Although most Western scholarship refers to this Vessantara tale in Chinese, the *Archaic version*, with fewer accretions, deserves our attention.³⁷⁾

These two narratives are close to each other and they generally make use of the same transcriptions for the Indic proper names, but they do not necessarily use the same sources. The older narrative preserves a few elements that have not been introduced in the more recent one, although the later version is especially remarkable for its plethora of extra episodes. A synoptic edition of these two texts should be of some interest. Both refer to the prince as Sudāna instead of Viśvantara.

The remaining antique tradition in Chinese about this *Avadāna* is limited to a few lines here and there mentioning the successive offerings of the hero of the gift, as in *Fo ben xing jing* 佛本行經 **Buddhapūrvacaryā-sūtra* (T. 193, j. 5, p. 89). The *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論 (T. 1509 j.12, p.146 b4-6 and j. 33, p. 304c27), the Buddhist encyclopedia translated and annotated by Etienne Lamotte,³⁸⁾ refers to the story of Prince Sudāna.

The annotation by Lamotte, gives precious bibliographical information on the tale, especially concerning the Chinese travellers who found traces of the legend when crossing Gandhāra.

It can be said about the two developed Chinese versions of the Sudāna story, the *Archaic version* and the *Monograph*, that they lack the intense religious or inner feeling that permeates the account by Saṃghasena. Using a similar but looser framework, more attention is given to picturesque elements. The same observation could be applied to the Pāli account where the external descriptions cover a very large place.

We will concentrate on the drama of the children in these two texts and on details that are lacking in Saṃghasena's account. Before the banishment of the prince, there are already foreshadowings of what will happen: the ministers are afraid that such a prince could give away the kingdom or even his wife and children (T. 152, p. 8b5). The eventuality of offering his son and daughter is expressed by the prince in the *Monograph* (T. 171, p. 420b20-21) but, in its version in the Tang anthology (T. 2122, p. 880a29-b1), this possibility is put in the mouth of Mādri herself, the wife of Sudāna, who claims that if somebody requests it, she and her son and daughter are ready to be given away, according to the prince's will.

For the period preceding the visit of the brahmin, several details are given about the children: their departure with their parents (T. 152, p. 8c28), how on the way a greedy brahmin asked for and received their dresses (*ibid.*, p. 9a6), how after having given horse, chariot, jewels and dresses, their father and mother each had to carry one of them (*ibid.*, p. 9a11) to the mountain.

After a long march of three weeks or twenty-one days, as described in the *Archaic version*, the family reaches the mountain. First, an ascetic finds the presence of the wife and children improper for the prince studying the Way (*ibid.* p. 9a22). It is through the rather idyllic description of their new abode that we are informed about the housing, the name and

the dress of the children (grasses for Jālin, the boy; antelope's hide for Kṛṣṇajīnā, the girl,). Their ages, seven and six years, are mentioned only in the *Monograph* (T. 171, p.421b7-20) which also describes how they played: We are even told that Jālin was wounded when playing with a lion and was cured by a monkey. Observing that scene, the prince praised the sincere feelings of the beasts. This sentence is followed immediately by the dreadful narrative of the plot of the mischievous young wife of the ugly brahmin to get as her own slaves the two children of the generous prince.

The crucial scene is the offering of the two children to the brahmin. We have read above, in Saṃghasena's account, the impressive argument made by the son defending the children's personal rights against their father. As we saw, the father was bound to his vow of giving everything, but was also convinced that his children were still completely immature. In the *Archaic version* (T. 152, p. 9b27-c28) and in the *Monograph* (T. 171, p. 422a5-b18), it is mostly the pitiful aspect of the scene that is emphasized. According to the *Archaic version*, the children are the first to see the brahmin coming. They instantantly sense that he will ask their father for them. Holding their hands, they hide themselves in a hole covered by dry roots. After having been requested three times by the brahmin, who needs the children as caretakers for his old age 養老 (T. 152, p. 9c8; T. 171, p. 422a15), the prince agrees. The reaction of the children is double. They say first that the man is not a brahmin but a demon who will eat them. Second, they deplore the absence of their mother who is away cutting fruits. When she comes back, she will be mad (the term 狂 is often used) as a cow in search of her calf.

Before being ritually offered by water poured by the prince on the hands of the brahmin, the children are told by their father that the brahmin is not a demon. The brahmin succeeds in averting a last meeting of the children with their mother. In the *Monograph*, the new arguments

of the children are then that since they are of royal race they cannot become slaves except as a result of a crime committed in a previous existence. They wish to do penance in front of their father. They pray that the punishment will disappear and that them will avoid such misfortune in future generations. The prince answers by referring to the universality of suffering and impermanence: all the affections have to be severed. He assures them that he will save them when he has reached *bodhi*.

The third and last time that the children speak to their father, they deplore not being able to bid farewell to their mother due to the sins of their previous life. The brahmin insists again on avoiding such a meeting and asks that the children be tied up. The prince helps the brahmin tie them up and he does nothing when the brahmin strikes his children to force them to leave. A last appeal to see their mother is addressed to the deities of the mountain and of the woods. In the *Monograph*, we are told that it is already on the way that such an appeal is made. The boy tries to bind himself to a tree in order to stop the march and leave a possibility for his mother to come. The brahmin hits him again. The two children submit and ask for the pity of the divinities of the mountains and of the trees.

As in all the traditions, the story of the children is interrupted by the story of the despair of their mother. The account of the last ordeals of the children and of their redemption by their grandfather normally appears in connection with a vow to save them made by Mādrī at the demand of the god Śakra, but in the *Archaic version* (T. 152, 10b16-19) it is only the prince who makes a vow, which is unrelated to the children. The normal pattern of the story is that Mādrī after being offered to a pseudo brahmin who reveals himself as Śakra, is offered the chance to make three wishes (or one wish, related only to the children, in the

Vinaya tradition). Mādri's wishes are as follows: first, that the brahmin will take the children to their home country; second, that the children do not suffer from hunger or thirst, and third that, together with the prince, she will soon return to their country. The wish of Mādri generates a succession of events starting with the redemption of the children that leads to the happy conclusion of the tale.

The next passage that we will investigate concerns the final ordeals of the children and their redemption by their grandfather. This is the *Archaic version* (T. 152, p. 10b19-c29), which, except for the last scene, is more developed than the *Monograph* (T. 171, p. 423a21-c6).

The *Archaic version* (T. 151, p. 10b19-c2) starts its account with the episode that ended the account of the *Monograph*: an attempt by the children to escape from the brahmin. While he is asleep, they hide themselves under water lilies in a pond, but they are caught by the brahmin who hits and ties them up. This episode is well known and much illustrated in the Pāli tradition where it occurs when their father is still present. In the *Archaic version*, this scene duplicates the scene that we have mentioned above in the same text (*ibid.*, p.9c1-11), in which the children are hidden from their father in a hole. It is one of the numerous cases showing how the narrator borrowed freely from a large number of episodes and details that were probably well known to his readers. We also get the impression that in this episode the narrator wished to present the behaviour of the children as piteous indeed but still childish.

Angered by the cruelty of the brahmin, the gods start secretly to nourish the children and to arrange soft couches for them. In contrast, the brahmin must endure a penurious life of scarce food and hard couches. Narrated humorously, it is a detail expanded in the *Archaic version* (*ibid.*, p. 9b25-c2) but only alluded to in the *Monograph*.

The next episode (*ibid.*, p.10c2-8) is the homecoming of the brahmin

and his meeting with his wife, who does not accept the two children, too noble to be servants. It is here that after having narrated the vows of Mādri and of the prince, the *Monograph* (T. 171, p. 423b21-27) starts its account of the end of the ordeals of the children. In both accounts, the brahmin is thus reduced to bringing them to their native place and to their grandfather, the king.

It is in a later scene, when the children, still slaves of the brahmin, are confronted with their grandfather that the brother is most articulate. He refuses to be held in the arms of the king as long as he is a slave. He makes still more bitter his lesson to the king in the following dialogue which shows an unexpected feminist undertone, which is explained differently, in relation to dowry, in the *Vessantara-jātaka* (pp. 546.24 - 547.8). When the king asks how much he has to pay to redeem his grand children, the boy answers himself, proposing a higher price for his sister than for himself. He explains that as the women of low rank living in the palace are well treated whereas the only son of the king is banished, one has to conclude that a woman must be more valuable than a man. In the *Archaic version*, there is some sarcasm in the reaction of the king who praises the boy in the following terms: "My grandson is eight years old but he has the arguments of a doctor" 八歲孫童而有高士之論. He adds: "How much more argumentative still is his father!" (T.152, p. 10c 22) At that moment, the people surrounding the king are afraid that the king, offended by this arrogance, will reject his grandchildren. The brahmin reiterates the terms: either the high price will be paid for both children or he keeps them. The king accepts his condition, the brahmin takes his leave, and the children are then described as sitting on the lap of their grandfather.

This sarcastic aspect is completely absent from the *Monograph*, in which the dialogue grows more and more edifying. The boy starts it by making an observation on the women. The king repents and wishes

to hold his grandchildren in his arms. The boy contrasts this invitation with his condition as a slave, without resentment toward the king, without fear of the brahmin. When the king has paid the ransom, the children agree to climb on their grandfather's lap and to answer to his questions about their father's life in seclusion.

Finally, in the *Monograph* (T. 171, p. 423b28-c6) only, after having given the king reassuring news about the prince, the boy asks magnanimously that the brahmin be offered a meal before his departure, since he had been the recipient of the gift of themselves from their father. In the two traditions, the consequence of the return of the children is the sending of a messenger to the prince to let him know that his sentence of banishment is rescinded and to urge him to return.

With the last mention of the children in the *Archaic account* (T. 152, p. 11a21), as in the *Monograph* (T. 171, p. 424a19), the Buddha, concluding the *Avadāna*, identifies the boy with Rāhula, i.e., his son, and the girl with the enigmatic mother of an *arhat* called Zhu Chi 朱[or 珠]遲 in T.152 and Mo Li 末利 in T.171. In the *Vessantara-jātaka* (PTS p. 593.29) she is identified with the nun Uppalavaṇṇā

Part III

The account of the children in the *Vinaya* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin*

Next we look at the tradition of the *Vinaya* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin*: *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (T. 1448, j. 14, p. 64c-69a) and *Samghabhedavastu* (T. 1450, j. 16, p. 181a-184b). These two narratives, translated by Yi Jing in the early eighth century, are introduced in their respective contexts as an account of one of the previous lives of Devadatta. The devious brahmin who asks for the children was Devadatta in an earlier existence.

The narratives in Chinese are similar but not identical. We can compare them with a Sanskrit version (*Samṅhabhedavastu* of Gilgit³⁹) which has been the source of the outline of the tale given in the chapter 23 of the *Avadānakalpalatā* by Kṣemendra) and with two Tibetan versions.

As I confine myself to the scarce information that this text gives about the children's situation, I may observe that one of the famous minor episodes of the tale, the gift of the chariot to greedy brahmins, is duplicated in this account. The second time, when Viśvantara and his family are on their way toward seclusion (*tapovana*), it is said that the father carried his daughter on his shoulders and that the mother takes care of her son (*tato Viśvantaraḥ... Kṛṣṇajināṃ kumārīṃ skandhē āropya, Mādrī ca Jālināṃ kumāram*)⁴⁰. This is in opposition to all the tradition that generally insists on the point that Jālin the boy was the elder and heavier. The image of the father bringing a boy taller than his sister, brought by her mother, is very popular. The 29th stanza of the Pāli *Cariyā-piṭaka*⁴¹ insists on the point that the girl is light (*lahukā*) and her brother is heavy (*garuka*). In the Chinese translation of this passage (T.1450, j.16, p. 182 b7-8), the bodhisattva carries the boy and the princess carries the girl. In the corresponding passage of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (T. 1448, j. 14, p. 66a15), the prince is described as holding both the boy and the girl.

Beside that curious detail, we observe that in these *Vinaya* texts, the drama of the gift of the children is considered mostly from the standpoint of the father, torn between his love for his children and his obligation to practice giving, especially toward a brahmin. Later, as we will see in the next article, there will be consideration from the standpoint of the mother. In the Sanskrit text, nothing is said about the life of the children in the forest. They have two occasions to express themselves after the earthquake that indicates that their fate had been settled. The first of their childish laments (Gnoli II, p. 126.16-19) is partly in prose,

partly in verse. They ask not to be given away and describe themselves as deprived of support (*guruvihīna*). The Chinese corresponding sentence (T.1450, p.183a3-4) is only in prose and omits the reference to the mother in the Sanskrit stanza. In the translation of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, the children pronounce a pathetic stanza whose object is their good mother 慈母⁴²⁾ who is out of sight and from whom they will be separated forever by the will of their father.

After Viśvantara has once more vowed to reach supreme bodhi, the *Vinaya* gives the children a last chance to express themselves. Their words are formulated in stanza in the Sanskrit *Samghabhedavastu* as well as in its Chinese translation, and in prose in the Chinese translation of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*. The children's calling to their father and through him to their mother is at this stage to ask for indulgence (*kṣamā*); they say that their eventual discourteous speech or disobedience should be forgiven (*maṛṣanīya*) as children's peccadillos. (Gnoli, p. 126.29-130.4). It is the same plea for indulgence expressed through the transliteration 懺摩 (*kṣamā*) in T.1448 (66c18). It is more especially addressed to their mother in T. 1450 (183a13-16), which uses the expression 報恩: "We are not now earning a benevolent reward" 今時不得報慈恩.

In this *Vinaya* tradition, the salvation of the children is effected through their mother. After she has been given to the god Śakra, he asks her to make a vow. In the common tradition, three vows must be formulated, but here Mādrī wishes only for the deliverance from servitude (*dāsabhāvād vimocaya*) of her children through the help of their grandfather (Gnoli, p. 132.15-16; T. 1448, p. 68a9-10; T. 1450, p. 184a13-14). The god makes the brahmin bring the children to the capital, where they are soon recognised, although their appearance is miserable. The king sees them out of breath (*kṣīṇasvara*), emaciated (*kṛsatanū*) and with their bodies completely covered with dust (*maladigdha-gātra*). This realism, which we find also in the Chinese translations (T. 1148, p. 68a

23-24; T. 1450, p. 184a25), contrasts with most of the tradition, which describes the children as being beaten by the brahmin, but very soon protected by divinities secretly taking care of them, although the brahmin endures every kind of adversity. We have to remember that in this *Vinaya* tradition, more than Viśvantara, it is the Brahmin Jujjuka, Devadatta in a former existence, who is the main figure of the tale as an anti-hero. The account of the beatings he imposes on the children is omitted here, but the last sentence of the account (Gnoli, p.133.24-26) is a cynical reply of the brahmin to people observing that he owes his prosperity to Viśvantara: "What do I have to do with Viśvantara (*kim mama Viśvantareṇa kṛtam*)? I am a son of the supreme cast (*uttama-varṇa-prasūto'ham*)! It is the world that is indebted to me, therefore riches are my due" (*dakṣiṇīyo lokasya yena mama bhogāupanamanti*). Absent from the Chinese *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, the cynical reply of the Brahman to the people telling him that he owes his comfort 安隱 to the grandchildren of the king appears in the Chinese *Samghabhedavastu* (T. 1450, p. 184b16-20). It is expressed similarly: "Being superior 最上 and a field of merit 福田, I have to be worshipped and therefore to become rich 合得受供養 因此得財宝." It seems that the famous scene of the death of the brahmin through overeating is found only in the Southern tradition.

CONCLUSION

This brief look at the case of the children in the Chinese recensions of the *Vessantara-jātaka* may throw some light on the whole subject.

I think first that we may suggest that there is a Northern tradition that does not coincide with what we have called the Southern tradition, represented by the Pāli *Jātaka*. This epic, much more extended than all the Northern recensions investigated here, keeps its seminal value. We are even indebted to this *Jātaka*'s probably rather late division into

twelve chapters, including chapter VII, *Kumārapubba*, "Former matter with the children" and chapter VIII, *Maddi*, to justify our approach, focusing first on the children's drama, and in the next article, on their mother, Mādri.

In any event, the comparison between the much interrelated Sanskrit and Chinese recensions of the tale leads us to consider that, centered as it is on the hero Vessantara, the Pāli tradition shows a tendency to give a more passive role to the other protagonists of the story. We have two clear examples of this tendency. In the *Vessantara-jātaka* (pp. 544.20-545.26), it is Vessantara who suggests to the reticent brahmin that he ask his father for a ransom for the two children. We can see in the Northern tradition that much more importance is given to the wish made by Mādri to Sakka that her children be saved through a ransom paid by their grandfather. Moreover, later in the *Vessantara-jātaka* (pp. 546.24-547.8), it is Vessantara who suggests to his son that he ask for a higher ransom for his sister than for himself. Such a high ransom would allow her to be married into a kingly family. We have seen that in the closely related archaic T. 152 and monographic T. 171 it is the boy who intervenes to give a moralistic context to that preference, incriminating implicitly the conduct of his grandfather, who banished his son and benefited the women of his palace.

Although there are several figures who play important roles in the Pāli as in the Northern tradition (one of them is Phusatī, the mother of Vessantara, much more present in the *Vessantara-jātaka* and in the Pāli *Cariyā-piṭaka* [v.1-11] than in the Northern tradition), in a few texts of the Northern tradition the son of the prince, Jālin, plays a conspicuous part. I believe that, still more than his "feminist" declaration to his grandfather, his proclamation to his father of what could be called "children's right" not to be victim of abandonment (*parityāga*) is a document of literary and historical interest. This proclamation is not

the only piece of interest in the recension of the Viśvantara tale by Saṃghasena.

Since the general analysis made by Alsdorf and Gombrich⁴³⁾, a few new approaches have been made in the field of the Vessantara / Viśvantara / Sudāna studies. A synoptic study of the different recensions of the tale should be encouraged.

1) See "Two interpretations of human-flesh offering: misdeed or supreme sacrifice," *Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies* I (1998), pp. 57-83. In a private letter, Prof. J. W. de Jong observed that I should have taken into account an article by Jan Jaworski; "La section de la nourriture dans le Vinaya des Mahīśāsaka" (*Rocznik Orientalistyczny* VII, 1931, pp. 53-124) that includes translations and analyses of some of the *Vinaya* passages I quoted in my article. I am very grateful to Prof. de Jong for this correction, and I apologize for this omission that I should not have committed for many reasons: not only because Prof. Jaworski was a pioneer of Western *Vinaya* studies, but also because he belonged, in the decades following the First World War, to the Polish school of Buddhist studies to which we owe so much. Moreover, he published in my mother tongue, French.

2) Paul Pelliot [transl. & annot.], "Meou-tseu ou les doutes levés", *T'oung Pao* XIX, 1920, pp. 255-433, see pp. 304-306 and pp. 375-377; John P. Keenan, *How Master Mou Removes our Doubts*, SUNY Press, 1994; see pp. 105-110 and pp. 190-191.

3) T. 2102, j. 1, p. 3c27-4a13, compiled by Seng You 僧祐 (445-518).

4) It is used by T. 152 and T. 171 (see *infra* Part II), and also mentioned by Faxian in connection with his visit to Sri Lanka in T. 2085 p. 865b3. T. 153 (see *infra* Part I) uses a translation of his Sanskrit name Viśvantara: Yi-qie zhi—一切持. In the tradition of the *Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin* (see *infra* Part III), the transliteration Wei-shi-fo-duo-luo 尾施縛多羅 is used in T. 1448, j. 14, p. 65a6 although in T. 1550, j. 16, p. 181a29, there is a translation: Zi-

zai jian 自在間 [var. 間].

- 5) For an overview of these versions, see the tables by Jampa Losang Panglung in *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya analysiert auf Grund der Tibetischen Uebersetzung* (Tōkyō: The Reiyukai Library, 1981).
- 6) Hendrik Kern, *The Jātaka-mālā Stories of Buddha's former incarnations, otherwise entitled Bodhisattva-avadāna-mālā, by Ārya-çūra, critically edited in the original Sanskrit* (Harvard University Press, 1891), p. 51.22-23. Translations: 1) by J. S. Speyer, *The Jātaka-mālā Garland of Birth-Stories, of Āryaśūra* (London: Sacred Books of the Buddhists, 1895), p. 71. 2) by Peter Khoroché, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 58.
- 7) *Milindapañha*, PTS (Trenckner ed.), pp. 113-119. Translation by Edith Nolot, *Entretiens de Milinda et de Nāgasena* (Paris: Gallimard, "Connaissance de l'Orient", 1995), pp. 109-113.
- 8) *Ibid.*, pp. 274-284. Translation by Edith Nolot, *ibid.*, pp. 218-226.
- 9) See Forrest Mc Gill, "Painting the 'Great Life'" in Juliane Schober ed., *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu : University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 195-217.
- 10) PTS (Fausböll ed.), pp. 479-596.
- 11) See Ludwig Alsdorf, "Bemerkungen zum Vessantara-Jātaka", *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd-und Ostasiens*, vol.1, 1957, pp. 1-70.
- 12) *Nidānakathā* in PTS *Jātaka* (ed. Fausböll), vol. I. p. 74.22-23.
- 13) *Ibid.*, p. 88.32.
- 14) The Buddha explains to Ānanda that a remembrance of his generosity as prince Sudāna in a very distant past made him laugh and emit from his mouth a five-colored ray of light: T. 171, p. 418c3-9.
- 15) See *Hōbōgirin* V (Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise - Paris: Librairie A. Maisonneuve, 1979) s.v. Chōrai (by H. Durt), pp. 375-376.
- 16) Well examined in Margaret Cone and Richard F. Gombrich, *The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara: A Buddhist Epic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,

1977). On this *Jātaka*, see also Etienne Lamotte, *Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse* II (Louvain, Bibliothèque du Muséon, 1949), p. 713, n. 1, completed by *Traité* V (Louvain: PIOL, 1980), p. 2251, n.1,2.

17) The text of the Viśvantara-avadāna, chapter 23 of the *Avadānakalpalatā* by Kṣemendra (A.D.1052) has been edited and translated in English in appendix to the thesis of Kabita Das Gupta (See *infra* note 39), pp. 132-145.

18) The story of Tārāvaloka, in Nalini Balbir, ed., Somadeva, *Océan des rivières de contes* (Paris: Gallimard, "Pléiade," 1997) pp. 1185-1190 and notes, by Sylvain Brocquet, pp.1499-1501.

19) See *infra* note 37.

20) *Journal Asiatique*, 1914, pp. 221-305.

21) See Dieter Schlingloff, "Das Śaśa-Jātaka," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens* XV, 1971, p. 60, notes and *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1987, p. 96 and p. 111, n. 18-19.

Siegfried Lienhard, "La légende du prince Viśvantara dans la tradition népalaise," *Arts Asiatiques* XXXIV, 1978, p. 140, note 2.

22) See H. Durt, *art. cit.*, pp. 81-82, n. 67.

23) As the last entry in the *Cinq-cents contes et apologues tirés du Canon bouddhique chinois* III (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1911), pp. 362-395.

24) Cf. *supra* note 7.

25) Explained as seven hundred objects of the same kind. In other Chinese traditions, the prince asks for seven days to make his last offerings, but the king allows only one day to his son before leaving his kingdom.

26) The same expression in the *Jātakamālā* (v. 55) and in T. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, the wisdom of the generous Prince Tārāvaloka, who plays the role of Viśvantara in the Buddhist *Jātaka*, is described as knowing the meaning of every word except "no." (N. Balbir ed., *Océan des rivières de contes*, p.1185).

27) That reference to his previous situation as a *grhapati* appears three times in our text.

- 28) In the *Jātakamālā* (v. 58), there is a pun on *vāma*: women as beautiful and as opposition. Kern ed. p. 61. 18.
- 29) The same expression as used just before by the father of the two children.
- 30) Comparison used by the mother of the prince in describing her sadness when her son has been banished in T. 152, p. 8c24.
- 31) See *Da zhi du lun*, T. 1509, j. 33, p. 304c27, Lamotte, *Traité V*, p. 2251
- 32) In the Jātaka literature, prince Vessantara and the generous king of the Sibis are often associated.
- 33) See in *Kokuyaku Issaikyō, Honnenbu 6* (Tōkyō: Daitō shuppansha, 1935), p. 116, the preface to its modern Japanese translation by Narita Shōshin 成田昌信.
- 34) *Otani Kanjur Catalogue* (Kyōto, 1932), no 1020.
- 35) See H. Durt, *art. cit.*, pp. 81-82, n. 67.
- 36) *Cf. supra* note 21.
- 37) Pelliot in *art. cit.* note 2, deplores the fact that Chavannes translated all the tales of the *Liu-du ji jing* 六度集經 (T.152) except the tale of Sudāna, preferring the most developed and later version of this tale by Shāng Jian (T.171). This choice also had the advantage of concluding the collection selected by Chavannes with a work parallel to the *Vessantara Jātaka*, which concludes the collection of 547 tales of the Pāli *Jātaka*.
- 38) *Traité II*, pp. 713-714.
- 39) There are two manuscripts of the Sanskrit *Samghabhedavastu* that contain the *Viśvantarāvadāna*. The first one, edited by Kabita Das Gupta, *Viśvantarāvadāna, Eine Buddhistische Legende*, [Doctoral Dissertation of the Freie Universität Berlin] Berlin, 1978, is lacking the lengthy discussion between the Brahmin Jujjuka and Viśvantara before the gift of the children (corresponding to pp. 124.10 - 126.10 of the Gnoli edition). The second one is a chapter of the complete work edited by Raniero Gnoli, with the assistance of T. Venkatacharya, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu being the 17th and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*, 2 vols.

Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1978. The *Viśvantarâvadāna* is found in vol. II, pp. 119-133. It lacks the story of the marriage of Jujjuka, antecedent of Devadatta, which covers pp. 46.17 - 49.14 of the K. Das Gupta edition. The story of the marriage of Jujjuka does not appear in Yi Jing's translation.

40) Gnoli, II, p. 124.4-5, K. Das Gupta, p. 46.12-13.

41) *Buddhavaṃsa and Cariyāpitaka*, New Edition by N. A. Jayawickrama, PTS 1974, p. 8.

42) In Buddhist texts, the reference to *maitri* (goodness, friendliness) is generally addressed to the father 慈父 and *karuṇā* (compassion) to the mother 悲母.

43) Cf. *supra*, notes 11 and 16.