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To Dr Arion Roşu

INTRODUCTION

The universal application of the law of karman is a theme that has had to be reformulated again and again. The long life of the Buddha is full of casual meetings, but all are the result of karman, not of chance. When we consider the most important events of his life, especially the succession of episodes surrounding his birth, we find karmic predestination at every stage. The topic of this article will be the career of a nun, Kajaṅgalā, who happens to be at the converging point of three series of karmic tales. First, she is one of the distinguished women who missed the opportunity to become the mother of the Buddha. Those ladies sometimes appear under a benign aspect, as we shall see when the Buddha meets one of his would-be mothers in the *Sāketa-jātaka*. More often they appear under a tragic aspect, as we shall see when the Buddha meets poor old women who, thanks to this meeting, will become late-ordained *mahallikā*. A second series of karmic tales deals with the Buddha's meetings with mothers made insane by the loss of a child. These tales are known mostly from the *Therīgāthā*. The extreme instance of such distress is reached when one of these women embraces the Buddha, as in the story of Vāsiṭṭhī. Such an embrace is also a feature of the story of Kajaṅgalā, who is not insane but very wise. The third series of tales expressly concerns wise nuns, sometimes eulogized by the Buddha himself. We shall see that the story of Kajaṅgalā is the story of a meeting with the Buddha connected with the motif of the birth of

the Buddha, with the motif of the misbehavior of a would-be mother of the Buddha and with the motif of a redemption from this transgression through the accession to a high level of wisdom in a community of nuns.

Mother of the Buddha

In the context of the birth of the Buddha, special attention had to be devoted to the mother of the Buddha. Among the numerous “cycles” which, according to Alfred Foucher,¹ became the components of the biography of Śākyamuni, the “cycle” of Mahāmāyā, or Māyā, the mother of the Buddha, although discreet, is scattered through this abundant biographical literature. Foucher connected “cycles” with places. This category may be extended to important human figures of the Buddha’s legend. Māyā’s cycle groups some leitmotifs, such as the five-hundred previous existences she had to spend as a mother of the Bodhisattva, her curative influence during the ten months of her last pregnancy, the birth of her son from her right side and, seven days later, her programmed death, followed by her rebirth in the Trāyastriṃśa-deva heaven. These leitmotifs are well known features of all the Buddhist traditions.

In previous articles,² I have alluded to the attempts to de-emphasize the human nature of the Buddha’s mother Māyā,³ in order to exalt the role of the

¹ Alfred Foucher, *La vie du Buddha d’après les textes et les monuments de l’Inde*, Paris: Payot, 1949, pp. 18–19 and *passim*.

² Cf. Durt, a) “L’apparition du Buddha à sa mère après son nirvāṇa dans le *Sūtra de Mahāmāyā* (T. 383) et dans le *Sūtra de la Mère du Buddha* (T. 2919).” *De Dunhuang au Japon, Etudes chinoises et bouddhiques offertes à Michel Soyminié* (éd. J. P. Drège), EPHE, Sciences Historiques et Philologiques et Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Etudes Chinoises II, Hautes Etudes Orientales 31, Paris-Genève: Droz, 1996, pp. 1–24. b) “The Pregnancy of Māyā: I. The five uncontrollable longings (*dohadā*).” *Journal of the International College for Advanced Buddhist Studies* [abr. here as *JICABS*], No 5 (2002), pp. 188–187 (pp. 43–44 of the offprint).

³ See a sūtra (T. 815) attributed to the translator Dharmarakṣa (late 3rd–early 4th

Prajñā, quintessential mother of the Buddhas, assimilated to the *Dharmakāya*. This process of making the mother of the Buddha close to an abstraction was oriented in another direction through the Tantric system of symbols.

One observation that has to be made about Māyā is that in several Jātaka tales (actually Jātaka commentaries⁴), her name appears at the time of the final identification, when the Buddha is identified with the Bodhisattva hero of the tale; positive figures are identified with the parents of the Buddha, Śuddhodana and Māyā or with well-known disciples; negative figures are identified with Devadatta, or, if female, with Ciñcā Mānavikā. My opinion is that in these almost automatic identifications, any psychological or “circumstantial” connection between the “antecedents” involved in the Jātakas and the famous personages and circumstances of the historical Buddha’s legend did not matter much. We do not recognize the “spirit” of Māyā in the Jātaka figures with which she is identified, neither do we do recognize any similarity between the events told in the Jātakas and the few events taking place during the life of Māyā that we know from texts and images. Moreover, certain Jātaka tales, as in the *Sāketa-jātaka*, introduce further women who have been mothers of the Bodhisattva but who did not succeed in becoming his mother in his last and definitive existence.

Vāsiṭṭhī

The case of those unfortunate “would-be” mothers of the Buddha presents some similarities with the case of the mothers in despair who appear in the *Therīgāthā* and in scattered episodes of the life of the Buddha. In a previous

century) and bearing the same title as the (probably later) famous Sūtra of Mahāmāyā (T. 383). In this “Sūtra of the predication of the Dharma to his mother by the Buddha having ascended to the heaven of the thirty three” (佛昇忉利天為母說法經), T. 815, j. 2, p. 792c2–25, the role of Māyā is constantly reviled.

⁴ In Jātakas, canonical verses are separated by long tracts of non-canonical prose commentary, which contains the tale itself.

article,⁵ our attention had been attracted by a *therī*, Vāsiṭṭhī, who, before entering the Way, had been a mother who had lost her children. She was insane when she embraced the Buddha whom she imagined as to be her lost son *redivivus*. This burst of affection was attributed to her mental despair. The vicissitudes of Vāsiṭṭhī, with several variants, can be followed from the *Therīgāthā* to the *Abhidharmakośavyākhyā* and to the Mahāyānic *Mahā-parinirvāṇasūtra*. Vāsiṭṭhī's action has been excused and interpreted as a case of insanity cured by the Buddha.

Mahallikā stories

In less dramatic tales, we are informed that the Buddha met an old woman who appeared to be destitute but was endowed with a remarkable capacity for learning and teaching. This situation resulted from her ambivalent karman. On the positive side, she was worthy, during five hundred previous existences, of being the mother of the Bodhisattva destined to become Śākyamuni. On the negative side, out of greediness, she had opposed her son's propensity to generosity. She lost her status as future mother of the Buddha, and poverty was the punishment for her greediness, but understanding and teaching the Dharma was the positive reward for having been the mother of a bodhisattva. It would lead her to meet the Buddha and to improve her destiny. *Mahallikā*, feminine form of *Mahallaka*,⁶ is a term that refers to old, destitute women. In the best cases, they can be ordained in the saṃgha and constitute the category of *bhikṣuṇī*, called *mahallikā* or *vr̥ddhā pravrajitā*, "ordained in a later age."

There are three closely related, short sūtras, grouped as "sūtras of the old

⁵ Cf. Durt, "The vicissitudes of Vāsiṭṭhī/Vāsiṣṭhā who became insane due to the loss of her child: From *Therīgāthā* to Mahāyāna." *JICABS*, No 4 (2001), pp. 314-294 (offprint: pp. 27-47).

⁶ Cf. Durt, "Mahalla/Mahallaka et la crise de la communauté après le Parinirvāṇa du Buddha", *Indianisme et bouddhisme: Mélanges offerts à Mgr Etienne Lamotte*, Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain 23, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1980, p. 79-99.

mother” (老母經), telling this story. They are almost identical to each other and introduce an Amidist note in the tale: the woman will be reborn in the Amitābha’s paradise⁷ and after that become a Buddha. The Chinese translation of the first sūtra (T. 559) is attributed to Shi Jian 支謙 (first half of the third century) and the bibliographer Sengyou 僧祐 (445-518) attributes the second sūtra (T. 561) to an anonymous translator of the Liu Song 劉宋 period (420-479). The third sūtra (T. 560), a translation attributed to Guṇabhadra (middle of the 5th century), does not mention the name of Amitābha, but mentions a probable synonym: “Buddha of infinite purity” (無量清淨佛).⁸

We have here the general theme of the woman—mother or wife—obstructing the bodhisattva vocation of her son or of her husband. It is a leitmotif diffused in many Buddhist narratives. In the case of a mother, we may cite the lack of generosity of the mother of Maudgalyāyana, whose punishment was more severe and much more famous.⁹ For a wife, we have as an example the precautions taken by Sumedha, the first bodhisattva predecessor of Śākyamuni, when marrying the future Yaśodharā, not to be prevented from giving away even his wife if somebody asks for her as a gift. This precaution is matched by the gesture of Vessantara, the last bodhisattva predecessor of Śākyamuni, giving his children to a brahmin and his wife to a pseudo-brahmin, as we have seen in two previous articles.¹⁰ The emergency of a new

⁷ T. 559, p. 912b7, T. 561, p. 913b4.

⁸ T. 560, p. 612c10.

⁹ The meeting of Maudgalyāyana with hungry ghosts (some of them having been originally greedy women) is a not uncommon feature of Buddhist tales. The salvation by Maudgalyāyana of his mother fallen in the Hell as punishment of her greediness became a major predication theme in Chinese Buddhism. It continues to be the object of numerous studies, among which the most detailed is Stephen F. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, Princeton University Press, 1988. See especially pp. 124-136.

¹⁰ Cf. Durt, a) “The Offering of the Children of Prince Viśvantara/Sudāna in the Chinese Tradition.” *JICABS*, No 2 (1999), pp. 256-255 (pp. 157-158 of the offprint). b)

type of sūtras emphasizing motherly love seems to reflect a powerful current of filial sentimentality conspicuous in Indian Buddhism as well as in Chinese Buddhism.

The tale of Kajaṅgalā

The story of the *mahallikā*, unaffected by the Amidist note appearing in the three short sūtras mentioned above, receives its full development in the tale of Kajaṅgalā.

1. Pāli sources

The name of Kajaṅgalā is well known as the name of a learned *bhikkhunī* in the tradition of the *Anguttara Nikāya*,¹¹ but the legend about her antecedents and about her redemption through a meeting with the Buddha seems to be found only in the Sanskrit tradition and in its derived traditions. It should also be noted that Kajaṅgalā does not figure in the list of the thirteen outstanding *bhikkhunī* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*,¹² where the *bhikkhunī* Dhammadinnā is presented as the best expounder of the Dhamma (*dhammakathikā*).¹³ A similar

“The Casting-off of Mādri in the Northern Buddhist Literary Tradition.” *JICABS*, No 3 (2000), pp. 270–245 (offprint: pp. 133–158).

¹¹ *Ang. N. PTS. V*, p. 54–59, Comm. (*Manoratha-pūraṇī*) *PTS, V*, p. 25–26.

¹² *Ang. N. I*, p. 24.

¹³ G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* [abr. here as *DPPN*]. London: John Murray, 1938, pp. 1142, 1143; Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善, *Indo Bukkyō koyu meishi jiten* 印度佛教固有名詞辞典, Nagoya: Hajinkaku, 1931, p. 159. According to an isolate tradition, in a previous life, Dharmadinnā had been related to a story of shift from poverty to riches. Sumedhā, Dharmadinnā and Viśākhā were poor women who were rewarded for having invited the Buddha Kanakamuni (Konāgamuni in S. Lévi’s edition). Dharmadinnā’s generosity seems to match the greediness of Kajaṅgalā. See Sylvain Lévi ed., *Mahākarmavibhaṅga (La Grande Classification des Actes) et Karmavibhaṅgopadeśa (Discussion sur le Mahā Karmavibhaṅga)*, Paris: Leroux, 1932, p. 97, transl. p. 147; Noriyuki Kudo ed., *The Karmavibhaṅga: Transliterations and Annotations of the Original Sanskrit Manuscripts from Nepal*, Bibliotheca Philologica et Philosophica Buddhica VII,

observation has to be made for the corresponding Chinese text, where there are fifty outstanding nuns. Among them a nun whose name is translated as Puzhao 普照 is presented as “able to explain and dissect the deep Dharma” (能廣說義分別深法).¹⁴ The *Kuddhakapāṭha* gives a particular importance to Kajaṅgalā as it made her the teacher of *upāsakas* of the city of Kajaṅgalā and the exponent of three main topics (the 4th: the four Noble Truths, the 7th: the seven elements of the Enlightenment, and the 8th: the Noble Eightfold Path) among the ten topics of its fourth section (*Kumārapañham*).¹⁵

2. Sanskrit Sources

The sources of the tale of Kajaṅgalā (Kacaṅgalā according to the Sanskrit orthography) are remarkably homogeneous. The two Sanskrit versions, *Bhaiṣajyavastu*¹⁶ and *Avadānaśataka*,¹⁷ are very close to each other. We may suppose that the Kajaṅgalā tale, the 78th tale of the *Avadānaśataka* anthology, reproduces a passage from the Vinaya, of which the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* is a component. Nevertheless, we observe that, literarily speaking, the text of the anthology is more rich in details than the text of the Gilgit Vinaya, although some of the missing details in the Gilgit Vinaya may be found in the Chinese translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. An example, as we shall see, is the

The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, Tokyo 2004, p. 195.

¹⁴ T. 125, j. 3, p. 559b19.

¹⁵ *Khuddaka-pāṭha* PTS, p. 2; Comm. *Paramatthajjhōtikā* I, pp. 80–82, 83–85, 85–86.

¹⁶ Nalinaksha Dutt ed., *Gilgit Manuscripts*, III, 1, Srinagar, 1947, pp. 20–24; S. Bagchi ed., *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayavastu*, I, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 16, Mithila Institute, Darbhanga, 1967, pp. 20–22.

¹⁷ J. S. Speyer ed., *Avadānaśataka. A century of Edifying Tales belonging to the Hinayāna*, II, St.-Petersbourg, 1909, pp. 41–44; P. L. Vaidya ed., *Avadānaśataka*, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 19, Mithila Institute, Darbhanga, 1959, pp. 192–193. French translation by Léon Feer, *Avadāna-śataka, cent légendes (bouddhiques)*, Annales du Musée Guimet 18, Paris: Leroux, 1891, pp. 290–293.

scene of the embrace when the Buddha lets himself be embraced by his former mother. The *Avadānaśataka* tells that Kajaṅgalā had her breast bursting with milk and that she took the Buddha in her arms. The embrace figures in the Chinese Vinaya but not the detail of the bursting milk. Both the bursting milk and the embrace are absent from the Gilgit Vinaya which mentions only (as in the other versions) that Kajaṅgalā raised her arms. The Gilgit Vinaya also mentions (as in the other versions) that the Buddha intervened to forbid the bhikṣus to hold back Kajaṅgalā who, if impeded, would gush hot blood and perish. The most extensive representation of the scene is thus in the *Avadānaśataka*.

3. Chinese sources

The Kajaṅgalā tale is kept in two Chinese translations. The oldest version figures as 6th tale in a collection of tales known as *Cabaozangjing* 雜寶藏經 (*Vividharatnakosa*)¹⁸ translated in 472. This collection is independent of the *Avadānaśataka* whose Chinese version does not include the tale of Kajaṅgalā. The account is short, limited to the narrative aspects of the tale, and cuts down its doctrinal aspects. Remarkable is the constant intermediate role of Ānanda at every moment of the story. In the other traditions Ānanda is only called to ask for water for the Buddha. Here, he is ordered to allow Kajaṅgalā to embrace the Buddha. He has to call her owner and to introduce her to Mahāprajāpati. Moreover, this tale is furnished with an appendix, unknown elsewhere, and to be studied separately, in which the Buddha Śākyamuni recalls one of his past existences in the company of his former mother Kajaṅgalā. A more recent version of the Kajaṅgalā tale, at least in what

¹⁸ T. 203, j. 1, p. 450bc. The Sanskrit title is a reconstitution proposed by Nanjō. The collection has been translated by Charles Willemen: *The Storehouse of Sundry Valuables*, BDK English Tripiṭaka 10-1, Tokyo: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1994, pp. 20-21. See also Satō Chisui 佐藤智水, "The character of Yün-kang 雲岡 Buddhism," *The Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko*, 36 (1978), p. 57, fn. 48.

regards the date of translation, figures in the Chinese translation (T. 1448) of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*,¹⁹ made by Yijing 義淨 (635–713).

4. Tibetan sources

The Kajaṅgalā tale is preserved in two Tibetan translations: a) in the ‘*Dul-ba*, Tibetan translation of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*; where it figures in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*; b) in the collection of tales, in Tibetan only, whose title has been reconstructed as *Karmaśataka* by Léon Feer, who made a French translation of the work. The selection of tales is different in the *Karmaśataka* and in the *Avadānaśataka*. Among the fifteen tales common to the two compilations, we find a shortened version of the tale of Kajaṅgalā.²⁰

Diffusion

The tale of Kajaṅgalā had a limited diffusion. It is not to be found among the famous *Jātakas*; nor among the famous Sanskrit literary anthologies, which, as in the case of the *Avadānakalpalatā*, also became popular in Tibetan translations. This minor tale, in its *Cabaozangjing* version, was nevertheless included in the most extensive Chinese Buddhist anthology, compiled in the early Tang period, the *Fayuanzhulin* 法苑樹林²¹ as an example of the flexibility (改易) of the Buddha. Finally, although the *Cabaozangjing* and the *Fayuanzhulin* have been influential, the tale of Kajaṅgalā seems to have been ignored by Japanese medieval anthologies like the *Konjaku monogatari shū*.

In modern times, the tale of Kajaṅgalā has not attracted much attention: In *Cinq Cents Contes*,²² Chavannes, noting that Léon Feer had translated the

¹⁹ T. 1448, j. 10, pp. 44a12–45a3.

²⁰ No 33 in the *Karmaśataka*, no 78 in the *Avadānaśataka*. See Léon Feer, “Le Karmaśataka”, *Journal Asiatique*, janvier-février, mars-avril, mai-juin 1901, p. 7 of the offprint.

²¹ T. 2122, j. 52, p. 675a10–23.

²² Edouard Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka chinois*, Paris

Avadānaśataka tale, did not investigate further the subject of this old woman. Strangely enough the Panglung²³ catalogue, generally very complete, omits the name of Kajaṅgalā. She is referred to in the dictionaries and repertories by Akanuma,²⁴ Malalasekera²⁵ and Higata.²⁶

The name of Kajaṅgalā

I have kept here the Pāli orthography for the name of Kajaṅgalā as she is mentioned in the *Anguttara Nikāya*. The name is explained as a toponym.²⁷ It is written as Kacaṅgalā (from a forest called Kācaṅgalī: loc. *Kācaṅgalīya vana-ṣaṇḍe*) in the *Avadānaśataka*, and Kacaṅgalā in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*. In Chinese, without any attempt at translation, there are the transcriptions *Qiadanzheluo* 迦旦遮羅 (Higata proposes to correct *dan* 旦 in 亘) in the *Cabaozangjing*²⁸ and *Qiazhanluo* 迦戰羅 in the Chinese version of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*.²⁹

1910–1934, vol. III, p. 10, vol. IV, p. 59, 204.

²³ Jampa Losang Panglung, *Die Erzählstoffe des Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya analysiert auf grund der Tibetischen Uebersetzung*, Studia Philologica Buddhica, Monograph Series III, Tokyo: The Reiyukai Library, 1981, see p. 30.

²⁴ Akanuma, *Indo Bukkyō kōyū meishi jiten*, (cf. fn. 13), pp. 254b–255a.

²⁵ *DPPN*, pp. 481–482.

²⁶ Higata Ryūshō 干潟龍祥, *Honshō kyōrui no shisōshiteki kenkyū* 本生経類の思想史的研究 [A Historical Study of the Thoughts in Jātakas and the Similar Stories], Oriental Library Series A, Vol. 35, Tokyo: Toyo Bunko 1954, vol. II (Tables), p. 72a.

²⁷ Kajaṅgalā is a place well-known in the Buddhist tradition. See *DPPN*, I, pp. 481–482. Birthplace of Nāgasena, close to the Himālaya (*Milindapañha*, p. 10). Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, Louvain: Institut Orientaliste 1958, p. 440 identifies it with the city of Puṇḍravardhana, mentioned as Puṇḍavardhana in the *Divyāvadāna*, p. 21, l. 24–25, actually Mahāsthān in the Bhagra District. Xuanzang 玄奘 (T. 2987, j. 10, p. 927a4) describes, between the kingdoms of Champā and of Puṇḍravardhana, a kingdom called Jie-zhu-chang-qi-luo 羯朱唱祇羅 [with a variant: -wa- 囉 for the third character], which could be a transcription of Kajaṅgalā.

²⁸ T. 203, j. 1, p. 450b5.

²⁹ T. 1448, j. 10, p. 44b2.

Location of the episode

In the *Avadānaśataka*, we have seen that the name of Kajaṅgalā is explained as coming from the place where the meeting took place: a forest called *Kācaṅgalī vana-ṣaṇḍa*. In the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, the event is located in a place called Otaḷā which is also the location of the preceding tale³⁰ in this work. The Chinese *Bhaiṣajyavastu* refers to a village called Wu-tuo-yan 烏陀延. The *Cabaozangjing* refers to an unknown place called Ju-he-luo 居何羅.

In all the traditions, the story of Kajaṅgalā is divided in two parts: a narrative recounting her meeting with the Buddha and its wonderful consequences: from being a poor (*daridrā*) slave, she became a *bhikṣuṇī* ordained in her old age (*vrddhā pravrajitā*) and reached the outstanding consecration for a disciple of the Buddha of being called *agrā* (excellent). The second part consists of an explanation by the Buddha to his reluctant disciples about the karmic reasons why Kajaṅgalā suffered first so many punishments and thereafter enjoyed so many rewards. Except for the tale of the *Cabaozangjing*, the conclusion of each version points out ambivalence, black (*kṛṣṇa*, 黑) or white (*śukla*, 白), of acts and retributions.

The kernel of the tale is the story of the dramatic meeting of the Buddha with Kajaṅgalā, told in rather similar terms in our four sources, with the discrepancies concerning lactation and embrace or concerning the role of Ānanda, which have been cited above. There are differences in the names of places, and, for the sources in Chinese, the addition of an episode in the *Cabaozangjing*, along with some differences of vocabulary due to the three centuries separating the Northern Wei translation of the *Cabaozangjing* and

³⁰ Corresponding to the Otaḷāyaṇa Sūtra in the *Samyuktakāgama* (See Dutt, p. 19, fn. 1).

the Tang period translation of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*.

I. Narrative part

As the texts are very similar (the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* being more lengthy and less picturesque), I use here mostly the *Avadānaśataka* but I take into account some of the discrepancies found in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* which has the advantage of presenting a much older manuscript tradition. The two Chinese versions are used accessorially when their terminology presents some interest. I recognize that such a comparative approach would be best served by a synoptic edition of the four texts considered here, but I resign myself to giving here only an outline of the narrative, and, for the explanatory part, a classification of the arguments.

Kajaṅgalā had been the mother of the future Buddha Śākyamuni during five hundred of her and his past existences, but did not succeed in becoming his mother in his last and culminating existence as the Buddha Śākyamuni. Nevertheless, a decisive meeting with the Buddha changed her life. The context was rather trivial: the Buddha was thirsty. He told Ānanda to ask water from an old woman subjected to the order of fetching water (*dharmādāyodakārthini*) who was going to a well (*kūpaṃ upasṛptā*). Called by Ānanda, the old woman declared: “I will bring it myself!” (*Ahaṃ svayam eva āneṣyāmi*). She filled the pitcher and went towards the Venerable one. She saw (*dadarśa*) him in his glory (32 marks, etc.). This sight aroused in her the affection for a son (*putrasnehaḥśaṃmutpannaḥ*).³¹ Milk surged from her breast (*stanābhyāṃ kṣīradhārāḥ prasrutāḥ*) and she opened her arms (*ūrdhvabāhūḥ*) saying “Son! Son!—*Putra! Putra!*” She then tried to embrace (*pariṣvaktum*

³¹ In the narrative of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (Dutt, p. 20, l. 15–17), we find the opening of the arms and the double exclamation “*Putra*” but no reference to the lactation and to embrace.

ārabdhā, 抱) the Bhagavat. The bhikṣus tried to stop her, but the Buddha said, “Do not, bhikṣus, try to oppose what she is doing!” (*Mā yūyaṃ bhikṣava imāṃ kṛtvāṃ vārayata*). His injunction is continued as he states that, if impeded, this old woman, who had been his mother during his previous existences, would gush out (沸) hot blood and perish. Confronted with her imagining that she had given birth to him, his mind turned to compassion (慈愍) in the face of this generous love (恩愛).

In Sanskrit, these reactions of the Buddha are expressed in stanzas. Although the meaning is the same, there are a few variants in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* text. I have taken as basis the *Avadānaśataka* text in the revised version of P. L. Vaidya and, line after line, I have introduced the different readings of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* with the indication: Var. Vin. (Vinaya Variant).

Without interval, during 500 existences, she was my mother

Pañca janmaśatānyeṣā[mama] mātā āsīn-nirantaram

Var. Vin.: 1) *me* instead of [mama]; 2) *bhūn-* instead of *āsīn-*.

Out of affection for me, her son, she is embracing my limbs

Iyaṃ me putra-snehena gāreṣu samaślikṣata

This verse belongs only to the tradition of the *Avadānaśataka*.

If she is impeded from the embrace of my limbs

Sa cedeṣā nivāryeta mama gārasya śleṣanāt

Var. Vin.: 1) *sā* instead of *sa*; 2) *nivaritā* instead of *nivāryeta*, 3) *gārasya* instead of *gāreṣu*.

She will instantaneously vomit hot blood from her throat

Idānīm rudhiram hyuṣṇaṃ kaṇṭhād asyāḥ sravet-ksaṇāt

Var. Vin.: 1) *eṣā* instead of *asyāḥ*; 2) *vamet* instead of *sravet*.

With grateful memory seeing her love for her son

Kṛtaśatāmanusmṛtya dṛṣṭvemām putralālasām

From pity I offer myself compassionately to her physical affection

Kāruṇyādgātrasaṁśleṣaṁ dadāmi anukampayā

Var. Vin.: *pradadāmy-a°* instead of *dadāmi*.

After having expressed her joy and suppressed the twenty kinds of erroneous views about belief in the self (*sadkāya-dṛṣṭi*),³² a suppression particularly appropriate for a person who had abused greediness and pride, Kajaṅgalā achieves Entry into the flow (*Srota-āpanna*) and utters stanzas of religious elation. These stanzas of Kajaṅgalā are conventional, and I did not judge it necessary to reproduce them here.

Her condition as a slave is not overlooked, and on another occasion, her master pays homage to the Buddha. He is asked to free her (放 in *Cabaozangjing*) and authorizes her to leave the world. Received in the Community by Mahāprajāpati (波闍波提 in *Cabaozangjing*, 大世主 in *Yijing*) to whom she was introduced by the Buddha or by Ānanda (in *Cabaozangjing*), Kajaṅgalā reaches the *Arhati* state and receives the title of the first (*agrā*, 第一) in the analysis of the sūtras (*sūtrāntavibhāgakartri*, 善解契經 in *Cabaozangjing*, 分析經法 in *Yijing*). As said before, this distinction is not recognized in the famous lists of outstanding nuns of the *Anguttara Nikāya* or in the Chinese version of the *Ekottara Āgama*.

From a narrative standpoint, the embrace accepted by the Buddha is definitely the climax of his meeting with his former mother. The reaction of the Buddha will inevitably be compared to the famous rebuff: “Do not touch me”—

³² Fifteen of these theories belong to eternalism (*sassata-ditṭhi*) and five belong to nihilism (*uccheda-ditṭhi*) in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, PTS, pp. 149–150.

Noli me tangere (Joh. 20.17) of the resurrected Jesus Christ to Mary of Magdala, over-happy to see him alive outside of his grave. As happens so often when Buddhist and Christian episodes are brought together, the difference of context makes the comparison almost valueless. Jesus explains that he is already resurrected in the body but not yet ascended to his Father—an event, the Ascension, that the Gospel situates forty days after the Resurrection. During these forty days, the touching by Thomas (Joh. 20.27) of the wound on Jesus' side attests to the still material state of the body of Christ, already considered as God. The embrace of the Buddha does not take place in lofty circumstances. The meeting with Kajaṅgalā close to a fountain is one among the multiple meetings with ordinary people taking place during the forty-five years alleged duration of the Buddha's ministry. In the Buddhist canonical tradition, embracing (抱), often accompanied by kissing³³ (鳴 in the sense of smacking of the lips), is seldom referred to. The matter requires a special study. In the Vinaya tradition, as could be expected, the embrace of a monk by a woman is forbidden. It is, however, tolerated in exceptional cases. Such is the case of the monk falling in a well where a woman had fallen before him.³⁴ If the woman embraces his neck in order to be saved with him when efforts are made to extract both of them from the pit, the monk is proclaimed as sinless.

II. Karmic explanations:

misery followed by happy retribution

1. Old Age and poverty

Contrasting with the serene tale of the *Sāketa-jātaka*, the story of the bad fortune of Kajaṅgalā is explained as karmic retribution (*karmaṇo vipākena*). In her case, two causes are clearly unrelated: First, because she opposed

³³ On this point, see *Hōbōgirin* V, s.v. Chōrai 頂礼, p. 373a.

³⁴ See T. 1441, j. 4, p. 585a.

(*vārayati*) whenever possible the desire of her bodhisattva son to enter religion, she herself was able to enter religion only at an advanced age (*vrddhā pravrajitā*). Second, because he was obstructed in his propensity for giving (*dānāntarāyaḥ kṛtaḥ*), she became poor (*daridrā saṃvṛttā*). This is stated clearly in the *Avadānaśataka*: “Impeding me in my desire to leave the world, she has been a ‘late ordained’ as a result of this act; [by greediness (慳貪) and jealousy (嫉妬) in *Cabaozangjing*] having been made by her a restrained giver, she became poor (貧賤).”

2. Servitude

A supplementary misery is Kajaṅgalā’s condition as a slave (*dāsī*, 繫屬於人或於他, i.e. “bound to another person” in *Cabaozangjing*). We have seen in the narrative that her owner (*svamin*, 主 in *Cabaozangjing*, 夫 in the Yijing Vinaya) intervened to make her free to follow her vocation. She was slave because in a former life, when she was a *bhikṣuṇī* leader of community (衆主) under the Buddha Kāśyapa, she insulted eminent nuns calling them “slaves” (罵諸賢聖勝尼為碑 in *Cabaozangjing*). We see here again a case of double karmic retribution. After she practiced badly a highly meritorious maternity, she had nevertheless the advantage of being reborn as a *bhikṣuṇī* under Kāśyapa Buddha, but she behaved arrogantly. More details on her life in the Kāśyapa era will be given soon in the account about her positive karman.

3. Missing the chance to be the last mother of the Buddha

The *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* account mentions that the lack of meritorious acts (*puṇyamaheshākyasaṃvṛtaniyāni karmāni kṛtāni*) of Kajaṅgalā led to her supplanting by Māyā when the Buddha had to be born for the last time from a woman’s womb (*yen-āham-anayā paścime garbhavāsena dhāritaḥ*). Its Chinese version opposes the good acts (常作好業) of Māyā and their absence (不作善) in the case of Kajaṅgalā.³⁵ There is no explicit mention in the *Avadānaśataka* of a vow (*praṇidhāna*) made by Māyā in order to become

the mother of the Buddha. There are many Jātakas referring to Māyā's previous existences but, as far as I know, an account of such a *pranidhāna* by Māyā is yet to be found, and its mention in the *Karmaśataka*, as will be shown below, seems to be isolate.

4. Causality behind the later excelling of Kajaṅgalā

For the unfortunate Kajaṅgalā, a compensation was that she succeeded in becoming first among the *sūtrāntavibhāgakartriṇām-agrā*. Meriting this dignity was the fruit of another karmic connection: In her previous existence, Kāśyapa, the Buddha of the past who immediately precedes Śākyamuni, had ordained her and, acknowledging her exceptional erudition, he had already conferred on her the above-mentioned title. At the time of her death (*maraṇa-kāla-samaye*), she was making a *pranidhāna* vow related to the future Buddha Śākyamuni. She wished to enter into religion at the time of the teaching (*sāsana*) of Śākyamuni. She knew that the bodhisattva of her time whose destiny was to become Śākyamuni in the future was an outstanding disciple of Kāśyapa Buddha, a young brahmin (*māṇava*) called Uttara in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. This story of a connection in the future between a bodhisattva and a woman, here, a paragon of erudition wishing to learn from him, is perhaps a weak echo of a much more famous episode belonging to the lore of Sumedha or Sumati. Sumedha was also a *māṇava*, disciple of Dīpaṃkara Buddha and his destiny was also to become Śākyamuni in the future. In a time much earlier than that of Kāśyapa, we hear of a girl, known under various names, who had made the *pranidhāna* to become the wife, in his successive existences, of the *māṇava* Sumedha. According to Léon Feer, the title of *sūtrāntavibhāgakartriṇām-agra* had been conferred to the *māṇava* Uttara by Kāśyapa Buddha himself. The prediction (*vyākaraṇa*) given to Sumedha by Dīpaṃkara and the vow of the girl to become his constant wife in their

³⁵ T. 1448, j. 10, p. 44c15–16.

successive existences makes the story of Sumedha more impressive than the story of Uttara and Kajaṅgalā. Both stories do not belong to the classical 547 Jātakas although the Sumedha story belongs to the “Distant Antecedent” (*durenidāna*), the starting point of the *Nidānakathā* which introduces the Commentary of the Jātakas.³⁶

Complementary episodes

1. *In the Cabaozangjing* (T. 203)

Occurring only in the *Cabaozangjing* story of Kajaṅgalā, a supplementary “side-story” of poverty and servitude illustrates the law of karman. This story is located in Benares. There, the Bodhisattva and his mother were living in poverty. The boy decided to go to sea as a trader to provide her with better support. In contrast with several stories of refusal, among which the story of Maitrakanyaka³⁷ (or, in other versions,³⁸ Maitrāyājña) is probably the most famous, the mother assented to the decision of her son. During his absence, she was enslaved by bandits. On his return, her son was able to redeem her at a high cost. Thereafter they could afford a comfortable life. There was thus a precedent for the freeing of Kajaṅgalā by the Buddha. The expression used here by the Buddha is to “remove” (拔) the poverty, and later the suffering of his mother (母苦).

2. *Sāketa-jātaka* (Jātaka no 68 and no 237)

Having compared the two main traditions of the *Avadānaśataka* and of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, I wish to point out a strange Pāli development of the legend

³⁶ Cf. fn. 4.

³⁷ The tale of Maitrakanyaka 慈童女 (no 7) follows the tale of Kajaṅgalā (no 6) in the *Cabaozangjing*, T. 203, j. 1, p. 450c-451c; transl. Willemen (fn. 18), pp. 21-24.

³⁸ Sylvain Lévi ed., *Mahākarmavibhaṅga* (cf. fn. 13) pp. 50-55, transl. pp. 123-127; Noriyuki Kudo ed., *Karmavibhaṅga* (cf. *ibid.*), pp. 88-96.

about a former mother of the Bodhisattva not succeeding to become her mother in his last life. In this case it is not only a mother but a whole family that had the privilege of receiving the Bodhisattva as a son and as a brother, as a nephew and as a grandson. There are indeed variations in the earlier family relationships existing between the old couple and the *Bodhisattva*. They had been *pitā* and *matā*, *culla-pitā* and *culla-matā* (uncle and aunt), *mahāpitā* and *mahā-matā* (grand father and grand mother) during three periods, each of five hundred existences.

This story is told in the *Sāketa-jātaka*.³⁹ It does not conform to the general framework of a Jātaka where an adventure from the past life of the Bodhisattva is followed with the identification of the characters in that adventure with the Buddha himself and with persons in his entourage. Here, the charming scene of the Buddha meeting his former relatives happens in Sāketa during the “present” life of the Buddha Śākyamuni. The former lives of the Buddha are referred to but without mention of any specific event. This Jātaka without any corresponding form in Sanskrit or in Chinese is infused with a scent of filial piety and of respect for the elder. It is the former father of the *Bodhisattva* who first recognizes him on a street of Sāketa. The old (*mahallaka*) Brahmin falls at the Buddha’s feet and clasps him by the ankles (*gopphakesu gālhaṃ gahetva*), crying: Son, is it not the duty of children to cherish the old age of their parents? At last I have seen you; come, let your mother see you too!—*Tāta, nanu nāma puttēhi jīṇṇa-kāle matā-pītaṃ paṭijaggitaṇa, kasmā ettakaṃ kālaṃ amhākaṃ attānaṃ na dassesi, mayā tāva diṭṭho si, mātaraṃ paṇa passituṃ ehi.*

An interesting point is that, in this tale, the grasping of the Buddha’s feet by the father corresponds to the embracing by Kajaṅgalā in the tale reviewed above.

³⁹ *Jātaka* 68, ed. Fausböll, I, pp. 308-309, transl. Cowell, I, pp. 166-167; *Jātaka* 237, ed. Fausböll, II, pp. 234-235, transl. Cowell, II, pp. 162-163.

After the Buddha and his disciples are seated in the house of the Brahmin, similar sentences are pronounced by the mother crying: Son, where have you been all this time? Is it not the duty of children to comfort their parents in their old age?—*Tāta, ettakaṃ kālaṃ kahaṃ gato si, nanu nāma mātā-pīta-ro mahallakā upaṭṭhātabbā?* Then it is the turn of the sons and daughters (*putta-dhītara*) to get acquainted to their former brother (*bhatar*) and to greet him. The Buddha preached to the two parents (*tesaṃ dvinnam janānam*) the “Sūtra of the Old Age” (*Jarā-sutta*),⁴⁰ which is an eulogy, not specifically Buddhist, of religious life and depossession based on the transience of life. As a result, both of them attained the reward of No-return (*Anāgamin*).

The monks were upset by these unknown family connections of the Buddha. They said among themselves: Colleagues (*āvuso*), although this Brahmin knows (*janati*) the filiation of the Tathāgata from Śuddhodana and Mahāmāyā, he and his lady Brahmin refer to him as “our son” (*amhākaṃ putto*) with the Buddha’s approbation: The Master agrees! (*Satthāpi adhivāseti*).

The Buddha has then to teach them the long connection of fifteen hundred previous existences referred to above. In this short Jātaka (whose origin is perhaps pre-Buddhist) no blame is attached to the two parents who had not been lucky enough to become the parents of the Buddha in his last existence. In a down-to-earth fashion, the accent is put only on the pleasure of such a unexpected meeting. It is expressed in the final stanza:

The man thy mind rests on, with whom thy heart is pleased at first sight, —
place thy trust in him.

⁴⁰ *Sutta-nipāta*, vv. 804–813. Dines Andersen and Helmer Smith edd. PTS 1913, pp. 158–160. The *Jāra-sutta*, translated “Of Decay” by E. M. Hare (*Woven Cadences of Early Buddhist*, pp. 120–121) and “Old Age” by K. R. Norman (*The Group of Discourses*, I, PTS 1984, p. 136).

*Yasmiṃ mano nivisati cittaṃ cāpi pasāṃdati
adiṭṭhapubbake pose kāmaṃ tasmim pi vissase ti.*

3. Putrasaṃjñā

A last word about this Pāli account of the *Sāketa-jātaka*, full of serene resignation, could be that this is not the only place we find, instead of a mother, an old Brahmin having been a parent of the Bodhisattva in 500 previous existences. He appears in the already mentioned Tibetan *Karmaśataka*. Pointing out the parallelism with the tale of Kajaṅgalā, Léon Feer in the Tibetan version of the *Karmaśataka* refers to this tale under the title of *Putrasaṃjñā* (recognizing the son).⁴¹ He briefly mentions that the former father's meeting with the Buddha happened in Śrāvastī, that the Buddha was embraced and that he prevented his disciple from impeding the old Brahmin who later became an arhat. In the commentary on the karmic precedent of this event, the old Brahmin is clearly opposed to Śuddhodana. The Brahmin opposed the Bodhisattva aspirations of his son. The Bodhisattva had thus to make a *praṇidhāna* vow in order to avoid to having him again as father. During the 91th kalpa, under the Buddha Vipasyin, the future Śuddhodana made a *praṇidhāna* to become the father of a Buddha. Later, under the Buddha Kāśyapa, he made a *praṇidhāna* to become *arhat* under the successor of Kāśyapa, i.e. Śākyamuni. This contrast between an unsuccessful and a successful progenitor is not expressed in the Sanskrit and Chinese tales of Kajaṅgalā that have been the object of this article, but in the Tibetan Kajaṅgalā tale, collected in the same *Karmaśataka*, it is said that it was the *praṇidhāna* made by Mahāmāyā to become mother of the Buddha that raised the first obstacle for Kajaṅgalā. Her opposition to the generosity of her son was a second reason, leading to her poverty and her delayed vocation.⁴²

⁴¹ Léon Feer, "Le Karma-śataka" *Journal Asiatique*, 1901, p. 71-72.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 58.

CONCLUSION

As we look at the last existence as a human being of the Buddha Śākyamuni, we may state without doubt that the biographical tradition (in literature as in art) is unanimous about the genetic maternity of Māyā. If Mahāprajāpati, well-known as the sister of Māyā, is sometimes called mother, it is by a natural extension of her role as step-mother of the Buddha. Māyā and Mahāprajāpati are complementary figures in the texts and, at a later date, in the iconography of the birth of the Buddha. Except in speculation about the nature of the Buddha, there has never been any question about the relationship of Māyā and the Buddha as mother and son.

The appearance of women who had a chance to become the mother of the Buddha but who did not succeed in this exalted destiny is a development of the law of karman. This doctrine displayed an implacable ethic of retribution, sometimes beneficial but more often bringing punishment for such missed opportunities. It encouraged speculation about painful mistakes. Devadatta, who was so close to the Buddha and yet became his worst enemy, is an extreme case, but even to him is promised a future redemption.

A very important feature of the Kajaṅgalā story is her quality as an outstanding preacher, the only aspect of her personality appearing in the Pāli tradition. The Sanskrit story is much more dramatic. We see the same woman, originally destined to become the mother of the Buddha, falling into complete destitution before being redeemed to the point of becoming a luminary of the Buddhist teaching. As shown by the paucity of sources listed above, this story did not enjoy much diffusion. Nevertheless there was some educational value in the legend of a woman who, with a better karman, would have been the Buddha's mother. The tales compared here show the magnitude of the loss suffered by Kajaṅgalā and other women, but perhaps more than that, they show the resilience of a good karman and, with the help of the merciful Buddha, a high level of rehabilitation. As in other other attempts to consider synoptically well-known and less well-known Buddhist tales, we have to go

beyond the common-sense appreciation that in this literature produced in places and times world apart, “almost nothing is lost nor created.” There has been a doctrinal evolution which may be perceived when we compare the focus on Amitābha’s paradise, or on the *praṇidhāna* vow or on the *vyākaraṇa* prediction manifest in some of the tales under analysis. If a general lesson can be drawn from all those tales about meetings with the Buddha, it should be that, working alongside the karmic rules, with their black and white retributions, there is always the compassionate tolerance of the Buddha, of which his willingness to be embraced is a striking example.

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Abbreviations: T. = Taishō shinshu Daizōkyō, PTS = Pāli Text Society.

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