

LESSER KNOWN INDOCHINESE BUDDHIST BIRTH STORIES: A SURVEY OF FEW ISOLATED JĀTAKA IN PĀLI COMPOSED IN INDOCHINA

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In the course of the preparation of the national descriptive catalogue for the Pāli manuscript collections kept in France,¹ I met a considerable number of texts unknown to the lists stating classical Pāli literature and its classification.² Among them, I found some isolated *jātaka* stories composed in the so-called “Indochinese” Pāli language,³ not belonging to any recognized corpus or anthology, most of them never critically edited.

In this paper I would like to present a choice of lesser known *jātaka* kept under manuscript form with a short survey, including old rare editions, translations and, when it occurs, studies already done, completed with all the informations I could collect from catalogues and various local sources.

We find manuscript collections containing these *jātaka* in France, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. The oldest Siamese collection of Pāli manuscripts found in France has been brought by Christian Roman Catholic priests from the Missions étrangères de Paris⁴ or donated by the envoys of king Narai from Ayuthaya at the end of 17th century.⁵

* This paper is an enlarged version of the lecture given to the Department of Indian Studies, Graduate School of Letters, Nagoya University where I was kindly invited by his head, Professor Toshihiro Wada and Tokai Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies on 29th July 2010. I have a great pleasure in expressing my gratitude to Dr. Kazuko Tanabe and Dr. Toshiya Unebe who gave me their unstinting support throughout my stay in Japan.

1 See École française d'Extrême-Orient database EFEO PALI DATA folder 101.

2 CPD; DPPN; HPL.

3 On the Indochinese way of composing and writing Pāli language see Martini [1937: 369-385].

4 EFEO PALI DATA folder 101 file ME catal data.

5 Filliozat [2009: 281-309] or also available in EFEO PALI DATA folder 101 file Catal du Roi.

At the end of 19th century and the beginning years of the 20th century, French philologists started to catalogue and to classify collections of manuscripts from Indochina. Léon Feer,⁶ Louis Finot,⁷ George Cœdès,⁸ Suzanne Karpelès,⁹ scholars in Buddhology, have bought or have copied collections of manuscripts available in Siam, Laos and Cambodia. Between the two World Wars, Suzanne Karpelès has settled a body of scribes to engrave Pāli texts on palm leaves at the Royal Library in Phnom Penh in order to provide copies of original manuscripts to monks and scholars as well. At that time, practice of photography did exist of course, but was very expensive, requiring many difficult processings and products to be imported. This is the reason why the choice of making traditional copies on palm leaves was done till 1956.¹⁰ Exchange of manuscripts were currently organized between the scholars-curators of the Royal Library of Phnom Penh, the Vajirañāna Library in Bangkok and EFEO Library in Hanoi, the Library of Colombo Museum.

Today, royal monasteries and National Library in Bangkok, National Library and Buddhist Institute in Phnom Penh, National Library in Vientiane, National Museum in Luang Prabang, Bibliothèque nationale de France, the library of École française d'Extrême-Orient in Paris are still keeping large collections of manuscripts opened for public consultation. I had the privilege of checking many of them and select these *jātaka*.

1. The *Balasaṅkyajātaka* is attested in Laos on palm leaves manuscripts, no edition is available. According to Finot [1917: 49, 178 No. 29] we get a laconic information: “it deals with the numbering of spiritual powers.”(?) According to Cœdès [1966: 61-63] the *Balasaṅkyajātaka* gives an example of the conversion of a mighty and proud king similar to Jambūpati's story. The long and intricate story is difficult to summarize. The Bodhisattva is appearing as the king Suvaṇṇabhumṃ. Then follows the list of the chapters contained in the nine bundles of the manuscript without commentary or

⁶ Léon Feer [1830-1902]. See Lalou [1931: 1-17].

⁷ Louis Finot [1864-1935], first director of EFEO. See www.efeo.fr.

⁸ George Cœdès [1886-1969], chief librarian, The Vajirañāna National Library, Bangkok, director of EFEO. See www.efeo.fr.

⁹ Suzanne Karpelès [1890-1968], EFEO fellow, first curator Royal Library, Phnom Penh, founder of the Buddhist Institute and first general secretary, Phnom Penh. See www.efeo.fr.

¹⁰ This is the date of the last manuscript engraved in the Buddhist Institute, Phnom Penh.

explanations.

We have some more information according to Mayoury Ngaosrivathana & Kennon Breazeale. The cover of their recent book: *Breaking New Ground in Lao History*, represents a scene from the *Balasaṅkyajātaka* (mural from Vat Sisaket, Vientiane, Laos, by an unknown artist circa 1819-1824. I quote: “This *jātaka* was popular in Lan Sang and in Lan Na. His hero the king Bokkharaphat gave the commands and control of the kingdom to a thief better intentioned than were his ministers. This mural shows the king and the thief hiding themselves on a roof at night, preparing the robbing of the gifts given by the king to his ministers.”

2. The *Cakkhānavuttijātaka* or *Cakkhānavuttipāpasutta* is attested in Laos on palm leaves manuscripts, no edition is available. According to Finot [1917: 180 No. 79] the title is *Cakkhāvuttipāpasut*. According to Cœdès [1966: 69 LAOS 62]: The form of the title is doubtful. The exordium or beginning part combines the formula of introduction of a *sutta* and the one of a *jātaka*. The text tells the story at the time of the Buddha Padumuttara of the prince Cakkhānavutti, second son of Sararāja, king of Bārāṇasī and the queen Vimaladevī. This story is a pretext to moral exhortations.

3. The *Candasenajātaka* Thai and Lao script editions exist but they are not critical. Due to different sources, the text of the *Candasenajātaka* belongs sometimes to the Siamese and Lao versions of the *Paññāsajātaka*, sometimes it is found isolated. It is better known through modern Thai script editions inserting it in a list of the *Paññāsajātaka*, arranged under the patronage of Prince Damrong in the Vajirañāṇa Library, Bangkok. 1st edition is dating 1923 C.E.; 2nd edition: Bangkok, Silpa Bannagan, in 1956 C.E.) placing it at number 42.

A doctoral thesis including this *jātaka* has been recently submitted by the monk Braḥ Mahā Praḥsiddhi Aheusako (called Thongpān) under supervision of Venerable Praḥ Sudhīdharmānūvatara (Sabhāpati) in 2547 B.E. (= 2004 C.E.) at the Department of Pāli Studies, Mahachulalongkorn University, Wat Mahathat, Bangkok. It gives a partial critical edition in Pāli according to the Prince Damrong edition of the *Paññāsajātaka*. A translation in Thai and

study is added. The interest of this work should be tested.¹¹

Beatrice Chrystall, from Harvard University, USA, has given a transliteration of a Pāli manuscript from EFEO Cambodian collection with a rough translation in English and notes, now available on EFEO PALI DATA base with permission of the author.

I quote the summary written by Beatrice Chrystall: “This text has the basic framework of a classical jātaka: a *paccuppannavatthu*, (which however is minimal), and a *samodhāna*, which identifies the principal character as being the Buddha, and it explicitly calls itself a jātaka at the end (*Candasenajātakam nitthitam*). However, there are certain untypical aspects. In the *atītavatthu* there are two stories recounting the Buddha’s previous lives. The first story shows the *bodhisatta* as a poor man who piously restores and then makes a Buddha-image, having sold his wife to buy the necessary materials. He makes a prophecy himself that he will become a Buddha later. He is then taken to the Heaven of the Delighted, from where he is reborn as the son of the king of Benares. After searching for and finding a virtuous wife, keeping his word to a wicked spirit and reigning justly and non-violently, he renounces and goes to meditate in the Himalayas. He is finally reborn in the Brahma world. There are no verses in the *atītavatthu* and no commentary on the verses. However after the *samodhāna* there is a sermon, a *dhammadesanā*, containing various verses, not narrative but morally instructive. Certain of these aspects seem to have been under the influence of the Apadāna. The Apadāna is a collection of accounts in verse of the noble deeds carried out by monks and nuns in their previous lives, particularly the adoration of a previous Buddha. They often contain accounts of a succession of lives, as the monk or nun progresses along the spiritual path, and a prophecy made by the previous Buddha that Gotama Buddha’s teaching will be heard and that the monk or nun will become an *arahant*. There is often emphasis on the worship of *thūpas*, shrines and relics.”

A Lao version has been edited in 1974-1975 by the Buddhist Institute in Vientiane, inserting it in the *P’ra Cao Ha Sip Xat* (Fifty lives of the Buddha) as number 22 under the title *Thao Candasenakummān* (*Candasenakumāra*).

¹¹ Untitled Paññāsajātaka paṭhamabhāga roeng dī 28-44 ... Critical Study. ff. 22 + 296. ISBN 974-364-176-9 (photocopy A4 paper, bound in black hard cover). See 42. *candasena jātakam*, f. 207.

In checking the *Paññāsajātaka* manuscript collection at Wat Rajasiddharam in Thonburi (Bangkok) with Dr Kazuko Tanabe¹² and Dr Yohei Shimizu,¹³ we have found a text of the *Candasenajātaka* clearly included also to a Siamese *Paññāsajātaka* collection, placed just after the *Mahāsamkhapattajātakaṃ*.¹⁴

4. The *Gandhaghātakajātaka* is attested in Laos on palm leaves manuscripts, no edition is available. According to Coëdès [1966: 68 LAOS 61] the Pāli title of this *jātaka* means ‘destroyer of perfume’ and could be the translation of the Lao version *bryā gangāk* meaning toad. The Bodhisatta, son of Sudassana, king of Indapattanagara was born as a toad to whom the brāhmanas have predicted a bright future. At the age of 20, he was turned by Indra into a charming prince to whom all the kings of the universe offered their daughters. He became a mighty monarch. He was reigning since fifty years when a great dryness happened. He went down in the Nāga kingdom where he came to know that the dryness was prompted by Indra’s anger. The king went to fight Indra, took him prisoner and freed him against the promise to give every year a large amount of rice falling by itself in the baskets of the inhabitants. As soon as Indra was released, the rain started to fall. Indra was letting the nāga swim in the pond, as a result the rain was falling and the population had only to make baskets to receive crops of rice.

5. The *Jambūpatijātaka* is attested in Siam and Laos in vernacular and Pāli languages, a critical edition and translation into English is being prepared at the moment by my colleague Dr Peter Skilling from EFEO and Dr Santi Pakdeekam from Bangkok. They have already published a facsimile Pāli edition.¹⁵ A large bibliography including manuscripts is available on EFEO PALI DATA.

According to Saddhatissa [1981: 189]: “The *Mahājambūpatī-sarājā* also called *Jambūpatīsutta* in Thailand is an apocryphal story about a king named Jambūpati: once the Exalted One was dwelling in the Bamboo Grove near Rājagaha. Then there was a king called Jambūpati. At the time of his birth a golden pillar 18 hands in height

¹² Lecturer of the Eastern Institute, Tokyo.

¹³ Research scholar in Otani University, Kyoto.

¹⁴ Wat Rajasiddharam Thonburi 3.

¹⁵ Santi Pakdeekam [2009].

arose. On the day when he was taken out of the chamber where he was born, pots of treasures arose from the earth. One day he went with his royal retinue to the Buddha and, by listening to his discourse, all of them attained to the four paths and fruitions and the members of his army who were guarding the palace learnt of the five powers (*pañcabala*) and followed them.”

In another article Saddhatissa [1974: 222]: “There is an apocryphal sutta called the *Jambūpattisutta* which is peculiar to Laos. The sutta narrates the story of a king called Jambupatti who visited the Buddha in the dazzling robes of royalty in order to impress him. The Buddha, however, was found sitting on a throne dressed in the apparel of a *cakkavatti* king, shining as a god. Seeing him, Jambupatti’s pride diminished. This story has been portrayed in a mural painting of the Temple Library in Luang Prabang. In the scene the Buddha is depicted as pointing out to Jambupatti the torments he must suffer if he fails to follow the principles of his teaching.”

6. The *Lohagoṇajātaka* is attested in Laos on palm leaves manuscripts, no edition is available. According to Cœdès [1966: 67-LAOS 60], this *jātaka* is named in Lao *Nua Kau Dōn* ‘the ox with copper horns’. According to the colophon, this *jātaka* is supposed to belong to the *Paññāsajātaka* collection, but it does not appear in any known recension. It tells the story of the ox with copper horns (former birth of Anuruddha) and his younger brother (former birth of the Bodhisatta). After many adventures where the younger brother shows his skills in the games and the elder his strength in fighting buffalos, the elder brother dies in fighting a *nāga* and the Bodhisatta becomes the slave of the king of Kāsikanagara. At the death of the king, the slave becomes his successor and reigns under the name of Indacakkavamsarāja.

7. The *Dhanañjayapaṇḍitajātaka* or *Lokaneyyapakaraṇa* “The Book on the Instruction in Word(ly Matters)”. It has been edited by Prof. P.S. Jaini in the Pali Text Society collection¹⁶ on the base of only one manuscript from Cambodia or Siam (provenance is uncertain) without collating the many manuscripts existing in European and Asian libraries. A new critical comparative edition could be done, taking into account the Lao, Siamese and Cambodian versions available. A

¹⁶ Jaini [1986].

large bibliography including notices on original manuscripts is on EFEO PALI DATA No. 403.

8. The *Mahākappinarājajātaka* has never been edited. It is known in Cambodia. This *jātaka* does not have any similarity with the many references found in the Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names under *Mahākappinathera* or *Kappinasutta*. It does not belong to any *Paññāsajātaka* edited corpus and is known to me according a single text in an EFEO manuscript from Cambodian provenance.

9. *Mūlakittijātaka* never edited, Lao version. According to Cœdès [1966: 68-69; MS LAOS 62]. It is the story of the Bodhisatta born as the prince Mūlakitti, sacrificing his life for his father Yasakitti.

10. *Porānagotamajātaka* never edited, Lao version. According to Cœdès [1966: 71 ms. LAOS 63(IV)]. This *jātaka* is given as the illustration of a treatise called *ānisañ sān dhamma* on the benefits of copying the Dhamma in full or in parts.

11. *Rathasenajātaka* never edited in Pāli, only available in its Siamese, Lao and Cambodian versions. The Pāli version from Siam or Cambodia exists under an original manuscript form only,¹⁷ but it is well known in the Siamese, Cambodian and Lao versions with 19th century translations into French by Guesdon: EFEO mss. europ. 81 and the same story is found in Pavie [1988: 35-56] under the title “Les douze jeunes filles d’Angkor” (The twelve maiden from Angkor).

Like the text of the *Candasenajātaka*, the *Rathasenajātaka* belongs sometimes to the Siamese and Lao versions of the *Paññāsajātaka*, sometimes it is found isolated. It is better known through Siamese script editions inserting it in a list of the *Paññāsajātaka*, arranged under the patronage of Prince Damrong in the Vajirañāṇa Library, Bangkok. 1st edition is dating 1923 C.E.; 2nd edition: Bangkok, Silpa Bannagan, in 1956 C.E.) placing it at number 47. It has been edited as a cremation book for Prince Damrong in 1927 C.E.

A famous Dance drama inspired of *Rothasen* has been composed by the Department of Fine Arts in Bangkok and performed at the

¹⁷ EFEO PALI 28. A few days before sending this article to press, Dr. Toshiya Unebe reminded me of the existence of another manuscript containing this *Rathasenajātaka* in its Pāli version, found in Vat Rajasiddharam Thonburi 3 (See Deydier [1953-2003]: Electronic version available on EFEO PALI DATA folder 509 file 6), phūk 22-23: jyai b3 - ñyai a1.

Bangkok Theatre of Silpakorn in 1957.

12. *Sivijayajātaka* is popular in Siam and Lanna, never edited in its Pāli version. It exists only a Siamese version printed on palm leaves by the Dharmabhakti Press in Bangkok.

It is also called *Sivijayapañha* or *Mahāsivijayajātaka*, *Si Vixai* is the Lao pronunciation of *Srīvijay*. It is among the first Pāli texts known in Europe at the beginning of the 18th century through the catalogue of the manuscripts kept in the Library of the French king Louis the 15th, compiled by Fourmont & de Vilefroy in the *Catalogus Codicum Manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Regiae*. Tomus primus, Parisiis e Typographia Regiae 1739. Burnouf and Lassen [1826: 209 note n° V] reports the story in the Appendix under the title (I translate from French): *Specimen of the life of Sivichay and notice of Pali-Siamese manuscripts*.

According to Coëdès [1966: 43-45 ms. LAOS 34 nissaya]: “This extracanonical Jātaka is for illustration of the perfections of wisdom (*pañña*), behaviour (*sīla*) and liberality (*dāna*) practiced by the Bodhisatta during his birth as Sivijaya, prince of Videha. The Bodhisatta, son of Ādiccavaṃsa, king of Videha, was born from queen Vimalā (*devī*). At the age of 16, he refused all the maiden introduced to him, telling that he will make the choice of a wife by himself. After long and vain searches, he asked his favourite bird, a parrot, to continue the quest. The parrot having heard of the qualities of the princess Siveyyakā, daughter of the king Sivrāja, informed his master Sivijaya who immediately solicited the hand of the princess. The king replied that his daughter will belong to the one who will come by air. A *devaputta* came to help Sivijaya in transporting him to the princess abode during her sleep. The king discovered him after few days and decided to put him to death. But Sivijaya invented a flying engine *hamsayantra* and fled with the princess after having revealed to the guards that he had fulfilled the conditions of the king.

Arrived in the kingdom of his father after many adventures, Sivijaya was invited to rule as the king, but as he was dilapidating with his wife the royal treasure in giving alms, he was banished with her by the population. After having recognised that Sivijaya was a Bodhisatta, the inhabitants called him back to the throne with the queen.

According to Pou [1989: 60] (*Nouvelles Inscriptions du Cambodge*) her translation of the Inscription of Tatok monastery in Siemreap (K. 892) mentions the *Brah̥ Srīvijay* and explains that according to Reverend Father Eugène Denis, this *jātaka* is one of the 11 *jātaka* added lately (probably after the 17th century) to the *Paññāsajātaka* of Chiangmai, and used as a model to prince Phaya Pra Khlang (under the reign of Rama I, end of 18th, beginning of 19th century) to compose a famous poem named *Srīvijaya*.

According to Hundius [1990: 133-144], the most ancient manuscript is dating 1580 C.E. and Supaphan [1990: 120-126] dates its composition between 1450-1550 C.E.

Many manuscripts in Pāli-Siamese or Lao or Khmer nissaya do exist in Europe, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia. A list is available on EFEO PALI DATA under No. 403.

13. *Sivirājānāmatthu* is still to be studied to establish its origin. No edition. It is not the story of the *Sivirājajātaka* ed. PTS VI, p. 401-412, and it does not correspond to any other quotations of a Sivirājā in the *jātaka*. It is not the *Sivijayajātaka*. I know this text after a single manuscript in Pāli from Cambodia, kept in the library of the Foreign Missions in Paris. My transliteration of the manuscript MEP 31(5) is available on EFEO PALI DATA No. 403.

14. *Subhajātaka* is still to be studied to establish its origin. No edition. Cambodian and Lao original manuscripts are available. A so-called *Subhajātaka* is kept under a palm leaf manuscript form from Cambodia in the library of Foreign Missions in Paris (MEP PALI 25/6). The story is different from the already edited *jātaka*.¹⁸ It is not found in the *Lokaneyya*, despite the name of Dhanañjaya appearing at the beginning of the story as the father of the heroine Subhaddhā. But the names of Mahāsubhaddā and Cūlasubhaddā (not °ddhā, but spelling is not fixed in manuscripts) is mentioned in the Lao collection of the *Paññāsajātaka*, arranged, compiled and summarized in French by Henri Deydier under the full title of *Subhaddhājātaka*.¹⁹ Both texts are to be compared, I do not know any further study. The transliteration of the manuscript is available on EFEO PALI DATA

¹⁸ Jaini [1983 vol II (32)].

¹⁹ Deydier [1953-2003]. (Electronic version available on EFEO PALI DATA folder 509 file 4 page 39 *jātaka* 23 Chaddanta)

No. 403.

15. *Suriyaṃsahasajātaka* is still to be studied to establish its origin. No edition in Pāli. Cambodian and Lao original manuscripts are available. A Thai version is edited in the *Paññāsajātaka*.

According to Cœdès [1966: 63-64], two manuscripts are available: Laos 54 and 55. The colophons show also the titles *Pavaravaṇ Haṇ Āmād* or *Suri(ya)vaṇ Haṇ Āmād*. Despite it does not appear in the versions of the Lao *Paññāsajātaka* compiled by Louis Finot, it has been incorporated at the translation into Thai of this collection of 50 under the title of *Varavaṃsajātaka* (No. 45)²⁰ and published in vol. XII of the Bangkok printed edition in 1927.

This story is very near the Cambodian text known as *Vorvoṇ Sórvoṇ* translated into French by Pavie.²¹

16. *Suttajātakanidānānisamsa* is still to be studied to establish its origin. No edition. Cambodian original manuscripts are available. It is a rare and long compilation of the benefits of the recitation of selected *sutta* and *jātaka* (among them is a *Jambupatijātaka*), known by few original manuscripts kept in EFEO library.

17. *Suvaṇṇameghajātaka* is still to be studied to establish its origin. No edition. Lao original manuscripts are available. The *Suvaṇṇameghajātaka* “Golden cloud” is not to be confused with the *Suvaṇṇamigajātaka* “Golden deer”, the 8th story in the *Paññāsajātaka*.

According to Cœdès [1966: 64-65 manuscript LAOS 57], the story is to be compared with the *jātaka* No. 359 in Fausböll III: 182-187. Here is the summary by George Cœdès: This story is supposed to be borrowed from the *Samyuttanikāya*(!). The Bodhisatta was born as the prince Suvaṇṇamegha, son of the king Sudassana of Vārāṇasī and his first queen. Since his childhood he had to bear the jealousy of his brother Jayarājakumāra and his mother, the queen of second rank. At the age of 3 years old, when his mother died, he was thrown in a precipice but was saved by the fruit of his merits. Guided by his golden haired dog, born the same day as him, Suvaṇṇamegha visited

²⁰ According to Dr. Toshiya Unebe, a manuscript of the latter part of the *Paññāsajātaka*, Vat Rajasiddharam Thonburi 3 (see fn. 17), phūk 21-22: ṇyī b2 - chyai b3 contains the *Varavaṃsajātaka* in its Pāli version.

²¹ Mission Pavie, Études diverses I, pp. 55-153.

an hermit who gave him magical weapons and a woman. Then, having won in a fight the yakkha who used to devour girls, he got a magical stick. Having heard that Suvanṇamegha and his dog were still alive, Jayarājakumāra and his mother advised the king to leave Vārāṇasī for a new city along the sea and at the death of the king Sudassana, they convinced the people to enthrone as the sovereign, the sister of Jayarājakumāra. The golden haired dog having exhausted his bad karma, has been changed by Indra into a pretty young man named Suvanṇa Hāñ Gām, who after some adventures succeeded to the king of Sāvattthī in taking his daughter for wife. In the main time, when Suvanṇameghakumāra was reigning in Vārāṇasī, his brother Jayarājakumāra organized a coalition with neighbour kings and took the city. But Suvanṇa Hāñ Gām came for helping and delivered Suvanṇamegha. The coalitionists were defeated and the earth opened to swallow Jayarājakumāra with his mother who both fell in Avīci hell.

18. *Vijādhara-jātaka* has no edition in its Pāli version despite many manuscripts available, but is well known in Indochinese versions. The Sanskrit version of the *Vidyādhara-jātaka* is supposed lost by historians of Indian literature where it is just alluded to in the introduction of the famous king Harsha's play *Nāgānanda*. The *Vijādhara-jātaka* Pāli text is ignored in the classification of Pāli works presented in the Epilegomena of the *Critical Pāli Dictionary*. No record is stated in the *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names* and modern histories of Pāli literature mainly based on printed books do not mention it. The canonical *jātaka* mentioning *vijjādhara* (Fausböll ed. No. 391, 436, 519) are completely different stories. In fact, the story of the birth of the Bodhisatta Vijādhara has survived in the Indochinese Peninsula: some Pāli texts along with Cambodian versions are registered under manuscript form in European and Southeast Asian libraries. In Cambodia, this story was depicted on a mural painting of a monastery now destroyed, and a recent epigraphical source quoting its title has been found. At least two Burmese illustrated manuscript are still extant.

To my knowledge, the Pāli text is mentioned for the first time by European scholars in Burnouf & Lassen [1826] (in French), then in Pallegoix [1850] *Grammatica linguae thai* (in Latin). A first study is given by Feer in *Journal Asiatique* 1875 (in French) and the catalogue of Khmer manuscripts in the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Au

Chhieng [1953], describes in detail the Cambodian version.

As stated by the dated manuscripts existing, this text was attested in Cambodia in the middle of the 19th century, confirmed by Pou [1989].²²

Manuscripts of the *Vijādhara-jātaka* in European Collections

Five manuscripts kept in **Bibliothèque nationale de France**, Paris, are requiring the knowledge of both Khmer and Pāli. For reading the manuscript notes by the scholar Léon Feer, French is required.

Most probably these notes are at the origin of his study in *Journal Asiatique* dated 1875. Listing the extracanonial isolated *jātaka*, he writes that the *Vijādhārajātaka* is a little different from the *jātaka* usual style in its structure. In reading back the manuscript from BnF PALI 211 in comparing with the romanized transliteration done by Léon Feer, I have checked that he was often “correcting” the spelling but never missed to indicate above his correction, the copy of the original Cambodian Mūl script. Everywhere the standard classical Pāli is commanding “*ññ*” he has turned the manuscript original usual single *ñ* into the double “*ññ*”. It seems he has not seen many “*m*” and confused a lot “*ta*” and “*ga*” that only the context permits to differentiate. His transliteration has not been studied carefully, words are not well divided, not recognised, spaces wrongly arranged, but we cannot blame Feer as this is only a rough copy, not yet ready for print and he has the merit of having exhibited the first this rare text in Europe.

In addition, 5 manuscripts are kept in **École française d’Extrême-Orient Library**, Paris, requiring also the knowledge of both Khmer and Pāli. There is a summary of their contents in French. I give you a rough translation in English of the story.

Prah Mohathè (this is the Thera Upagutta) was one of the best disciples of the Buddha. One day he flew in the Traitran (*tavatimsa* abode of the 33 *deva*) to recite his Tèсна (*desana*, instruction) to the inhabitants. The *devatā* were coming in crowds in front of him. They invited him to teach and listened in paying close attention. At the end of the recitation they gave him a meal. The *devatā* put him in charge of their recommendations for the relatives they have left on earth. The Thera came down to the earth to tell his travel to the king

²² I am thankful to Ashley Thompson who kindly made me remark that this text is quoted in the stone inscription of Vat Tatok in Siemreap (Cambodia).

Mahāpatirāja. Then Prah Mohathè went to pay homage to the Buddha, his master residing in the Jetavana at Savatthī, and reported what he had done in the celestial world. He asked him permission to go down into the hells in order to save the poor people suffering since a long time. A large lotus flower sprang up to offer him a seat. The inhabitants of hell came to listen to the *dhamma* and put him in charge of their recommendations for the relatives they have left on earth. He came back with these news to report to Mahāpatirāja who went to question the Buddha on what to do for the dead relatives. The Buddha taught that they have to acquire merits (*puñña*) to be offered to the dead, give alms, and practice morality (*sīla*). During the dark fortnight of Photrabet, they have to pound rice everyday and cook cakes for them. Thanks to this good deed, the dead come out of the hells. The 14th of the moon (*catuddasi*), they must clean and sweep everywhere, give offerings such as flowers, fruits, food, etc. and invite the dead and the *devatā*. On that day, the *sīla* have to be practiced and at night, the *Vijādhara*sutta has to be listened to. Thanks to this good deed the relatives are free from their sufferings and enter the celestial abode. Then the Buddha told this story: Once upon a time the Buddha has born as the king Vijādhara reigning in Vārāṇasī. He was taking care devoutly of his parents. His father died. Thanks to his rich alms done by his son, he went to the celestial abode of happiness. Moreover, wishing to show his gratitude to his mother, he said: “If a *deva*, a *yakkha*, an *asura*, a *peta* come to ask my head, my eyes, my blood, my flesh, etc., I shall give them”. A *peta* came to implore the protection of the king who asked him which crime he carried out to have fallen in a this bad condition. The *peta* replied that he committed the sin of hatred, anger and desire. He asked the king to give him his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. The king consented in vowing to become a Buddha. Lamentations of his mother. The king, his mother and the people, all took rebirth in the celestial abode.

According to Bautze-Picron 1998, **The British Library**, London, is keeping a Burmese illuminated manuscript depicting the story of Jīmūtavāhana, very close to the Vijadhāra and the **Cambridge University Library** exhibits an illustration probably representing also this story. The Bodhisattva is seated at the entrance of a mountain cave(?) among a group of people, and a monstrous multicoloured bird (Garuḍa?).

Manuscripts of the *Vijādhara-jātaka* in Cambodian collections

According to the FEMC card catalogue (Fonds d'édition des manuscrits du Cambodge),²³ 4 microfilms of manuscript texts of the *Vijadhārajātaka* are available in Khmer language.

There is a rubbing of a Cambodian inscription from a stela stating the list of texts copied by two monks in Tatok monastery in Siem Rāp, including the *Vijadhārajātaka*, it could be viewed also *in situ*.

Giteau [1975] attests the story that she has identified on the murals of Vat Tep Pranam in Oudong: A king of Bārāṇāsī, Vijatthadhara or Vijayadhara, wanted to make a donation of his body. He was the Bodhisatta. Sakka wanted to test him. Keeping the aspect of a hungry beggar, he came to the king asking him his liver to eat. Vijadhara wished that a sword fell from the sky to allow him to incise his body in order to extract his liver.

After Madeleine Giteau, Mrs Saveros Pou reporting about these murals of Vat Tep Pranam in Oudong, relates them to stanzas 108-111 of the Modern Inscriptions of Angkor mentioning bodhisattv Jādhar.²⁴ She continues in proposing a parallel between the story of Vijadhāra and the Vetāla reported by Vogel in his *Indian Serpent-lore* [1929]. It deals with *Jīmūtavāhana*, composed by Somendra (son of Kṣemendra) in which Jīmūta was a prince *vidyādhara* who gave himself as a victim to a *garuḍa* in order to save the life of a *nāga*. Despite the various events being different of the *Vijjādhara*, the main topic is the same, that is the total donation of his body. Vogel adds that Jīmūtavāhana was called *bodhisattvāṃśa*, 'the portion of the Bodhisattva', despite that the story is not a *jātaka*. The resembling two stories is not fortuitous and is stressing a kinship. We know already the immanence of the Indian narrative literature (*Pañcatantra*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*) in the folklore of Southeast Asia. It happens that a late *jātaka* springs up from these sources.

²³ École française d'Extrême-Orient, Vat Unnalom, Phnom Penh. For consultation or requests, contact Olivier de Bernon <femc.efeo@forum.org.kh>.

²⁴ BEFEO LXII, 312: "108. If some one is asking some parts of my body such as flesh, lungs, liver, heart, entrails, eyes or bones, I shall give them.

109. I ask to rejoy in the faith with sincere heart like lord Jādhar who gave his whole flesh and all his blood to the pret.

110. I ask the devatā to be the testimonies of my donations, that Indra and Brahma, concerned by these acts, assist me, enlighten me and help me to perform them,

111. that the devatā let fall a sword by miracle, and with this sword I shall cut my flesh to feed the hungry pret up to satiety."

In conclusion, I confirm that these texts kept under manuscript form in public libraries are all easily available for critical or princeps editions, offering further studies to scholars in the field of Indochinese Pāli.

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