MONIKA ZIN

The Mākapāṇgu Story in the Madras Government Museum:
The Problem of the Textual Affiliations of the Narrative Reliefs
in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda

Among the Amaravati reliefs in the Madras Government Museum there is a medallion which is not particularly badly damaged but the bottom right part of which is missing. The relief (pl. 1a and fig. 1)\(^1\) presents a story in three scenes of various sizes. In the central scene in the bottom part, on the left side, the king is shown surrounded by his court. The court apparently consists entirely of women. The king’s hands are together in a gesture of respect. He is sitting opposite four Brahmins with their hair piled high. The index fingers of the two Brahmins sitting in the front are raised as if in motion. Buildings can be seen in the background of this central scene. They are simple village buildings, a plain wall and some huts among trees. They separate the scene at the bottom from the two depicted in the upper part of the relief. In the upper left scene a boy is lying on a platform surrounded by three men; one of them is pulling the boy’s leg or possibly pointing a weapon at him; the condition of the relief makes it very difficult to establish what he is doing. Burgess (1887: 51) writes: «a short sword, as if about to murder the youth». The boy does not make any effort to protect himself. On the upper right, three men (the same men?) can be seen; one of them is holding a hoe above his head.

The relief was identified by Sivaramamurti (1942: 230-31) as Somanassa-Jātaka.

The *Somanassajātaka* (Jātaka: IV, 444-54, no. 505; Cowell 1895-1907: IV, 275-80) tells the story about Keṣu, the king of Kuru, who hosts some hermits in his park. One day they bid the king farewell and set off for the Himalayas. One of them, a virtuous ascetic named Mahārakkhitā, foretells the birth of a long-awaited heir to the throne. He is overheard saying this by a man who only pretends to be an ascetic and who then tells it to the king, as if it were his own prophecy. The grateful king honours him and allows him to live in his park. When the king’s son Somanassa (the Bodhisatva) is seven, the king goes

\(^1\) Burgess (1887: pl. 19.2); Sivaramamurti (1942: III B, 19; pl. 27.2).

AION, 64/1-4 (2004)
to war and tells him to serve the ascetic. Prince Somanassa finds the ascetic working in the garden and thus discovers that he is not a hermit but a swindler, so he refuses to pay homage to him. The sham ascetic speaks to the king as soon as he comes back from war and accuses Somanassa of having no respect for him. Not waiting for any explanations, the king sends his servants to kill his son. Eventually Somanassa manages to convince the servants first to hold an investigation, which then reveals that the sham ascetic is actually a gardener who sells vegetables grown in King Reju’s garden.

Fig. 1 — Relief from Amaravati depicting the Mūkapāṇgu story.
Madras Government Museum, Acc. no. 148.
(Drawing by the author).

According to Sivaramamurti the medallion depicts the following:
- the central scene: the king is talking to the virtuous ascetic Mahārakkhita and other hermits before their journey to the Himalayas;
- the upper scene on the in the garden;
- the upper scene on the in his bed.

Sivaramamurti’s int be absolutely certain that ral scene does not relat King Reju saying good the story, the prophecy o One detail which S his interpretation; althou beyond any doubt that t in the part of the relief which the king is simply; dently looking at somef their fingers. Sivaramai also far from perfect, t text. It is incompren represented as having c or why there is someon sham ascetic, or, finall text says that Sumanas scene does not corre boy find him playing w against the servants b does not correspond to

Another interprete relief in a more conviti any resistance is Princ 1 abh ekhitasam kunā nuphakešīvāt nirvāśetvē thunāngī (Jetāko: IV, 44 with both yellow robes, watering his plants (Cov 2)ndacs amākami ahun was sitting by my moth 1907: IV, 279).

4 sa raṇhuto parasdevoyo dudhāsī/ jīvī sa pānās stands. Craving grace wi King!’” (Cowell 1895-11.
5 After Schelingoff (2000: no. 538 (cf. fn. 7), Nīrī (Jayawickrama 1974: 25
anassa finds the ascetic a hermit but a swindler, c speaks to the king as sa of having no respect ends his servants to kill he servants first to hold ascetic is actually a gar-

-- the upper scene on the right: the king's son observes the sham ascetic digging in the garden;
-- the upper scene on the left: the servants go to kill the king's son who is lying in his bed.

Sivaramamurti's interpretation is not convincing even though he seems to be absolutely certain that it is correct. According to this interpretation, the central scene does not relate to the scenes above it. Sivaramamurti says it shows King Repu saying goodbye to the good ascetics. But in that case, according to the story, the prophecy of the birth of the king's son was not articulated.

One detail which Sivaramamurti apparently missed completely contradicts his interpretation; although the Brahmins' faces are damaged, one can still see beyond any doubt that the three men are not looking at the king but at something in the part of the relief that is missing. Thus it cannot be a farewell scene in which the king is simply saying goodbye to the ascetics. The Brahmins are evidently looking at something, comment on it and give the king instructions with their fingers. Sivaramamurti's interpretation of the scenes in the upper part is also far from perfect, as these depictions do not precisely correspond to the text. It is incomprehensible why in the scene on the right the sham ascetic is represented as having curly hair while in the text he is called jatila (amatteda), or why there is someone else standing beside the king's son and looking at the sham ascetic, or, finally, why the sham ascetic himself is digging, since the text says that Somanassa finds him watering the vegetable patch. The other scene does not correspond to the text either: the servants who go to kill the boy find him playing with his mother, not in bed; nor does he defend himself against the servants but endures the assault without any resistance -- which does not correspond to the text at all.\(^5\)

Another interpretation of this scene explains the events presented in the relief in a more convincing way: the boy who submits to the assault without any resistance is Prince Mūkapāngu (Mūgapakkha), 'dumb-stiff'.\(^5\)

\(^2\) ath' ekadīvasaḥ kumāra jatīlam pasissattāt nūyānāto govā kājājīlīm ekaṃ ga-

\(^3\) mānucca anāksama aham nātā nābhī mādātīlo sāhasā tehi dēvā ḍātā (Jātaka: IV, 451); "Where I was sitting by my mother's side They found me, dragged me cruelly away" (Cowell 1895-

\(^4\) sa rājapuṭo parideveyaṇaḥ/ dāsaśeṣuḥ atālām puggheyaḥ/ aham pi icchāmi janāda duddhisu/ jīvaṇa pante va pāpādāsayaḥ (Jātaka: IV, 447); "There the prince lamenting stands, Craving grace with folded hands: 'Spare me yet awhile, and bring Me alive to see the King!" (Cowell 1895-1907: IV, 278).

\(^5\) After Schlingloff (2000: 1, 180), the story is preserved in the following sources: Pali: Jātaka no. 538 (cf. fn. 7), śrūpaṇa-kākha (Jātaka: 1, 46; Jayawickrama 1990: 60), āvikā Śrīpiṭaka III.6.11 (Jayawickrama 1974: 29; Horner 1975: 57); Sanskrit or its translations: Bodhisattvavagā-
The oldest depiction of this story is to be found in a relief from Bharhat. The medallion, identified by Cunningham (1879: 58) (fig. 2), presents the story according to the version given in the verses of the "Mūgapakkha-jātaka"; its interpretation is guaranteed by the inscription *mukhapak[kya] [d]jātak[ās]* (Lüders 1963: 150-53) on the right edge of the medallion. The verses of the Jātaka tell the story of the royal Prince Temiya (the Bodhisattva) who remembers his previous incarnation and accepts suffering in order to avoid his previous fate. In the past he had been a king who condemned people to death or torture and then had to suffer extreme torture in hell. As a little child the prince is taken to the courtroom by his father where he hears how the judgements are passed and people are sentenced. It is then that he decides to remain still and silent - that is why he is called Mūgapakkha, 'dumb-stiff' - in order not to be forced to become a king in the future. The king sends a charioteer to get rid of the dumb prince in the forest. In the face of death, Prince Temiya stands up and speaks to the charioteer. Temiya explains his behaviour to himself and refuses to return to the city. He stays in the forest as an ascetic, and his father, the king visits him there.

The relief from Bharhat presents the story of Mūgapakkha in three scenes: on the left side of the relief the king can be seen sitting in his palace surrounded by his court and holding an unnaturally stiff child lying on his knees. It is highly probable that the scene when he observes his presents another scene charioteer digging a g in the middle. The Jātaka: the prince gets keeps digging without quarter of the medallion dants visits his son, at

In the Pali version with a cart and a ca cart) - makes it pass see Temiya lying in (which is not include
in a relief from Bharhut. 38 (fig. 2), 4 presents the story of the Mūkapaṇḍita jātaka; ugāphakṣīya jātaka[ān] jātaka [ān] jātakah jālāli. The verses of the Bodhisattva who remember in order to avoid his previ-

ous actions. As a little child the prince hears how the judge-

The king sends a chari-

Forest as an ascetic, and gapakka in three scenes:

; in his palace surrounded on his knees. It is highly

preserved in Tibetan, 214,2,5

[vol. 23: 724]; Tocharian A:

see Dresden (1955: 432); Uly-

ns. by Chavannes (1910-34: I,

[jvol. 13: 522a-535b].

l), Coomaraswamy (1956: pl.

-19); for the translation of the

khaṭṭhā ṅagā ketumassakāya y father took me on his lap, but once this miscreant slay, Sav

95-1907: VI, 11).

na abhāṇhi kim kāśyapa karite na va caṁhāna gāthana eva/ tīrthāntha puttāṁ me nikkhaṇā

wherefore do you dig that with it?’. The charioteer went in and: ‘Our king has found his hole and bury him far

be easily deduced from the

probable that the scene is a depiction of the turning point in the life of the prince when he observes his father passing judgements. The bottom part of the relief presents another scene, in which one can see an empty chariot on the left and a charioteer digging a grave with a mattock on the right. Prince Temiya is standing in the middle. The composition of this scene corresponds to the verses of the Jātaka: the prince gets off the chariot and speaks to the charioteer, who initially keeps digging without paying any attention to the king’s son. The right upper quarter of the medallion presents a later scene, in which the king with his attendants visits his son, an ascetic, in the forest.

In the Pali version the scene with the chariot and the charioteer – or rather with a cart and a cart driver (as in later times, it is not a chariot but a plain cart) – makes it possible to identify the story. In Polonnaruva, Ceylon, one can see Temiya lying in the cart (fig. 3), and in Thailand an excerpt from a text (which is not included in the verses of the Jātaka but only in the prose) was used
to interpret the iconography of the story: while the cart driver is digging a hole, Temiya decides to check whether he is strong enough to defend himself in case he is forced to lie in the grave.\textsuperscript{10} He does so by lifting up the cart (Wenk 1975: pl. 182) (fig. 4).

The Sanskrit version of the story is — with the exception of the late poetic adaptation in Kṣemendra’s \textit{Bodhisattvāvadānakapalaśī} — preserved only in translations. Although these ‘northern’ versions are different in many respects, they contain adaptations of verses 3 and 4 of the Jātaka. These verses recount the beginning of a conversation between the king’s son and the charioteer, including the question why the latter is digging a grave.\textsuperscript{11} The charioteer is, however, of minor importance in Sanskrit and is mentioned only in the adapted verses. In all this texts it is not the charioteer but the executioners who are...
t driver is digging a hole, to defend himself in case up the cart (Wenk 1975:
ception of the late poetic 'ātā - preserved only in fficient in many respects, ka. These verses recount son and the charioteer, rava. The charioteer is, ioned only in the adapted he executioners who are

s vo pātirayāhāna balon ti akom yiya ukkhipti éti ... if I have the power to contend I lifted it up as if it were a toy-
se version, cf. St. John (1893:
? Therefore do ye dig a hole? auce the king’s son, dumb and accoring to our commands, be

Fig. 4 - Painting in Wat Nā Phra That, Pak Thong Chai (Northern Thailand), 19th cent. (Drawing by the author.)

The depictions of the story that correspond to its ‘northern’ versions are to be found in paintings in Ajanta and in Central Asia. The painting in Ajanta (identified by Schlingloff 1977a: 472-76) depicts the Mūkapāṇgu story according to the version of the Mitāsamvāstivādavinaya (fig. 5). In this version the prince is called Udaka, «Water», which refers to the place of his birth (von

12 «In obedience to the king’s commands, the executioners set the prince on a cart, and took him out of the city» (von Schieffner 1906: 248).
13 Copy: Griffiths 16M; photography of the copy held at Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 82-1887 and in India Office, vol. 73, nos. 6060-6061. Ills. in Yazdani (1930-35: III, pl. 50-51); Singh (1965: pl. 50); Schlingloff (1977a: 475-76, drawing; 1987: 381, drawing; 2000: I, 179, drawing).
Schiefner 1906: 247). In accordance with this detail of the story the painting depicts (upper left) a carriage, followed by a horseman (the king?), in which the newborn prince is being brought from the river palace (once probably painted to the left of the cell door). The digging of a grave is not depicted in Ajanta. The prince is driven in a cart to the place where he is to be scared to death (bottom right). The presence of a demon indicates that the location depicted is the place of execution. The executioners grab the boy’s limbs; and one of them is holding a sword over him. The scene corresponds precisely to a version preserved in the Tocharian language (but based on the Sanskrit version of the Vinaya of Mulasarvastivadin), in which the king orders the executioners to kill his son with a sword.  

In Ajanta, the next scene shows a conversation between the prince and the executioners.

The paintings of the Mūkappāgu story in the monasteries on the northern Silk Road in Central Asia, identified by Grünwedel (1912: 74), look different. Like the majority of the Jātaka depictions in Central Asia, they are reduced to the single most dramatic scene. One can see here (fig. 6) how two executioners close the coffin containing the prince.

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14 Udelkāhyāḥ sa bālo 'bhīṁ sanājāḥ saṅī̄lantare/ vardhamānāḥ pitūs uṣyantān yavivarāyamana ṛhə̄yāḥ (Bodhisattvāvadānākāpālata 38.26; Vaidya 1959: 1, 240).
16 Iils. in Waldschmidt and von Le Coq (1928: 18, fig. 32) and Xu Wanyin (1983-85: 1, fig. 63).
17 Further depictions in Kizil: Cave 38 (Musikerkhöhle), barrel vault (ills. in Waldschmidt and von Le Coq 1928: 18, fig. 33, drawing; Xu Wanyin 1983-85: 1, fig. 129; Yaldiz 1987: fig. 28, drawing); Cave 206 (Fusswaschungskhöhle), plinth: Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst, Acc.

As far as the religious presence of a reclining prince Mūkappāgu, the mattock (just like in the interpretation. We will most important part of the scene. It most probably, and the Brahmining the boy’s future.

The question that from Amaravati depic

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ail of the story the painting depicts (upper left) a carriage, followed by a horseman (the king?), in which the swarmed prince is being fetched from the river palace across probably painted to the fl of the cell door. The gugging of a grave is not detected in Ajanta. The prince driven in a cart to the place where he is to be scared to death (bottom right). The essence of a demon indicates that the location depicted is the place of execution. The executioners grab the boy's limbs; and one of them is holding a sword over him. The scene corresponds closely to a version preserved in the Tocharian language (but based on the Sanskrit version of the Vinaya Pitaka as in Maravijaya), in which the king orders the executioners to kill his son with a sword. In Ajanta, the next scene cut from the northern (1912: 74), look different. Asia, they are reduced to six (6) how two executioners.

Fig. 6 – Painting in Kizil, Cave 17 (Bodhisattvagewölbbehöhle), barrel vault. (After Schlingloff 2000: II, 34, no. 39/6).

As far as the relief from Amaravati (pl. 1a and fig. 1) is concerned, the presence of a reclining boy means it can be positively identified as the story of prince Mākapāngu. The upper right scene, in which a person is digging with a mattock (just like in the relief from Bharhut) confirms the accuracy of this interpretation. We will never know what the central scene depicted, since its most important part (i.e., what the Brahmins are looking at) has not been preserved. It most probably depicted the reclining prince, perhaps lying on the cart, and the Brahmins, looking at him are giving the king instructions regarding the boy’s future.

The question that arises here is, which version of the story does the relief from Amaravati depict? The central scene does not provide the answer to this.

question since it is compatible with all the versions except the one to be found in the verses of the Jātaka. In the prose of the Jātaka the king receives advice from the soothsayers (lakṣhaṇātāhaka), who call the prince kālabārni, i.e. they see him as a person whose presence brings misfortune (Zin 2003), and advise the king to drive him out of the city and to bury him alive. In the northern versions the king asks Brahmins, doctors or ministers for advice (Mulasarvāstivādavinaya: minister and physician; Tocharian: ministers; Bodhissattvāvādānakalpatāla: physicians; T 152: Brahmins). The depiction of the Brahmins in the relief thus corresponds most closely to the Jātaka and to the Chinese version.

The scenes in the upper part of the relief permit a more precise identification of the corresponding textual tradition. At the very least it makes it possible to rule out the Pali version. In Pali - both in the verses and in the prose of the Jātaka - it is only a charioteer who takes the prince to the forest. The presence of two other people in both scenes corresponds only to the versions of northern Buddhism in which there are several assassins (Mulasarvāstivādavinaya: executioners; Bodhissattvāvādānakalpatāla: grave digger).

The fact that it is the version that is depicted suggests that the text version is known to the artists. This example of the relief from Amaravati is (1942: 229) already shown in a reciting boy and a reclining musician.

23 «So king Brahmadatta set hand over the prince to kill him to death» (von Schlegel 2000: 40).
24 Bodhissattvāvādānakalpatālā: «svāhu rato saccinena rato niyati» (Vaidya 1959: I, 224: 1); «preṣṣṭaṁ teṣāṁ kṣīrtvāna vaidyās taddāsaṁkheṣṇan/ avodav vahāyaṁ rājau rājasārnam na dhṛṣṭavā/ abhāvāsād yadi jato 'sva doṣo p ti sukhamiṣṭham/ ind eka bhayasyavaśād utprahatvā ca vakti caŚ tvādār. .
25 «Le roi et la reine s’en inquiétèrent: ils appelaient la multitude des brahmanes pour leur demander qu’elle était la cause de ce fait; ils répondirent: ‘Cet enfant a une influence néfaste; s’il est beau mais ne parle pas, de quelle utilité vous est-il, ô grand roi? Si les femmes de votre harem ne vous donnent pas d’héritier, ne serait-ce pas parce qu’il vous nous? Il vous faut l’enterrer vivant et alors aurez certainement un noble héritier’» (Chavannes 1910-14: 1, 126-27).
except the one to be found ka the king receives advice I the prince kālakarī, i.e., misfortune (Zin 2003), and to bury him alive. In the ministers for advice (Miṣcharian: ministers; Bodhi-
is). The depiction of the story to the Jātaka and to the
it a more precise identification least they make it possible and in the prose of the forest. The presence of the to the versions of northern sarvāstivāda vinaya: execution


The fact that it is the ‘northern’ Sanskrit version and not the southern Pali version that is depicted in Amaravati was without a doubt the reason why Śivaramamurti failed to identify the content of the relief, despite the scene with a reclining boy and a man digging a grave.

This example of the presence of the northern literary tradition in the reliefs from Amaravati is by no means an isolated phenomenon. Śivaramamurti (1942: 229) already showed that the legend of King Śibi, who cut off flesh from his own body in order to save a dove, was depicted in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda in the form recorded only in the Bodhisattvavādānakalpalata 55 (Vaidya 1959: II, 334-37) of Kṣemendra (11th century, Kashmir) as the story of King Sarvampada. There the dove begs the king to protect him not from a falcon but from a hunter (nayṣāda). The story is depicted in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda at least 13 times. There is one painting of the story in

23 «So king Brahmadatta sent for executioners, and let them know privately that he was going to hand over the prince to them in the presence of a great assembly, but that they were not to put him to death» (von Schieffer 1906: 35).


26 «On revêtit le prince de vêtements précieux, puis on le renuit aux fossoyeurs; les fossoyeurs lui enlevèrent ses beaux habits et tous ensemble se mirent à faire la fosse» (Chavannes 1910: 34: I, 127).

27 A second version only discovered recently, Dravyaparyavadānakahā (Okada Mamiko 1993: 164-68), which tells the story in a mixture of prose and verses, was composed at a later time.

Ajanta (identified by Schlingloff 1984-86: 305-8). 29
A further - hitherto unidentified - example of a depiction in the south of a story known only in 'northern' versions is another relief from Nagarjunakonda (pl. 1b and fig. 7). A story is presented here in two scenes: in what has survived of the lower scene two elephants can be made out. The smaller of the two - evidently a female - is lying down. The upper scene, which is in a better state of preservation, depicts a king making a meaningful gesture with his forefinger and an elephant standing in front of a pot full of round objects. The elephant reaches out with its trunk to pick up one of the objects. The story presented here can be identified without problem if it is compared to its depictions in the paintings of Central Asia (Borromeo 1992) (fig. 8). 30 It is the story

Fig. 7 - Relief from Nagarjunakonda.
Nagarjunakonda Museum, Acc. no. 19.
(Drawing by the author.)

29 Ajanta, Cave XVII, front transept, left side wall. Copy: Griffiths 17S; photography of the copy held at Indian Section of the Victoria and Albert Museum, no. 93-1887 and in India Office, vol. 73, nos. 6093-6094. See illus. in Griffiths (1896-97: I, pl. 64a); Yazdani (1930-35: IV, pl. 15); Singh (1965: pl. 50); Schlingloff (1984-86: 305-8, drawing; 1987: 89, 366, fig. 12, drawing; 2000: 1, 232, drawing).

30 Ills. in Waldschmidt and von Le Coq (1928: pl. A.1); Xu Wanyin (1983-85: III, fig. 210); Borromeo (1992: fig. 1). Further depictions in Central Asia: (a) Kizil, Cave 17B (Schalchhöhle), barrel vault, Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst, Acc. no. 8449 (war loss); illus. in Grünwedel (1920: fig. 42, 44 drawing); von Le Coq (1924: pl. 10); Waldschmidt and von Le Coq (1928: fig. 1, drawing), Borromeo (1992: fig. 3, drawing); Schlingloff (2000: II, 47[3], drawing); (b) Kirish (Ritterhöhle), right side wall, Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst, Acc. no. III 8917; illus. in Waldschmidt and von Le Coq (1928: pl. C); Xu Wanyin (1983-85: III, fig. 210); Schlingloff (2000: II, 47[9], drawing). Other paintings from Central Asia show only the escape of the King Prabhāśa (Borromeo 1992: figs. 4-9).

Fig. 8 - Pair
Berlin, A
(A)

of King Prabhāśa, 31 de one and perhaps even Schlingloff (1977b: 20 I, 249), Cave XVII (fi;
ing an excursion King denly runs off into the
there. Afer several dr king keeps complainin tamed. The mahout, I been perfectly trained demonstrate the anima

31 After Schlingloff (2000: nāṭī of Haribhadra 1 (cf. also in Chinese T 201.53
100); Bodhisatvabodhisū
avamāvasi, pres. Pagün’s trans. in Schl Tocharian B (Lévi 1925:
ghar cf. Zieme (1985); i Taakasu 1901).

32 Cave I, right side wall: drawing, and pl. 36(c), C drawing; Cave II, versi Schlingloff (2000: 1, 24

33 Copy: Griffiths 17N1; p Ills. in Schlingloff (1977
a depiction in the south of her relief from Nagarjunanagar in two scenes: in what has fade out. The smaller of the scene, which is in a better eaningful gesture with his t full of round objects. The f the objects. The story pre-t is compared to its depic-t92) (fig. 8). It is the story

of King Prabhāsa,31 depictions of which have also been preserved in at least one and perhaps even in three paintings in Ajanta.32 Cave I, identified by Schlingloff (1977b: 2000: I, 244-46), Cave II, identified by Schlingloff (2000: I, 249), Cave XVII (fig. 9), identified by Foucher (1921: 218, no. 28).33 During an excursion King Prabhāsa has to save himself when his elephant suddenly runs off into the jungle. It turns out that the bull had smelled a female there. After several days the elephant is brought back to the palace and the king keeps complaining to the mahout that the elephant has not been properly tamed. The mahout, however, continues to claim that while the animal has been perfectly trained its powerful passion cannot be kept in check. In order to demonstrate the animal’s absolute obedience the mahout requires it to pick up


red-hot iron balls with its trunk. The relief of Nagarjunakonda (pl. I and fig. 7) depicts this story in two scenes: the lower scene shows the bull elephant and the female elephant lying on the ground; the upper part depicts the test with the red-hot iron balls.

Fig. 9 — Painting in Ajanta, Cave XVII, rear transept, right side wall. (After Schlingloff 2000: I, 250).

As the above examples show, the question of the affiliation to a particular school of texts that served as the literary background for the reliefs at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda is highly complicated. The identification of that affiliation will require a lot of effort and case studies of particular reliefs. Nowadays the complete identification of the corresponding literary tradition is only possible with regard to a small number of reliefs. For instance, the relief in Nagarjunakonda 34 which depicts the story of Prince Sudhana includes elements which correspond only to the version of the story from the Mahāvastu but also differs from it (Vogel 1937: 120-21). 35 Some elements of the Buddha legend depicted in ‘southern’ reliefs correspond only to descriptions in ‘northern’ literature. For example, a representation of the ‘Miracle of Śrīvastī’ in Amaravati 36 does not include details from the Pali story such as a mango tree, but instead an Aśoka-tree and the youth Uttarā floating in the air described in the text of Mulasarvāstivadinaya (Schlingloff 2000: I, 503-4). The depic-

34 Nagarjunakonda, Site 6, Nagarjunakonda Museum. Ills. in Longhurst (1938: pl. 27c); Vogel (1937: pl. 36); Ray (1965: fig. 14); Rosen Stone (1994: figs. 119-21).
35 The relief shows Sudhana riding on the back of the monkey king together with two companions while the text mentions three (Vogel 1937: 121).
36 Relief from Amaravati, Madras Government Museum, Acc. no. 130; ills. in Sivaramamurti (1942: III A,21; pl. 38.2); also in Burgess (1887: pl. 7.1) and Schlingloff (2000: II, 100[4], drawing).

Fig. 10 — Relief in...
The Mūkoparda Story in the Madras Government Museum

Irjunakonda (pl. I and fig. 7) shows the bull elephant and part depicts the test with

The affiliation to a particular and for the reliefs at Amaravati identification of that affinities of particular reliefs sponding literary tradition is lies. For instance, the relief prince Sudhana includes elec story from the Mahāvamsa one elements of the Buddha story to descriptions in 'north' the 'Miracle of Śrāvasti' in story such as a mango tree, sitting in the air described in 2000: 1, 503-4). The depic-

Longhurst (1938: pl. 27c); Vogel 119-21).

king together with two companions


Fig. 10 – Relief from Amaravati. Madras Government Museum, Acc. no. 105. (Drawing by the author).

Numerous reliefs from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda have been wrongly identified. We can take as an example a relief showing a king being attacked by several aggressive armed persons (fig. 10). Sivaramamurti’s interpretation (1942: IV A,3) – “Prince Siddhartha lives in three pleasant palaces carefully guarded from the ills of life” (Ibid.: pl. 59.1c, opposite page) –

37 Two reliefs from Amaravati held in Madras Government Museum. For the first one, see Burgess (1887: pl. 48.4) and Stern and Bénisti (1961: pl. 9b); for the second one (Acc. no. 80), Sivaramamurti (1942: III A,18; pl. 40.2) and Burgess (1887: pl. 23.4).

34 Illus. in Sivaramamurti (1942: pl. 59.1c); Burgess (1887: pl. 42.4); Stern and Bénisti (1961: pl. 45a); Raven Stone (1994: fig. 70); Roy (1994: fig. 126).
is absolutely impossible. Many reliefs have been identified in a rather unconvincing manner, since the interpretations correspond only vaguely to the adduced texts. As a typical example we can take the interpretation of a story that is depicted in three reliefs, two from Amaravati and one from Nagarjunakonda (figs. 11-13). All these reliefs show a (holy) tree, in which lives a tree spirit (vṛksadevata). In front of the tree an elephant with a driver is taking a bath in a pond. A king (?) with his retinue is approaching the pond. The background of the reliefs shows among other things children and a couple carrying babies in a rural landscape. Sivaramamurti (1942: 219-20) explains the relief in Madras Museum as a depiction of the story of Mittavindaka, the Unfortunate One, from Losakajātaka (Jātaka, no. 41). He claims that the elephant in the water represents drought and that the children are a detail that is important for the interpretation. As another relief shows (fig. 14) the same story can be depicted without children; there the most important detail is a procession arriving at the pond with the elephant in it. The subject of the reliefs is thus unknown.

39 Ilms. in Burgess (1887: pl. 49, 2, drawing); Bachhofer (1929: pl. 127b); Sivaramamurti (1942: III B, 12; pl. 46, 2; 1979: fig. 17); Stern and Bénisti (1961: pl. 24b); Parimoo (1995: fig. 11).

40 Ilms. in Ray (1965: fig. 17, detail); Krishna Murthy (1977: pl. 34); Parimoo (1995: fig. 13); Rosen Stone (1994: fig. 226).

41 Ilms. in Barrett (1954: pl. 100); Knox (1992: 135); Rosen Stone (1994: fig. 150).
identified in a rather unconfirmed only vaguely to the ad-
interpretation of a story that and one from Nagarjuna-
holy) tree, in which lives

a) Relief from Amaravati. Madras Government Museum, Acc. no. 148. (Photo by the author).

b) Relief from Nagarjunakonda. Nagarjunakonda Museum, Acc. no. 19. (Photo by the author).

...
Concerning the interpretation of the narrative reliefs from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda on the basis of literary sources, it must be noted that in all the reliefs that have been positively identified (as for instance in the case of the
stories of Viśvantara, Śaddanta, Śaśa, Māṇḍhātara, Aṅgulimāla or Nanda) there are no significant differences between the texts and the corresponding reliefs. It has been shown that in a number of cases these reliefs correspond closely to the versions of the stories found in the literary tradition of ‘northern’ Buddhism. However, it is uncertain whether all the original sources have survived to the present day and, therefore, whether it will ever be possible to find a literary explanation of the reliefs. As an example we can take the depiction of the famous parable about the ‘Man in the Well’ — known from Mahābhārata, several Jaina sources and many versions in the Christian literature (Kuhn 1888; Lang 1966: 77-78) — which we meet several times in the reliefs from Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda (identified by Vogel 1937: 109-13; fig. 15, fig. 16, fig. 17, fig. 18).

Fig. 16 – Relief from Nagarjunakonda, Site 6, Paris, Musée Guimet. (Drawing by the author).

42 ‘A Brahmin loses his way in a dense forest full of beast of pray ... in the middle of the forest, covered by underwood and creeper plants, there is a well. The Brahman falls into it and is caught on the intertwined branches of a creeper ... and yet another even greater danger threatens him there. In the middle of the well he perceived a great, mighty dragon, at the edge of the lid of the well he saw a ... giant elephant slowly approaching. In the branches of the tree which covered the well, swarmed all kinds of dreadful-looking bees, preparing honey. The honey drips down and is greedily drunk by the man hanging in the well. For he was not weary of existence, and did not give up hope of life, though white and black mice gnawed the tree on which he hung’ (Winternitz 1927: 408).

43 Mahābhārata X:5, 19-22; Roy (1884-96: VII, Sree Parva 7-8).
45 Rao (1956: pl. 18); Rosen Stone (1994: fig. 81).
46 Hackin (1931: pls. 6-7); Deneck (1970: pls. 82-85); Rosen Stone (1994: fig. 113).
47 Longhurst (1938: pl. 49b); Rosen Stone (1944: fig. 223).
Aṅgulimālī or Nanda) there are the corresponding reliefs. reliefs correspond closely to tradition of 'northern' Buddhist sources have survived to be possible to find a literary take the depiction of the fa-
nown from Mahābhārata,43 Christian literature (Kuhn al times in the reliefs from gel 1937: 109-13; fig. 15,45

Paris, Musée Guimet.

pray ... in the middle of the forest, The Brahman falls into it and is another even greater danger threat-

and black mice gnawed the tree on

7-8).


Stone (1994: fig. 113).

(1994: fig. 68).

The reliefs which have been linked to the parable of the 'Man in the Well' depict a story about a king who attacks with a weapon an ascetic (not the Buddha) who is sitting under a tree. In the next scene we see the same king adoring the ascetic. The oldest depictions of this story do not contain the par-
able (fig. 19). All Buddhist sources that are known today belong to northern Buddhism, none of them connects the parable with a story depicted in Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. Vogel (1937: 113-14) explains the reliefs as illustrations of the unknown version of the story of King Udana (Udayana) and his

Fig. 19 – Relief from Amaravati. London, British Museum, Acc. no. 11. (Drawing by the author.)

corversion by the arhat Piṇḍola. The problem with this identification is not only that we do not know of any such story but also the fact that the ‘Man in the Well’ would in that case be understood as a depiction of the content of the sermon of Piṇḍola – which would make it the only example of a ‘depiction within a depiction’ in Indian Buddhist art. In light of all these difficulties, we must assume that the literary source of the reliefs that contain the parable of the ‘Man in the Well’ will remain unknown for ever.

49 Iills. in Barrett (1954: pl. 29); Stern and Béniati (1961: pl. 57a); Knox (1992: 61). For further examples, cf. Burgess (1887: pl. 34.2, on the stūpa, on the right side and pl. 39.2, on the stūpa, on the left side).

Indeed, the effort to crush and squeeze the Amaravati and Nagarjuna-konda reliefs into the Procustean bed of Pali texts is the main reason for misinterpretations.

Monika Zin
Institut für Indologie und Iranistik
Geschwister-Scholl-Platz 1
80539 München

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