

The Oldest Painting of the Udayana Legend

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Two of the six pre-Christian Ajanta caves, caitya caves Nos. IX and X were decorated with paintings on their walls, ceilings and pillars. The caves date from the last two centuries B.C.. At some point during the second phase of building activity in Ajanta in the fifth century A.D., artists redecorated the caves of the earlier period. However, some of the original paintings were left untouched and have survived to this day. These old murals are panels representing narratives. While the narrations in Cave IX are depicted in a few and sometimes in just one single picture, the panels in Cave X present each story in a number of different scenes.

Most of the early wall paintings in this cave were copied in the 19th century when they were in a much better state of preservation than today.¹ On the basis of these copies, researchers were able to identify one of the stories on the right-hand wall of Cave X as Saddantajātaka as early as the 19th century.² The other one, the Śyāmajātaka, was identified in the first half of this century.³

¹ The first copies of the paintings were made in the first half of the 19th century by Major R. GILL, but were lost in the fire of the Crystal Palace in London in 1866. Prior to this, however, some copper engravings had been made on the basis of GILL's copies and published in: J. BURGESS' Report in: *Archæological Survey of Western India*, Bombay 1881. In the 1880s, the group of students around J. GRIFFITHS of the Bombay Jemsejit Jijibai School of Art made several copies in oil-colours, which were systematically despatched to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. As the "Reports" of the years 1872-85 of Mr. GRIFFITHS to the Government of Bombay prove (India Office, X63), the copies were made as a second-best solution when it turned out to be impossible to separate the paintings from the walls. — The right-hand flank wall of Cave X is copied in six oil-paintings No. 10 A-F, a part of which is kept in the storeroom of the Indian Section of the V & A Museum. The photographs of these copies are kept in *ibid.* (under the Nos. 19-1885, 32, 33, 34-1885 and 72-1887) and in the India Office in London (Vol. 70, Nos. 5963-5966 and Vol. 71, Nos. 5997-6003). — In J. GRIFFITHS' *The Paintings in the Buddhist Cave-Temples of Ajanta*, London 1896-97, there is only one sketch of the colour copies 10 A-D (Vol. 1, Pl. 41).

² This story was first recognised by J. BURGESS in: Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples and their Inscriptions = *Archæological Survey of Western India*, London 1883, p. 67.

³ The Śyāma story in Cave X was first described and identified by A. FOUCHER in his *Lettre d'Ajanṭā*, first published in the English translation in: *Journal of the Hyderabad Archaeological Society*, 5, 1919-20, p. 50ff., and later appearing in: *Journal Asiatique* 1921, p. 201ff.

The interpretation of the paintings on the left wall was more difficult as these were already in an advanced state of deterioration by the 19th century. The copies⁴ made of these paintings are imprecise and portray only the upper parts of most figures. Moreover, the painting was initially falsely interpreted: in one of the most distinctive scenes YAZDANI mistook the upper part of a wheel for a stūpa and labelled the scene “the royal party worshipping a stupa”.⁵ This interpretation was widely accepted. It was only in 1981 that SCHLINGLOFF⁶ identified the supposed stūpa as the “Wheel of Law” and the entire painting as a representation of highlights from the Buddha's life in eight scenes, beginning with the descent of the Bodhisatva from the Tuṣita heaven and ending with the arrival and departure of the seven kings for the distribution of the Buddha's relics.

To the right of this last scene further fragments of early paintings are visible, which cover about a third of Cave X's apsis and which up to now were never identified.⁷ These paintings had apparently deteriorated considerably by the 19th century, since they were never copied or even mentioned in relevant literature.



Fig. 1

Despite the poor state of preservation, even the untrained eye can make out details such as faces, trees and objects in the dim patches of pigments. As can be expected, these details prove that the style of the pictures in the apsis is the same as that of the paintings on both side walls.⁸ This may be demonstrated, for example, by the typical women's hair-styles, with an oblong piece of cloth above the forehead covering the ears and the hair and then falling down to the woman's back (fig. 1). A comparable

⁴ Nothing remains of Major GILL's copy of the wall paintings (cf. fn. 1) but a copper engraving based on it, which was published in: *Illustrated London News* 1849. A reproduction of the copper engraving is illustrated in: BURGESS, 1883 (*op.cit.*, fn. 2), p. 67. GRIFFITHS' pupils made six oil copies of the left wall, which were despatched to the V & A Museum as No. 10 G-L. The photographs of these are kept *ibid.* (under Nos. 73, 74, 75-1887 – the others having been destroyed) and in India Office (Vol. 71, Nos. 6004-6011, Vol. 73, Nos. 6057-6059).

⁵ G. YAZDANI, *Ajanta*, Oxford 1930-55, Vol. 3, Text, p. 27.

⁶ D. SCHLINGLOFF, *Die älteste Malerei des Buddhalebens*, in: *Gedenkschrift für L. Alsdorf*, Wiesbaden 1981, p. 181-98; transl. in: *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, Delhi 1987, p. 1-13.

⁷ SCHLINGLOFF, 1981 (*op.cit.*), p. 193-94, & *Studies (op.cit.)*, p. 9, has expressed the opinion that the story of Viśvantara, i.e. the second-last birth of the Bodhisatva, could perhaps have been painted between the scenes of the life of the Buddha and the Jātakas.

⁸ There is no substance to YAZDANI's strange claim that the paintings on the left wall originate from the second century B.C. (*op.cit.*, fn. 5, p. 24), and that those on the right wall are from the third or fourth century A.D. (p. 31).



Fig. 2

representation in the painting on the left wall (fig. 2)⁹ reveals other details of this head-dress, such as the pattern of the material, strands of hair and earrings. But the main features of the head decoration are undoubtedly the same.

Further objects discernible in the fragments of the paintings disclose the same features as found in similar representations in other, better preserved, early parts. In particular, two pieces of furniture are relatively well preserved, namely an armchair and a wicker stool (fig. 3).

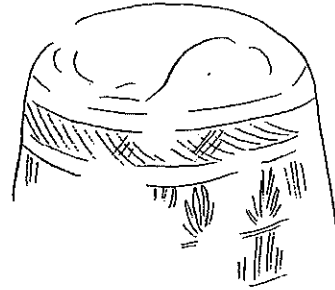


Fig. 3

In ancient representations an armchair in this form is the king's throne and the wicker stool the queen's seat; in our painting, however, these seats are unoccupied. This detail shows that our pictures are most unusual. In comparable representations in early Ajanta murals (fig. 4¹⁰ & fig. 5¹¹) as well as in contemporary



Fig. 4

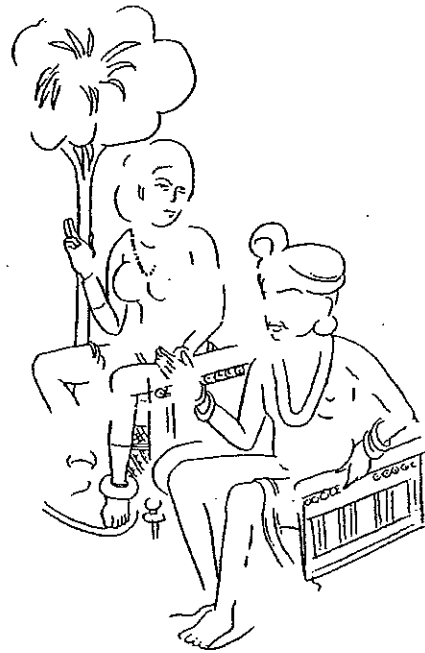


Fig. 5

⁹ Detail from GRIFFITHS' copy No. 10I (I.S. 74-1887; I.O. Vol. 71, Nos. 6006-6007). Illustrated in: YAZDANI, 1930-1955 (*op.cit.*, fn. 5), Vol. 3, Pl. 24a, Pl. 26, Pl. 27a-b.

¹⁰ Detail from GRIFFITHS' copy No. 10A (I.S. 33-1885; I.O., Vol. 70, No. 5963); cf. GRIFFITHS 1896-97 (*op.cit.*, fn. 1), Vol. 1, Pl. 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*



Fig. 6

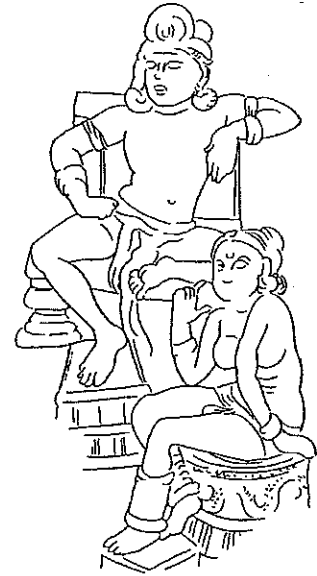


Fig. 7

reliefs in Sanchi (fig. 6)¹² and Amaravati (fig. 7)¹³, the two seats are occupied by the royal couple.

In our paintings (fig. 8) the king, a man of youthful appearance, can be seen standing before the throne in an unusual position; he has his right arm raised horizontally to his shoulders and has clenched his fist below his cheek. Having stretched out his left hand, he is holding a vertical object, the top of which is bent towards his body.

As small and as dim as these outlines may be, there can be no doubt regarding their interpretation: the king has risen from his throne, drawn his bow and is about to shoot an arrow. His target can be found to the right of this scene, where one can recognise the heads of several women turned towards the archer. At least seven female heads are discernible, only three of which are in a relatively good state of preservation. One can no longer ascertain whether the first woman, who is standing near the wicker stool, was separate from the group or whether more women were painted in the space inbetween. But, as shocking as it may be, one thing is clear: the king is aiming his arrow at the women.

¹² Sanchi I, West Gate, middle architrave, rear side, on the extreme left. Illustrated in: J. MARSHALL/A. FOUCHER, *The Monuments of Sānchī*, Calcutta 1940, Vol. 2, Pl. 63.

¹³ Amaravati, British Museum, 44. Illustrated in: R. KNOX, *Amaravati, Buddhist Sculptures from the Great Stupa*, London 1992, Pl. 61. — Other examples from the British Museum: *ibid.* Pl. 41, 62, and from the Madras Museum in: C. SIVARAMAMURTI, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum*, Madras 1942 (Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, New Series – General Section, Vol. IV), Pl. 25.2, 32.1, 36.1, 50.2.

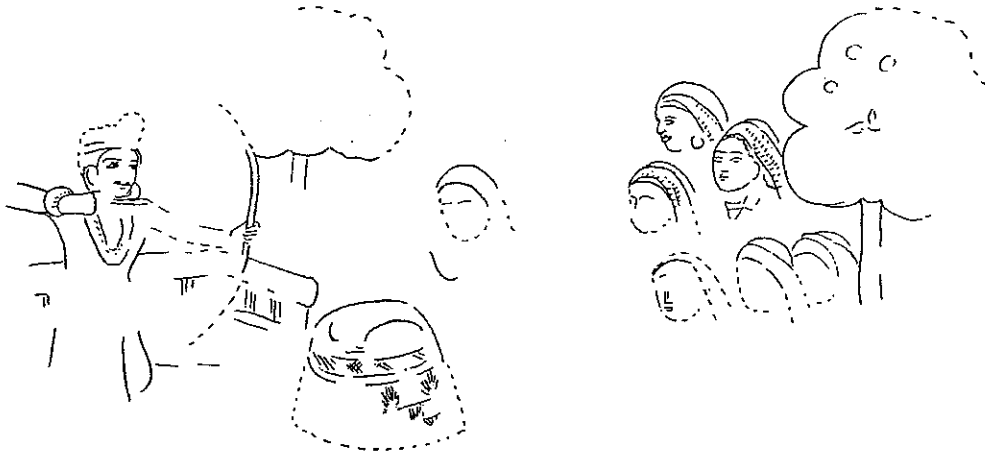


Fig. 8

One could deduce that the fact that the wicker stool is unoccupied indicates that the queen is among this group of women. And indeed, the theory that it is precisely the queen at whom the king is aiming is supported by two Amaravati reliefs.

These reliefs were carved some 200 years later but show an identical scene with an archer holding a large bow in his left hand (fig. 9¹⁴ & fig. 10¹⁵).

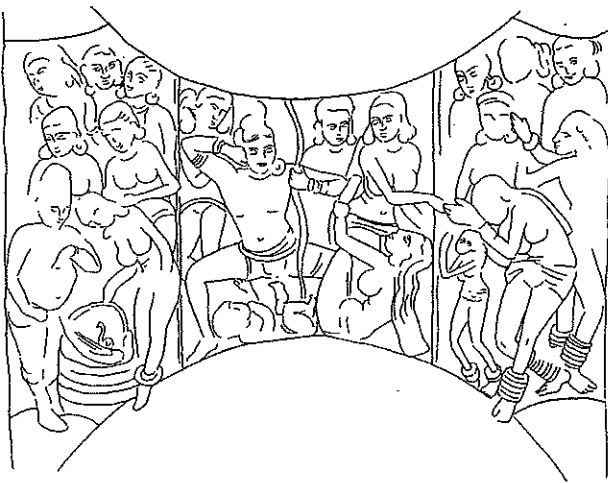


Fig. 9

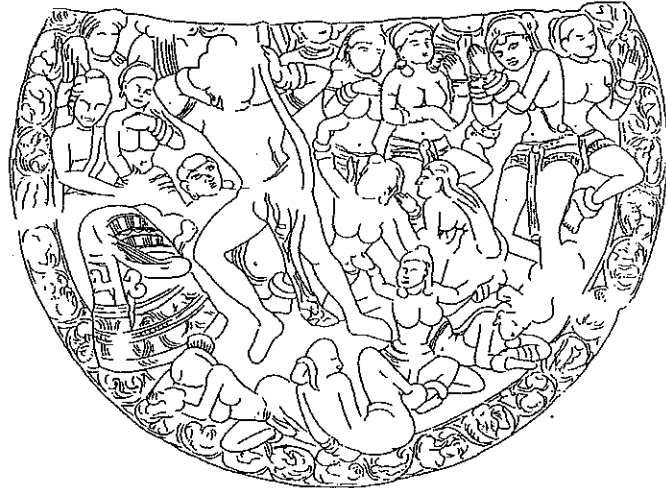


Fig. 10

¹⁴ Madras Government Museum, III A. 27. Illustrated in: J. BURGESS, *The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati ...*, London 1887, Pl. 12.2; SIVARAMAMURTI, 1942, (*op.cit.*, fn. 13), Pl. 34.1; V.S. AGRAWALA, *Indian Art*, Varanasi 1965, Fig. 215 (tracing); C. SIVARAMAMURTI, *Amaravati Mode of Sculpture*, Madras 1976, Pl. 29.

¹⁵ British Museum, 15. Illustrated in: J. FERGUSSON, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, London 1868, Pl. 63.1; P. STERN/M. BÉNISTI, *Évolution du style indien d'Amarāvati*, Paris 1962; KNOX, 1992 (*op.cit.*, fn. 13) Pl. 24.

The position of his right hand, holding the arrow, is almost identical to the king's in the Ajanta painting under consideration. One finds to the right of the Amaravati archer a group of women in different poses; some standing, some seated and others lying down. Among these figures, one woman is portrayed larger than the others. She stands, bowing, with her hands joined together in respect, while the other women are shown with various gestures of horror and supplication.

The characteristic elements of this scene are identical with those of the Ajanta painting under discussion. Besides the distinctive features, one additional detail is found both in the reliefs and in Ajanta, namely the unoccupied wicker stool. In the Amaravati reliefs a *vīṇā* is lying on the stool.

On the basis of this detail, one of the two reliefs (fig. 9) was correctly interpreted by LINOSSIER¹⁶ as early as 1929. In 1942, SIVARAMAMURTI¹⁷ applied this interpretation to the other relief (fig. 10). The reliefs depict the events of a Pali story, recounted in the *Udenavattthu* of the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*:¹⁸

During the lifetime of the Buddha the Vatsa king Udena was the ruler of Kosambi. The king, who was fond of playing the *vīṇā*, had two wives: One was Māgandiyā, who was formerly offered in marriage to the Buddha by her father and who hated the Buddha for his rejection. The second wife was Sāmāvatī, who through her hunchback maid-servant Khujjuttarā became a pious Buddhist lay sister. Of course Māgandiyā hated Sāmāvatī and tried to slander her to the king as often as possible. One day Māgandiyā asked her uncle Cullamāgandiyā, who was just as villainous as she was, to bring her a snake whose venom teeth were neutralised. She hid the snake in the sound-box of the king's *vīṇā*. Then, under the pretext of an inauspicious dream that Sāmāvatī would attempt to take the king's life, she led the king to the private apartment of Sāmāvatī, where she caused the snake to creep out of the instrument and accused Sāmāvatī of a murderous attack on the king's life. The king, terrified, seized his bow and aimed a poisoned arrow at his innocent wife. Sāmāvatī, however, radiated the feeling of infinite goodness taught to her by the Buddha, and the arrow reversed its course in mid-air as if to strike the king's heart.¹⁹

¹⁶ R. LINOSSIER, Une légende d'Udena à Amarāvātī, in: *Revue des Arts Asiatiques, Annals du Musée Guimet*, 6, Paris 1929-30, p. 101-02.

¹⁷ SIVARAMAMURTI, 1942 (*op.cit.*, fn. 13) p. 203.

¹⁸ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, I.2, ed. Vol. 1,2, p. 161-231; transl. Pt. 1, p. 247-91: The story of Māgandiyā's intrigue and the shooting at Sāmāvatī, ed. p. 215-18; transl. p. 285-87.

¹⁹ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, I.2 (ed. p. 216-17; transl. p. 286): *rājā sahasatthāmaṃ siṅgadhanuṃ ādāya jiyam poṭhetvā visapītasaram sannaḥitvā Sāmāvatīṃ dhure katvā/ sabbā tā paṭipāṭiyā ṭhapāpetvā/ Sāmāvatīyā ure saram vissajjesi/ so tassā mettānubhāvena paṭinivattitvā āgata-maggābhimukho va hutvā rañño hadayaṃ pavisanto viya aṭṭhāsi/ rājā cintesi ...*

In the relief identified by her, LINOSSIER recognised further details reported in the text. In the left part of the scene a corpulent man, who should be identified as the uncle Cullamāgandiyā, is helping Māgandiyā to hide the snake. In the right part of the relief a hunchback girl is standing in front of the queen – the maid-servant named Khujjuttarā in the text.²⁰

Short versions of the same story are to be found in some other texts of later Pali literature, with slight differences in some details. In the *Visuddhimagga* Buddhaghosa tells that the king, ready to shoot at the queen, was so moved by her radiation of infinite goodness that he could neither shoot his arrow nor lower his bow.²¹

The tale is recounted in the Commentaries to *Aṅguttaranikāya*²² and to *Paṭisambhidāmagga*²³ in the same way.

With the exception of this difference, all motifs which could be portrayed in art are identical with the version of the story as it is told in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. All versions mention the vīṇā, the hunchback servant Khujjuttarā and the uncle Cullamāgandiyā, hence it is not possible to ascertain the exact literary version on which the Amaravati reliefs are based. Nonetheless, the basic identification of LINOSSIER is beyond any doubt: the reliefs represent the story of Udena and Sāmāvati on the basis of a version in which a snake hidden in a vīṇā was the motive for the king's outburst of rage.

The similarity of the Amaravati reliefs to the scene which can be reconstructed from the fragments of our Ajanta painting confirms their basic identity with the Udena story beyond any doubt. The question arises to which literary version this old painting may belong. As we have seen, the reliefs, made more than 200 years after our painting, are closely connected to the story as told in two different versions in the Pali commentaries, which were written at least 500 years after Cave X was painted. Above all, these murals prove that the stories of Udena have a long tradition, the development of which has yet to be ascertained. The scene depicted in the reliefs and in our painting represents one of the highlights of the story, which is told in the literary versions

²⁰ An exact description of the reliefs, taking account of LINOSSIER's interpretations, is to be found in: SIVARAMAMURTI, 1942 (*op.cit.*, fn. 13) p. 201ff.

²¹ *Visuddhimagga* XII (ed. p. 381; übers. p. 437): *Māgandiyabrāhmaṇo attano dhītāya aggama-hesiṭṭhānaṃ patthayamāno tassā vīṇāya āsivisaṃ pakkhipāpetvā rājānaṃ āha/ mahārāja Sāmāvati taṃ māretukāmā vīṇāya āsivisaṃ gahetvā pariharatī ti/ rājā taṃ disvā kupito Sāmāvatiṃ vadhissāmī ti dhanuṃ āropetvā visapitaṃ khurappaṃ sannayhi/ Sāmāvatiṃ saparivārā rājānaṃ mettāya phari/ rājā saraṃ neva khipituṃ na oropetuṃ sakkonto vedhamāno atthāsi/*

²² *Manorathapūrāṇi, Ekanipātavaṇṇanā* XIV, 3-4 (ed. p. 443): *rājā neva kaṇḍam pakkhipituṃ nāpanetuṃ sakkoti ...*

²³ *Saddhammapakāsini, Paṭisambhidāmaggaṭṭhakathā* 212.6 (ed. p. 674-75): *khurappaṃ neva khipituṃ na oropituṃ sakkoti ...*

in Pali more extensively than it could be portrayed in art. In these versions, a preceding episode reports another attempt of Māgandiyā to incite the king against Sāmāvati: she pretended that Sāmāvati had refused to kill and cook birds for the king's meal, but had done this for the Buddha's meal – in reality the birds prepared for the Buddha were already killed when they were given to her to cook.²⁴

The passage of the shooting with the arrow is followed by a last episode with the final success of Māgandiyā's conspiracy: Sāmāvati perishes in the flames of her palace together with her 500 ladies-in-waiting.²⁵

The elaborated story as told in the Pali commentaries consists of a composition of older motifs, which had been in circulation since ancient times. In the Pali Canon Māgandiyā is mentioned in one dialogue of the *Suttanipāta*²⁶, an old text, a Sanskrit parallel of which was discovered in Central Asia.²⁷ In this dialogue, the Buddha is explaining to Māgandiyā's father why the monks do not take wives. Sāmāvati and Khujjuttarā are mentioned together in the *Āṅguttaranikāya*²⁸ with the allusion to the ability of Sāmāvati to radiate the feeling of infinite goodness and to the intelligence of her servant Khujjuttarā demonstrated in our story by her conversion of her mistress to Buddhism. The story of the burning of Sāmāvati and her 500 ladies-in-waiting is reported in the *Udāna*.²⁹ King Udena himself, mentioned several times in the canonical³⁰ and post-canonical Pali literature, appears as one of the heroes of the

²⁴ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* I,2, ed. p. 213-214; transl. p. 284. The story is also recounted in other places in Pali commentary literature: *Manorathapūraṇī* I, XIV, 3-4 (ed. p. 441); *Saddhammapakkāsini* 212,5 (ed. p. 670).

²⁵ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* I,2, ed. p. 220-22; transl. p. 288-89. The story is also recounted in Dhammapāla's commentary on *Udāna* VII, 10 (ed. p. 383), and in Buddhaghosa's commentary on *Āṅguttaranikāya* I, XIV, 3-4 (ed. p. 444-45).

²⁶ *Māgandiyāsutta*, *Suttanipāta* IV, 9 ed. p. 157-159; transl. p. 159.

²⁷ Cf. R. HOERNLE, The Sutta Nipata in a Sanskrit Version from Eastern Turkestan, in: *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1916, p. 709-32 (with edition of the ms. and comparison with the Pali version).

²⁸ *Āṅguttaranikāya* I, XIX (ed. p. 23; transl. p. 24): *etad aggaṃ bhikkhave mama sāvikanam upāsikanam paṭhamam saranam gacchantīnam ... bahussutānam yadidaṃ Khujjuttarā / mettāvihārīnam yadidaṃ Sāmavati* / — Whereas Queen Sāmāvati's *mettā* can clearly be applied to our story, as it is said everywhere that she radiated her goodness onto the king *rājānam mettāya phari*, Khujjuttarā's cleverness is not as easy to explain. However, in the commentary to *Itivuttaka* (ed. Vol. 1, p. 32) it is said that Khujjuttarā had learnt all the sūtras of *Itivuttaka* off by heart, in order to repeat them to her mistress. Khujjuttarā is mentioned in two other places in *Āṅguttaranikāya*: *Dukkanipāta* 12,4 (ed. p. 88) and *Catukkanipāta* 176,4 (ed. Vol. 2, p. 164).

²⁹ *Udāna* VII, 10 (ed. p. 79; übers. p. 91): *tena kho pana samayena rañño Udenassa uyyānagatassa antepuram daḍḍham hoti/ pañca itthisatāni kālaṅkatāni hanti Sāmāvati-pamukhāni/*

³⁰ Apart from the already mentioned part from the prose to *Udāna* VII, 10 (fn. 29), which incidentally is not appropriate to the verse, Udena is mentioned in two places in the Pali Canon. In *Culla-*

Bṛhatkathā,³¹ in the often recounted³² and portrayed³³ tale of his adventurous escape with Vāsavadattā, also a familiar topic in the later Buddhist literature,³⁴ where it is connected with old motifs from stories about the doctor Jīvaka.³⁵

vagga XI, 1.13-14 (ed. p. 290-92; transl. p. 382-84) he asks Ānanda angrily, why the monks constantly need new clothes. Content with the detailed answer, he gives Ānanda 500 pieces of clothing. In *Samyuttanikāya* XXXV, III, 3, 127 (ed. Vol. 4, p. 110-12; transl. p. 68-70) the story of Udena's conversion by Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja is told.

³¹ The lost prose novel in Paisācī has been handed down in three summaries in Sanskrit *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgraha*, *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, in the Jaina-Māhāraṣṭrī prose novel *Vasudevahiṇḍī* and in the Tamil version *Peruṅkatai*, cf. F. LACÔTE, *Essai sur Guṇādyā* ..., Paris 1908; J.S. SPEYER, *Studies about Kathāsaritsāgara*, Amsterdam 1908; L. ALSDORF, *Eine neue Version der verlorenen Bṛhatkathā* ..., in: *Atti del XIX Congresso Internazionale degli Orientalisti*, Rome 1935, p. 344-49; *The Vasudevahiṇḍī* ..., in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, 8, London 1934-37, p. 319-33; D. NELSON, *The Bṛhatkathā Studies: The Problem of Ur-Text*, in: *Journal of Asian Studies*, 37, Ann Arbor 1978, p. 663-76; R. VIJAYALAKSMY, *The Relationship of Peruṅkatai to Bṛhatkathā* in: *Indo-Iranian Journal*, 24, Dordrecht/Boston 1982, p. 27-36. — Udayana and his wife Vāsavadattā, the daughter of the hostile King Pradyota, are the parents of the novel's hero, Naravāhanadatta.

³² Of the many retellings of Udayana's romantic love and escape, only the few most important are to be named here: two of the so-called "Bhāsa" dramas *Pratijñayaugandharāyaṇa* and *Svapnavāsavadatta*, and an incomplete, anonymous drama *Vīṇāvāsavadatta*; from Jain literature: *Āvaśyakacūṛṇi* (ed. Ratlam 1919, Vol. 2, p. 160-62) and *-ṭikā* (E. LEUMANN, *Die Āvaśyaka-Erzählungen*, Leipzig 1897, p. 14-19); *Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacarita* X, 11, 184-265; *Kumārāpālpratiḥodha* (ed. Baroda 1921, p. 77-93).

³³ Apart from the portrayal of the story in the Udayagiri caves in Orissa (identified by V.S. AGRAWALA, *Vāsavadattā and Śākuntalā Scenes in the Rāṅgumpha Cave* ..., in: *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art*, 14, Calcutta 1946), the story is also supported by several small objects, especially in the terracottas from the Kauśāmbī area, which date back to the time of the birth of Christ. The terracottas depict an elephant, ridden by several people, one of whom is holding the vīṇā, cf. S.C. KALA, *Terracotta Figurines from Kauśāmbī*, Allahabad 1950, Pl. 30, 31, 52, 53; K.A. RAI, *Vāsavadattā-Udayana-Terracotta Plaque from Kauśāmbī*, in: *Journal of the Uttar Pradesh Historical Society*, 18, Lucknow 1945, p. 82-90; *The Arts of India and Nepal*, Heeramanek Collection, Cat. Boston, 1966, No. 9; A.G. POSTER, *From Indian Earth*, New York 1986, No. 45.

³⁴ The most detailed version of the story in Pālī literature is to be found in *Udenavattthu* of *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* (ed. p. 191-99; transl. p. 270-74); this version is also contained in Buddhaghosa's commentary on *Majjhimanikāya* 85 (ed. Vol. 3, p. 325). The most interesting story of northern Buddhism is preserved only in the Tibetan version (analys. p. 154-57; übers. in: A. SCHIEFNER, *Mahākatjājana und König Tschanda-Pradjota* = *Mémoires de l'Académie Imp. des Sc. de St. Pétersburg*, St. Petersburg 1875).

³⁵ Jīvaka too flees from King Pradyota on the cow-elephant Bhadravātī – this story (most vividly translated by SCHIEFNER, *op.cit.*, p. 7) is very old, as it already appeared in *Mahāvagga* VII, 1.23-29 (ed. p. Vol. 1, p. 276-79; transl. p. 186-190). — F. LACÔTE (La source de la Vāsavadattā de Bhāsa, in: *Journal Asiatique*, 8, Paris 1919, p. 492-525) believes the sources of the Udayana story in the *Bṛhatkathā* to be folk tales, retold as Buddhist narrative elements. Queen Vāsavadattā's feigned death in the flames is, according to him, taken from the Śyāmāvātī story.

Thus the stories were well known and projected onto the life of the famous adventurer Udena/Udayana³⁶, whose unrestrained character may have provoked the motif of the impulsive attack on his wife. According to a story preserved in the Tibetan *bKa'-gyur* Udayana had even shot an arrow at the Buddha³⁷, and in the story of the present of the *Mātaṅgajātaka*, Udena killed the reverend Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja with ants.³⁸ Thus it seems not at all surprising that one of the Udayana tales in Pali literature tells of the rash shooting with a poisoned arrow.

The fact that the story of Udayana and Śyāmāvātī was well known not only in the “southern”, but also in the “northern” schools of Buddhism is proved by its parallel in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya, which is preserved in a Tibetan translation³⁹ and in a mostly verbal adaptation in the collection of tales *Divyāvadāna*. Apart from minor details, the story is identical with the Pali version: the wicked wife of Udayana, here called Anupamā, daughter of Mākandika, conspires against Śyāmāvātī with the result that the king hurries into her apartment in order to kill her with his arrows. However, the queen instructs her companions to radiate the feeling of infinite goodness with the consequence that the arrows of the king cannot hurt them. The first arrow falls to the ground halfway to its target, the second reverses its course in midair and falls at the king's feet; the king is about to shoot a third arrow,

³⁶ Udayanas person entered the narrative at a relatively late stage, undoubtedly due to the growing popularity of *Bṛhatkathā*. This is supported by the fact that several people who play a role in Udayana's story are initially mentioned in the canonic literature without any connection to him. Apart from the recently mentioned (fn. 35) Pradyota and his female elephant Bhadravātī, one can also mention Prince Bodhi, already known in the Canon (*Cullavagga*, V,21, ed. p. 127-29; transl. p. 125-30; *Majjhimanikāya* 85, ed. Vol. 2, p. 91-97; transl. p. 279-84), who is first taken to be Udena's son in the commentary (*Papañcasūdanī*, Vol. 3, p. 321-27). The story under discussion here seems to have gone through the same process, as all of the female figures of the story, Sāmāvātī, Khujjuttarā and Māgandiyā (fn. 26-28) appeared initially in the old texts without any mention of Udena.

³⁷ “Udayana, king of Vadsala, had assembled his army with the intention of conquering the city of Kanakavati, when, seeing the Blessed One approaching, he exclaimed in anger, ‘All such messengers of bad luck must be put to death!’ and with that he took a sharp arrow and shot it at the Blessed One. As it flew through the air these words were heard ... when the king heard these words, he became submissive to the Blessed One, and with clasped hands he sat down ...” (Mdo f.337-339: W.W. ROCKHILL, *The Life of the Buddha and the Early History of his Order derived from Tibetan Works in the Bkah-Hgyur and Bsttan-Hgyur*, London 1884, p. 74.).

³⁸ *Paccuppannavatthu* of *Mātaṅgajātaka* (No. 497, ed. Vol. 4, p. 375; transl. p. 235) portrays Udena as particularly cruel and rash. The king is supposed to have been drunk for seven days. — Udena had already been associated with Piṇḍola Bhāradvāja in the canonical Pali literature (fn. 30), just as in *Karmaśataka* (transl. p. 22-24), where it is said that Udayana wanted to decapitate the Arhat, who was forced to produce magical apparations in order to motivate the king to convert.

³⁹ *MSV*, analys. of the Tibetan translation, p. 156-57.

but, reproached by the queen, he checks his aggression.⁴⁰

In the Mūlasarvāstivāda version the motif of the snake hidden in the sound-box of the vīṇā is missing; instead, the reason for the king's anger is the fact that Śyāmāvati refused to kill and cook birds for his meal, whereas she did prepare them for the Buddha and his community.⁴¹

The second part of the story, in which Śyāmāvati and her 500 ladies-in-waiting are burned in her palace in a fire started by Anupamā, is nearly identical with the Pali version. This part is also reported in the Vinaya of the Sarvāstivāda school, preserved in its Chinese translation⁴² and in some Sanskrit fragments from Central Asia.⁴³

In the *Udayanavatsarājaparipṛcchā*, a Mahāyāna Sanskrit text preserved in Chinese translations,⁴⁴ the king shoots three arrows, which reverse their course and remain hovering over his head. Even in this version the motif of the snake in the vīṇā is missing.

In our painting something appears to be lying on the wicker stool, but this object is certainly not a vīṇā in the form in which it is represented in the painting on the left

⁴⁰ *Divyāvadāna* XXXVI (ed. p. 530) *rājā paryavasthito dhanuḥ pūrayitvā samprasthitaḥ / mitrāmitramadhyamo lokaḥ / aparayā Śyāmāvatyā niveditāni devo 'tyarthaṃ paryavasthito dhanuḥ pūrayitvā āgacchati kṣamayeti / tayā svopaniṣad (cj. svaparīṣad) uktā / bhaginyaḥ sarvā yūyaṃ maitrīm samāpadyadhvam iti / tāḥ sarvā maitrīsamāpannāḥ / rājñā ākarṇād dhanuḥ pūrayitvā śaraḥ kṣiptaḥ / so 'rdhamārge patitaḥ / dvitīyaḥ kṣiptaḥ / sa nivartya rājñāḥ samīpe patitaḥ / tṛtīyaṃ kṣeptum ārabdhaḥ / Śyāmāvati kathayati / deva mā kṣepsyasi mā sarveṇa sarvaṃ bhaviṣyatīti /*

⁴¹ *Divyāvadāna* XXXVI, p. 529-30. — The supposition of KRAMRISCH (*Indian Sculpture*, Oxford 1933, p. 168) that the Amaravati reliefs portrayed the Divyāvadāna version is impossible, since the episode with the vīṇā does not occur there.

⁴² *Vinayavibhaṅga* on *Pātayantikadharmā* 28 (Taisho, 1, Bd. 23, p. 124c-126c), analys. in V. ROSEN, *Der Vinayavibhaṅga zum Bhikṣuprātimokṣa der Sarvāstivādīns*, Berlin 1959, p. 208. — I am most grateful to Prof. Meisig for the information that there are no allusions in the text of Chinese Tripiṭaka (Taisho, Vol. 23, p. 120-130 = *Pātayantika* 78-90) to the shooting of arrows.

⁴³ Two Sanskrit manuscripts from Turfan, now in possession of the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin, are in correspondence with the Chinese translation of the Śyāmāvati story. The first MS (No. 1097) is very short, as only the corner of a sheet is preserved. This manuscript was identified by E. LÜDERS. The second MS (No. 1098) is much more extensive, containing a story which E. WALDSCHMIDT has published, translated and compared with the other versions (Ein Textbeitrag zur Udayana-Legende, in: *Festschrift Frauwallner*, Göttingen 1968, p. 101-25; revised version of the essay: The Burning to Death of King Udayana's 500 Wives, in: *German Scholars on India*, 1, Varanasi 1973, p. 366-86). The differences of the version recounted in the text to *Mākandikāvadāna* are not important, e.g. the idea of burning Śyāmāvati comes from *Mākandhika*, not from his daughter Anopamā.

⁴⁴ *Udayanavatsarājaparipṛcchā*, preserved as No. 29 in *Mahāratnakūṭasūtra*, an anthology of the 41 sūtras, compiled by Bodhiruci in 713 A.D. (B. NANJIO, *A Catalogue of the Chinese Translation of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka*, Oxford 1883, No. 23, p. 16, transl. D.Y. PAUL, *Women in Buddhism. Images of the Feminine in the Mahāyāna Tradition*, Berkeley 1985, p. 27-50). *Mahāratnakūṭa* was often translated into Chinese (NANJIO, No. 38, p. 23; No. 788, p. 183).

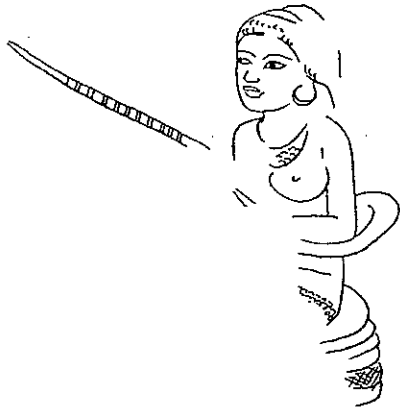


Fig. 11

wall of Cave X (fig. 11).⁴⁵ The representation of the unoccupied seat of the queen in our painting may have been the beginning of a pictorial tradition, as even in the two Amaravati reliefs a wicker stool is represented, in spite of the fact that the text explicitly states that the *vīṇā* with the snake was lying on the bed.⁴⁶

The motif of the snake hidden in the instrument may have been a secondary one, as it is completely absent in the Sanskrit tradi-

tion. Evidently the compilers of the different versions were searching for a satisfying motive for the king's assault on his wife, and the motive of the slander of the ladies-in-waiting regarding the killing of birds for the king's meal may have been felt to be insufficient.

It is uncertain whether the Ajanta painting corresponds to the version handed down in the northern tradition, as we can assume that numerous legends based on the popular topic had been in circulation since ancient times.⁴⁷

The popularity of our story is confirmed by its position in Cave X between the painting of the highlights of the life of the Buddha and the most popular Jātakas. Besides the life of the Buddha itself, this story must have been regarded as the most prominent contemporary event in the Buddha's lifetime.

⁴⁵ From the copy by GRIFFITHS' pupils 101: I. S. of the V & A Museum, No. 7-1887; India Office, Vol. 71, No. 6006-09; illustrated in: M. SINGH, *The Cave Paintings of Ajanta*, London 1965, Pl. 48.

⁴⁶ *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, I,2 (ed. p. 215-16; transl. p. 285): *sappo dvīhatīhaṃ nirāhāro tena chiddena nikkhamitvā passasanto phaṇaṃ katvā sayanapīṭhe nipajji/*

⁴⁷ The art of Amaravati presents proof that other motifs existed in the Buddhist Udayana story too. LIROSSIER's interpretation of the Amaravati reliefs (fn. 16), taken on by SIVARAMAMURTI (1942, *op.cit.* [fn. 13], p. 201ff) included another relief fragment, that most probably adjoined the medallion of fig. 9 (Madras Museum IIIA, 26, Illustrated in: BURGESS, 1887, *op.cit.* [fn. 14], Pl. 9,1; SIVARAMAMURTI, 1942, (*op.cit.*) Pl. 35,1). Whereas the upper part of the medallion shows the upper parts of the bodies of some women and of one man, whose right arm is raised, the lower part of the same (??) medallion shows some female bodies lying down, corresponding exactly to fig. 10. The representation follows quite exactly the iconographic pattern of Udayana, with the important difference that here the king is holding a round object in his hand instead of a bow, and obviously throws this at the woman. (SIVARAMAMURTI's assumption, *ibid.*, p. 204, that this is the arrow that flew back, is not acceptable). In all probability, this is a portrayal of an Udayana story, whose written form has not been preserved, which is also proven by the scenes with the fat Cullamāgandīya, shown further down.



Fig. 12

While the fragments of the shooting scene are so characteristic that they confirm the identification beyond any doubt, the fragments of figures in the other scenes only allow speculative identification (fig. 12), especially as we must assume that the scenes are not arranged according to their temporal sequence, but, like in the other paintings in Cave X, according to spatial units.⁴⁸

As the remains of trees indicate, even the other actions, as far as is discernible, take place in the same royal garden or courtyard as the shooting scene. In the next scene to the right the king may be seen together with some women. The position of his arms may indicate that he is asking a question. The following scene to the right shows the king again, together with his women. This time the king has laid his arms on the shoulders of two of them. As this gesture is an indication of despair, we may assume that the king is mourning over the burning of his wife Śyāmāvati and her 500 ladies-in-waiting. The burning palace and the events in connection with deeds of the king's cruel co-wife may have been painted on the right-hand side of the picture-sequence; these scenes, however, are irretrievably lost.

⁴⁸ As the Jātaka representations on the right-hand wall of the cave prove, the paintings, including the old ones, follow the principle of spatial and not of temporal sequence in their narration of the stories (cf. D. SCHLINGLOFF, *Erzählung und Bild. Die Darstellungsformen von Handlungsabläufen in der Europäischen und Indischen Kunst*, in: *Beiträge zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Archäologie*, 3, Munich 1981, p. 87-213; transl. *Studies (op.cit., fn. 6)*, p. 227-80), which, when applied to the painting under consideration, means that the first scene can be positioned beside a scene which takes place at a completely different time, provided both scenes take place in the same place.

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