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# About Two Rocks in the Buddha's Life Story

by MONIKA ZIN

## *The Rock in Rājagṛha*

The story about Devadatta hurling a rock at the Buddha in order to kill him is far less well known than another episode in which he tried to murder the Buddha by releasing the elephant Nālāgiri<sup>(1)</sup>. In comparison to the story about the raging elephant that was calmed down by the Buddha's all-including *maitrī* or by his magic, the story about the rock – in which the Buddha escaped death not through his power but owing to the help of protecting spirits or nature – is far less impressive<sup>(2)</sup> and much more difficult to represent in art. However, the story about the rock is told or at least mentioned often in canonical and post-canonical literature<sup>(3)</sup>. The episode is part of the *vinaya* of many schools as it belongs to a cycle of stories about an attempted schism of the order (*saṅghabheda*)<sup>(4)</sup>, but it is also told elsewhere<sup>(5)</sup>. The versions of the story differ in certain details but they

<sup>(1)</sup> For textual tradition, depictions in art and earlier research cf. Schlingloff 2000: no. 77: Dhanapāla and Zin 2006: 70-97.

<sup>(2)</sup> Cf. for example *Buddhacarita* XXI 39 (Tib.; transl. p. 103) where the episode is told in only one verse ('Then he set a rock rolling with force on Mount Ḡḍhrakūṭa; but, though aimed at the Sage, it did not fall on Him but divided into two pieces') it is followed by the story about the taming of the elephant in 23 verses.

<sup>(3)</sup> For the versions of the story cf. Malalasekera 1937-38, Vol. 1: 1108; Lamotte 1944-80, Vol. 2: 873-74; Mukherjee 1966: 67-70; *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. 4: 419; Bareau 1991; 1992: 73.

<sup>(4)</sup> After Bareau 1991: 89; *Vinayapitaka* of the Theravādin: *Cullavagga*, Vol. 2, pp. 180-206; of the Mahāsāṃghika = T 1425 (*Mo ho seng k'i liu, Mahāsāṃghikavinaya*), Vol. 22, p. 489c; of the Mahīśāsaka = T 1421 (*Mi cha sō pou ho hi wou fen liu, Mahīśāsakavinaya*), Vol. 22, pp. 164a-166b; of the Dharmaguptaka = T 1428 (*Sseu fen liu, Dharmaguptavinaya*), Vol. 22, pp. 909b-913c; of the Sarvāstivādin = T 1435 (*Che song liu, Sarvāstivādavinaya*), Vol. 22, pp. 257a-267a; of the Mūlasarvāstivādin, Sanskrit ed. Gnoli, Vol. 2, Vol. 24, pp. 166-74 = T 1450 (*Ken pen chouo yi ts'ie yeou pou p'i nai ye p'o seng che; Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya, Saṅghabbedakavastu*).

<sup>(5)</sup> After Lamotte 1944-80, Vol. 2: 874: *Milindapañha*; T 125 (*Tseng yi a ban king; Ekottarāgama*), chap. 47, p. 803b; T 197 (*Hing k'i hing king, Sūtra spoken by the Buddha on the former practice*), chap. 2, Vol. 4, p. 170c; T 1464 (*Pi nai ye, Vinayanidānasūtra*), chap. 5, Vol. 24, p. 870a; T 1509 (*Ta tche tou louen = Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*) chap. 14, Vol. 25, pp. 164c-165a; cf. below fns. 17 and 19.

The story belongs to the narratives about the bad *karma* of the Buddha, usually denoted as *pubba-kammapiḷoti*; cf. *Upāyakaṅkāsālyasūtra* III 10; cf. Tatz 1994: 86, 110; for the philosophical reflections about the topics cf. Walters 1990; Harrison 1995.

also have a lot in common: all of them take place near Rājagṛha on the mountain of Gṛdhrakūṭa (Vulture Peak).

The older Pali version, as told in the *Cullavagga* <sup>(6)</sup> and also referred to in the *Milindapañha* <sup>(7)</sup>, initially tells about Devadatta's trying to kill the Buddha with the help of hired assassins armed with bows and swords <sup>(8)</sup>; the Buddha, however, converted all of the men. Seeing how futile his plans were, Devadatta climbed up the Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain and hurled down a mighty rock <sup>(9)</sup>. Two mountain peaks approaching one another stopped the rock <sup>(10)</sup> and only a small splinter hurt the Buddha's foot and caused it to bleed <sup>(11)</sup>. The later Pali commentaries only repeat the same story <sup>(12)</sup> or sometimes provide additional details. The *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* tells about the physician Jīvaka who dressed the wound <sup>(13)</sup>.

None of the versions of 'northern' Buddhism (i.e. in Sanskrit or translation into Tibetan or Chinese) mentions mountain peaks approaching one another; here it is the Yakṣa of the mountain who hastens to help the Buddha. The 'northern' versions are by no means similar and the differences among them originate probably from the knowledge about local legends from Rājagṛha. A relevant rock – approximately 4, 5 meters in diameter – is found near Rājagṛha, Chinese pilgrims saw it <sup>(14)</sup> and it is even today presented as an attraction to tourists. Yet, according to the story in the *vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin School – preserved in the Sanskrit original <sup>(15)</sup> as well as in Tibetan <sup>(16)</sup> and Chinese translation <sup>(17)</sup> – the rock does no longer

<sup>(6)</sup> *Cullavagga* VII 3.9, Vol. 2, p. 193; transl. pp. 245-46.

<sup>(7)</sup> *Milindapañha* I 8, Vol. 2, p. 134; transl. p. 187; III 8, p. 179; transl. pp. 254-55.

<sup>(8)</sup> *Cullavagga* VII 3.7, Vol. 2, p. 192; transl. p. 243: *atha kho so eko puriso asicammaṃ gabetvā dhanukalāpaṃ sannayhitvā yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṃkami. . .*

<sup>(9)</sup> *Cullavagga* VII 3.9, Vol. 2, p. 193; transl. p. 245: *atha kho Devadatto Gijjhakūṭaṃ pabbataṃ abhirūhitvā mahantaṃ sīlaṃ pavijjhi ināya samaṇaṃ Gotamaṃ jīvitaṃ voropessāmīti/*

<sup>(10)</sup> *Ibid.*: *dve pabbatakūṭā samāgantvā taṃ sīlaṃ saṃpaṭicchimsu. . .*

<sup>(11)</sup> *Ibid.*: *. . . tatopapatikā uppativā Bhagavato pāde rubiraṃ uppādesi/*

*Samyuttanikāya* I 4.8 *Sakalikaṃ* (ed. 27; transl. p. 38) tells about the Buddha in Rājagṛha injured in his foot by a splinter of a rock but does not mention Devadatta or any other details.

<sup>(12)</sup> *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* I 12, Vol. 1, p. 140; transl. p. 236; *Paramatthadīpanī, Udānaṭṭhakathā* IV 8, p. 264; transl. p. 634; *Sattigumbajāṭaka*, no. 503, Vol. 4, p. 430; transl. pp. 267-68.

<sup>(13)</sup> *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* VII 1, Vol. 2, pp. 164-65; transl. p. 197: *Jivako taṃ pavattim sutvā Sattu santikaṃ gantvā vaṇapaṭikammatthāya tikhinaṃ bhesajjaṃ datvā vaṇaṃ bandhitvā Sattthāraṃ etad uvaca. . .*

<sup>(14)</sup> Fa hien (in Hiuen Tsiang transl., Vol. 1, pp. LIX-LX): '[...] when Buddha was walking to and fro from east to west in front of his cell, Devadatta, from between the northern eminences of the mountain, rolled down athwart his path a stone which wounded Buddha's toe. The stone is still there'; Hiuen Tsiang (transl. Vol. 2, p. 153: '[...] is a great stone about fourteen or fifteen feet high and thirty paces round. This is the place where Devadatta flung a stone from a distance to strike Buddha'; cf. Deeg 2005: 417-19.

<sup>(15)</sup> *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Vol. 2, pp. 166-74.

<sup>(16)</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. XLII (Ñe) 110.5.8, analys. Panglung 1981: 114; summary in Rockhill 1884: 92-93.

<sup>(17)</sup> T 1442 (*Ken pen chouo yi ts'ie yeou pou p'i nai ya, Mūlasarvāstivādinayavibhaṅga*), Vol. 22, p. 192a14-c20; summary in Mukherjee 1966: 69; Bareau 1991: 99.

exist as Vajrapāṇi is supposed to have crushed it into pieces (*cūrnayati*)<sup>(18)</sup>; the same story is found in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*<sup>(19)</sup>. Apart from that, the version as told in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* is peculiar in that it describes how Devadatta employed a mechanic from the south (*dakṣiṇāpathāt yantrakarācārya*) to build a machine (*yantra*, apparently a catapult) that would launch the rock. When not only the hired assassins but also the 500 men supposed to operate the catapult – all of them coming down the stairs created by the Buddha (*Bhagavatā sopānam nirmitam*) – were converted, Devadatta together with a procession of another 500 helpers climbed the mountain and started the machine<sup>(20)</sup>. Vajrapāṇi, however, crushed the falling rock with his *vajra*. Kumbhīra, the Yakṣa of the Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain, caught the falling pieces of stone with his body and died whilst only one splinter wounded the foot of the Buddha and caused it to bleed<sup>(21)</sup>. Jīvaka dressed the wound but the bleeding would not stop<sup>(22)</sup>. The physician therefore prescribed first a medicine produced from the extremely rare sandal-wood (*gośiṛṣacandana*), which was given to the Buddha by a merchant, and secondly the milk of a girl (*kanyākṣīra*), brought by the young Bhadrāśayā. Yet, as both these attempts failed, the monk Daśabalakāśyapa spoke with great ceremony the Word of Truth (*satyopavācana*) about the all-including love of the Buddha and it was then that the bleeding stopped.

In other versions of this story the rock remains undamaged but it is always the Yakṣa who catches it. According to the *vinaya* of the Sarvāstivādin School<sup>(23)</sup>, Devadatta, with the help of four companions, hurled a rock at the Buddha when the latter left the cave of the Yakṣa Kumbhīra (Kimbala or Kimbila) where he had meditated. The rock followed the Buddha everywhere, into the depth of the ocean and up to the highest heavens (Mukherjee 1966: 69, fn. 1), until finally Kumbhīra caught it in midflight and only a splinter injured the Buddha's foot. This event inspired the Buddha to give a sermon to the effect that nobody would ever escape the consequences of his evil deeds. When the Buddha subsequently embarked on a

<sup>(18)</sup> *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Vol. 2, p. 168: *tad abam yatnam āsthāya antarikṣe etāṃ śilāṃ vajreṇa cūrnayāmi* [...] *Vajrapāṇinā yakṣeṇa cūrṇitā . . .*

<sup>(19)</sup> *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* = T 1509 (*Ta tche tou louen*), chap. 14, Vol. 25, p. 165a; transl. Lamotte 1944-80, Vol. 2: 874.

<sup>(20)</sup> *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Vol. 2, p. 168: (Devadatta) *Gṛdhrakūṭam parvatam abhirūḍhaḥ* [...] *svayaṃ eva pañcaśataparivāro yantram āmredayitum ārabdhaḥ*

<sup>(21)</sup> *Ibid.*: *Vajrapāṇinā yakṣeṇa cūrṇitā/ ardhm Bhagavataḥ sthāne patitukāmaṃ Kumbhīrayakṣeṇa grhṇatā na sugrhitam kṛtam/ sa tena praghātitaḥ/ Bhagavatā utplutya pāṣāṇasarkarāyā pādah kṣataḥ kṛtaḥ/ Bhagavāms tasyāṃ velāyāṃ gāthāṃ bhāṣate* [...] *Kumbhīro'pi yakṣaḥ kuśalacittāḥ kālagataḥ/ kālam kṛtvā praṇītesu Trayastrīmṣesu deveṣu upapannaḥ*

<sup>(22)</sup> *Ibid.*, 171: *Bhagavataḥ pāṣāṇasarkarāyā pādah kṣataḥ rudhīram pragharaty eva nāvatiṣṭhate/ Jīvako vaidyārājo Bhagavato rujāvalokakaḥ trikālam upasamkrāmati . . .*

<sup>(23)</sup> T 1435 (*Che song liu, Sarvāstivādinaya*), chap. 23, Vol. 23, p. 260a13-b25; summary in Mukherjee 1966: 68-69; Bureau 1991: 95-96.

journey in order to give a series of sermons, Devadatta sent, first of all, his four companions after him, who were then followed by three groups of eight, sixteen and thirty-two assassins respectively <sup>(24)</sup>. The Buddha, however, managed to convert them all.

In the *vinaya* of the Mahāsāṅghika School Devadatta was accompanied by six evil monks <sup>(25)</sup>.

Other versions of the story about the assassination with a rock are less complex. The *vinaya* of the Mahīśāsakas <sup>(26)</sup> claims that Devadatta climbed the Gṛdhrakūṭa mountain together with one companion who first tried to hurl the rock at the Buddha. Then Devadatta himself hurled it down.

In the *vinaya* of the Dharmaguptaka School <sup>(27)</sup> it was also Devadatta alone who hurled the rock which was caught by an unnamed Yakṣa. This version is peculiar as the injured Buddha lay down in the cave.

The *Ekottarāgama*, probably of the Dharmaguptaka School <sup>(28)</sup>, does not mention these details; it only states how Devadatta climbed the mountain top, lifted a rock measuring 30 by 15 ells, and hurled it down on the Buddha. Luckily, the Yakṣa Kumbhīra caught it midflight so that only the splinter hurt the Buddha's foot.

The commentary on the *Udānavarga* (T 194) enriches the story by describing how the gods began to shower the Buddha flowers from the *Trayastrimśa*-heaven <sup>(29)</sup>.

The pictorial representations of the story about Devadatta's attempt to kill the Buddha with a rock are found among the reliefs of Gandhara and paintings in Central Asia. The sculptors in Gandhara who tried to present a continuous narration found it difficult to depict the event. Hence, there are only a few reliefs whose interpretation is certain.

<sup>(24)</sup> *Ibid.*: 68 – the motif is taken from the story about the hired assassins of Devadatta, in Pali other murderers waited for the hired assassins of the Buddha, and yet other killers waited for these.

<sup>(25)</sup> T 1425 (*Mo ho seng k'i liu, Mahāsāṅghikavinaya*), 489c; summary in Bareau 1991: 105.

<sup>(26)</sup> T 1421 (*Mi cha sō pou ho hi wou fen liu = Mahīśāsakavinaya*), after Mukherjee 1966: chap. 22, Vol. 22, p. 20a22-b29, summary in Mukherjee 1966: 68; Bareau 1991: 104.

<sup>(27)</sup> T 1428 (*Sseu fen liu, Dharmaguptavinaya*); summary in Mukherjee 1966: 67-68; Bareau 1991: 104.

<sup>(28)</sup> T 125 (*Tseng yi a han king, Ekottarāgama*), chap. 47, Vol. 2, p. 803b16; summary in Bareau 1992: 73; for the problems concerning the school affiliation cf. Allon 2001: 10-12, 39-40.

<sup>(29)</sup> T 194 (*Seng k'ie lo tch'a so tsi king, Sūtra on the practice of Buddha compiled by Saṅghabhūti*), according to an unpublished analysis by Valentina Stache-Rosen: 'Die großen Geister der fünf Gegenden des Reiches Yen-mo-chieh lebten in der Stadt Lo-yüeh. Sie beschützten das Volk mit ihrer Macht. Devadatta wollte den Buddha verletzen. Er stieg auf einen Berg, auf dem es viele Bäume und Teiche gab. Er nahm einen Stein und wollte ihn auf den Tathāgata schleudern. Die Geister hielten den Stein zurück und wollten, dass er nicht zur Erde fiele. Der Geist Chin-p'i-lo lebte auf dem Berg. Er wollte die böse Tat verhindern. Devadatta schleuderte den Stein und der Geist fing ihn auf, nur ein Splitter fiel auf den Fuß des Tathāgata und verletzte ihn. Devadatta lud große Schuld auf sich und mußte dafür in der Hölle büßen. Die 33 Götter streuten Blumen'.

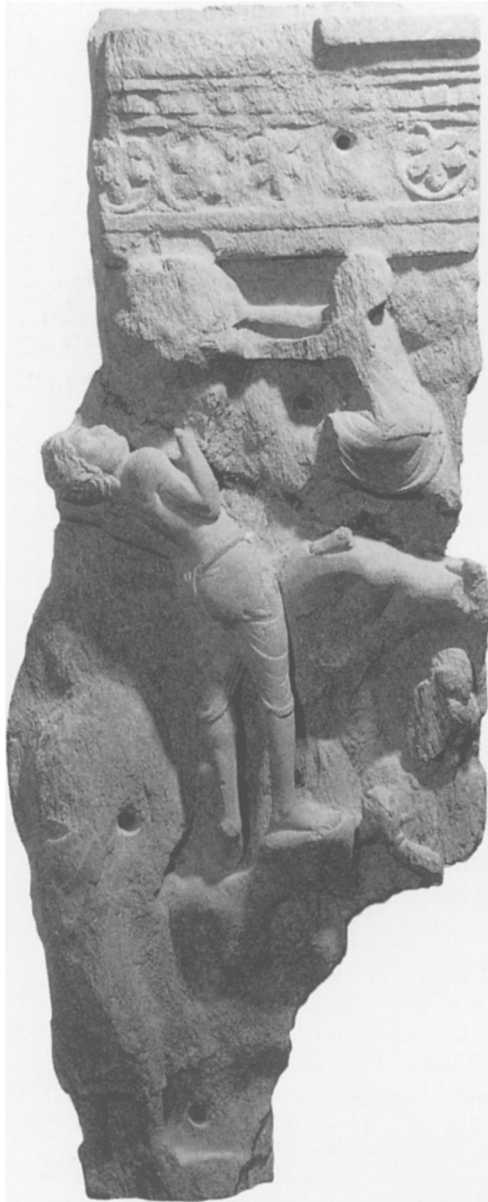


Fig. 1 - Taxila Museum, Case III B. (After Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 431).



Fig. 2 - Private Collection, Japan. (After Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 2: fig. 878).

One of them, a relief from Taxila (Fig. 1 = No. 1.1, cf. List 1 at the end of the paper) (identif. Marshall?), can easily be identified although it is only a tiny fragment. The outline of the Buddha can be seen clearly in the bottom left section. In the upper right section we see the figure of a man who is standing on a formation representing – beyond doubt – the rocks, and who is holding a big, round object in his hands. This man, wearing a piece of clothing covering not only the lower part of his body but also the upper part, is unquestionably Devadatta in a monk's attire, holding the rock to be hurled down on the Buddha. Another person standing on the rock-formation between the Buddha and the stone can – thanks to his pointed ears and his hair falling in locks – easily be identified as the Yaksha Kumbhira, shielding the Buddha from the rock.

Two other reliefs from private collections in Japan have not yet been identified. Their different concepts clearly point to the difficulties of the pictorial representation of the story. One of the reliefs (Fig. 2 = No. 1.2), which is the remaining part



Fig. 3 - Private Collection, Japan. (After Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 566).

of a greater composition, presents the Buddha sitting on his throne with Ānanda on his right (characterised by a Buddha-like *uṣṇīṣa*, cf. Zin 2003) and Vajrapāṇi standing behind him. The pictorial element which enables us to identify the relief is presented above this scene: a monk with a shaven head, wearing a typical garment, is holding a huge rock. The fact that the Buddha's injured foot is being dressed fully guarantees the appropriateness of the interpretation. Therefore, the person standing in front of the Buddha's throne must be the doctor Jīvaka, a boy (?) standing behind him is apparently holding the pot with medicine.

Jīvaka dressing the wounded foot of the Buddha is presented in the second relief in Japan (Fig. 3 = No. 1.3). For the second time the Buddha, standing next to Ānanda, can be seen in the middle of the relief. The right side of the relief is not easy to interpret: a person with his hair falling on his shoulders is standing opposite the Buddha; the body language of this figure suggests that with his right hand he is holding a heavy weight behind his back – a rock, whose structure is best visible at the bottom on the right (the left leg of the figure seems to be trapped inside it). This figure can be identified as the Yakṣa Kumbhīra. Another person on the right edge of the relief, who has a shaven head, is wearing a monk's garment and seems to be pushing the rock, is certainly Devadatta.

Among the reliefs of Gandhara we still find several examples that present a figure occupied with the foot of the Buddha who is sitting on the throne. It is possible that some or even all of these pictorial representations show the dressing of

the wound after Devadatta's attempted assassination. An example is a fragment of a relief from Butkara (Faccenna 1962 and 1964: pl. 69) which corresponds precisely with the lower right side of our Fig. 2 <sup>(30)</sup>.

The murals in the cave-monasteries in Kizil seem to reproduce the same kind of depiction with a monk hurling a rock at the Buddha. The painters in Central Asia who reduced the representation of the event to one picture presenting the most expressive scene, definitely had less difficulties with the depiction of the story. They simply presented a monk holding a rock above the Buddha's head. Such depictions (identif. Zin 1996) (Fig. 4 = No. 1.10) are frequently repeated in the murals.

One of the murals in Kizil shows a more complicated pattern. It must have been very expressive when it was complete. The painting (Fig. 5 = No. 1.6), identified hitherto as an Attack of Māra, is located on both sides of a niche which once must have accommodated a statue of the Buddha. Devadatta, holding a rock above the Buddha, can be seen on the left while the other part of the niche presents a green-skinned Yakṣa taking it on his back. The archers sitting on the left side must also be part of this composition; they represent the assassins sent by Devadatta. However, it is difficult to decide whether the white-skinned Yakṣa on the right below also belongs to this composition or rather to



Fig. 4 - Kumtula, Cave 46, barrel vault, left side. (After Zhao et al. 1985: fig. 116).



Fig. 5 - Kizil, Cave 175, right side-wall. (Drawing by the Author after Tan et al. 1981, Vol. 2: fig. 95 and Xu et al. 1983-85, Vol. 3: figs. 23-24).

<sup>(30)</sup> Further reliefs which possibly depict the same event: Lahore National Museum, Acc. no. 191; publ.: Burgess 1900: fig. 13; Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 320; Swat Museum, Saidu Sharif, Acc. no. 1339 (not published); *Sotheby's Catalogue*, 4th July 1984: no. 96. Especially the relief published in the *Sotheby's catalogue (Khmer, Thai, Indian and Himalayan Works of Art)* for the auction on 15th of June





Fig. 6 - Kizil, Cave 181. (After Grünwedel 1920: pls. 26-27, fig. 1).

the arrangement of the neighbouring niche. He can either be Kumbhīra, shown for the second time, or Vajrapāṇi.

In 1920 Grünwedel interpreted one of the paintings brought from Kizil to Berlin as Devadatta's attempt to assassinate the Buddha. The painting (Fig. 6 = No. 1.9) presents on the right edge of the composition a monk carrying a rock (Grünwedel writes that the man is trying to tear a block of stone from the rock). The drawback of this interpretation lies in the fact that this person seems to belong to the composition on the righthand side and not to the picture under consideration. Grünwedel refers to the monk lying at the Buddha's feet as Daśabalakāśyapa who is saying the Word of

1986, no. 226 apparently shows the scene, the flowers falling on the (not preserved) Buddha would relate to their counterpart in *T 194*, cf. fn. 29. The depictions of a woman standing near the throne with a pot repeated in all of these reliefs could relate to the girl Bhadrāśayā who – according the version in *MSV* – brings *kanyākṣīra* as a medicine in a new pot.

Truth and thus stopping the bleeding. The overturned bowl is supposed to symbolise the bloodshed.

If we were to accept Grünwedel's interpretation we would have to relate this scene to the tradition of the *Mūla-satvāstivādinaya*, as it is the only one telling about Daśabalakāśyapa. However, the fact that of the catapult and Devadatta's companions so characteristic of this version are absent contradicts this interpretation.

In general, an accurate determination of the school affiliation of the pictorial representations of this episode does not seem possible. We can only conclude that in the depictions discussed above

Devadatta is always the assassin and the Yakṣa Kumbhīra is presented frequently. It is easier to determine the school affiliation of Devadatta's other assault, namely the attack of the raging elephant, since the elephant is very often presented with a sword in its trunk, both in Gandhara and in Kizil (in the latter both episodes are frequently shown in juxtaposition). The *Ekottarāgama* which tells about the sword (Zin 1996: 335) is, however, a later text which was translated into Chinese at the end of the 4th century and abounds in Mahāyāna additions. Therefore it is possible that it was the description in the text which was moulded after reliefs rather than vice versa.



Fig. 7 - Peshawar Museum, No. 2031, NN 112,  
© Peshawar Museum.

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We have seen that the monk hurling the rock, the Yakṣa catching it, and the dressing of the Buddha's wounded foot constitute the pictorial elements which allow the identification of the scene as Devadatta's assault. The few depictions of the scene in Gandhara gain considerably in significance when we compare them with the representations found so frequently in Kizil, as they document the continuation of the pictorial tradition.

However, in Gandhara there is a series of over 20 reliefs (cf. List 2 at the end of the paper) which are traditionally interpreted as 'the assault of Devadatta's assassins on the Buddha' even though they show a completely different scene (Fig. 7 = No. 2.5). We have no knowledge about possible counterparts in the art of Central Asia, nor do we know of such representations from other regions of India.

The interpretation of these reliefs has been taking shape over a long period of time. First of all, Foucher (1905-55, Vol. 1: 541-42) interpreted the depiction – on the basis of the relief from Calcutta (No. 2.7) – as the first assault of Devadatta, i.e. the attack by the



Fig. 8 - Peshawar Museum (?) (earlier Malakand Agency). (After Vogel 1927: pl. 3.d).



Fig. 9 - Peshawar Museum, No. L 30, © Peshawar Museum.

assassins; here the assassins are said to be shown as separated from the Buddha by the wall. Hargreaves (1924-25) was the first to interpret 'the wall' as a stone. For that purpose he used as an example a relief showing an additional scene (Fig. 8 = No. 2.6), in which the rock is presented twice: once in an upright position and in another scene, analogically to the relief from Calcutta, with 'assassins' on the one side of the rock and the Buddha on the other. Hargreaves' interpretation met with some criticism<sup>(31)</sup> but was generally accepted. In the second volume of his

*opus magnum*, Foucher corrected his earlier interpretation and claimed that the reliefs depict simultaneously the first and the second attempts of assassinating the Buddha (i.e. with the help of the murderers and the rock respectively). As far as the consolidation of this interpretation is concerned, the paper of Taddei (1963) was of considerable importance, since the author opted for its interpretation as 'assassination with a rock', and proved that the scenes with the rock in the shape of a pillar lying diagonally were the Gandharan adaptations of Roman art in which themes showing the same composition, like the 'erection of an image of Dionysos', the 'erection of a wooden shaft' and, above all, the 'amorini playing with Hercules' club', had been very well known. As a result, the interpretation of our reliefs as 'the assault of Devadatta' was sealed: the conventional form of the rock has since been taken for granted and no further investigation of the

<sup>(31)</sup> Vogel (1927: 10-11) referred to an incoherence between the relief analysed by Hargreaves and the literary tradition and suggested it should be interpreted as the construction of the wall or palisade in Pāṭaliputra.



Fig. 10 - Private Collection, Japan. (After Kurita 1988-90, vol. 1: pl. P4-I).

meaning of the stone depicted in such way and the scene associated with it was undertaken.

Since the times of Foucher it has been noticed that in all reliefs the assassins are presented as wrestlers. Taddei (1963: 39) states that they are dressed in 'simple *subligaculum*, a sort of *laṅgoṭī*, characteristic of wrestlers and commonly worn, in the reliefs of Gandhara, by *bravi* (hired assassins)'. Although we can unquestionably agree with the first part of Taddei's assessment as wrestlers dressed in this way are frequently depicted (Fig. 9), it must be pointed out that the second part of the sentence relates only to the group of reliefs under consideration and that assassins dressed in this way do not appear anywhere else. Yet, one question remains: What actually tells us that these are the assassins? They do not have any weapons but only ropes, picks and clubs to move the rock. Furthermore, none of the reliefs shows them as hostile or aggressive towards the Buddha. This fact cannot be justified by simply stating that this depiction shows the men after their conversion, because similar scenes (e.g. the conversion of the murderer Aṅgulimāla) present the villain before his conversion. In the 'reliefs with the stone' there is no aggression whatsoever, as the athletes are either occupied with the rock – observing it with interest and admiration – or kneeling down respectfully in front of the Buddha (Fig. 10 = No. 2.18). Furthermore, the interpretation stating that 'the Buddha stops the fall of the heavy square stone or pillar destined to crush him' (Taddei 1963: 40) does not have its counterpart in reliefs: the rock is never shown falling down on the Buddha (what is more, such an interpretation does not have a counterpart in any of the texts which always mention the Yakṣa Kumbhīra). Moreover, the ropes brought by the wrestlers can hardly be related to the catapult described in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, and the erection of the rock is not related to any kind of machine. Even Taddei (1963: 42) points out in the description of one of the reliefs (our No. 2.20):

the lower edge of the pillar is not resting on the ground but seems to be sunk into it; the men who maneuver the ropes are using traction towards the top, not sideways, as would be natural if their aim were to place the pillar in a vertical position [...] [they] intend to extract it from a hole (whose rim seems to be shown in relief) and not erect it.

Thus, if we put aside the commonly accepted interpretations of the reliefs and only follow the facts presented in them we can make the following assumptions: the reliefs present the Buddha, accompanied by Vajrapāṇi and some monks, touching the rectangular block of stone with his right hand, and a group of non-aggressive athletes watching it with admiration and paying homage to the Buddha. The athletes are also sometimes presented in a neighbouring scene trying to pull the block from the hole or putting it into an upright position.

The reliefs do not present Devadatta, the Yakṣa Kumbhīra or the dressing of the wounded foot. Therefore it seems likely that their theme is not the attack on the Buddha, and the rock depicted here is a different one.

### *The Rock on the Road to Kuśinagara*

In a paragraph which does not have a corresponding part in Pali, Tibetan and Chinese (so called ‘Sanskrit-Sondertext’), the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* tells us about a big ‘earth-rock’ (*pṛthvīśilā*) on the road to Kuśinagara. In my opinion this is the literary basis for the reliefs. The story is preserved not only in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* but also in another Sanskrit version and several versions known nowadays only in translation.

The version of the story in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* was edited from manuscript fragments found in Eastern Turkestan<sup>(32)</sup>. The new edition (Wille-Peters, in press) incorporates manuscript fragments held in Berlin, Paris and London, but this edition, too, could not reconstruct the entire text of the *sūtra*. In the chapter under consideration (‘Vorgang 31’ of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*) the contents of some passages can be recognised only by means of a comparison with the adaption of the story in Kṣemendras *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*.

The incident took place on the last day of the Buddha’s life when he was in the country of the Mallas, wandering from the town of Pāpā to Kuśinagara, where he was to die. Having heard that the Buddha was to visit them, the Mallas decided to prepare their town for this honourable event. Young people were sent to clear up the road leading to the town. When they found a huge rock (60 ells long and 30 ells high) lying on the road they wanted to remove it. The text states: after fixing, with the help of a ladder, a rope at the (upper part) of the rock, some persons try to pull it out, then they try to drag it out by its ‘root’ (i.e. the part sunk into the earth); others attempt to split the rock with axes or break it with wedges; some struggle to have it pulled away by camels, others want to destroy it with power equalling that of an elephant herd, and some people try to let it disappear with the power of herbs or magic formulae<sup>(33)</sup>.

<sup>(32)</sup> *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Vorgang 31, Sanskrit-Sondertext II; transliteration of the Mss Waldschmidt 1948: 52-64; ed. + transl. *ibid.*: 64-89; transl. Weber 1999: 186-202.

<sup>(33)</sup> *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Vorgang 31.9-10, Waldschmidt 1948: 67-68 (31.9): *upetya tāṃ mahatīm (p)ṛ(thvīśilām na)larajjvā babuśo veṣṭayanti kecin niśrayaṇīm ābadhya muñjabalabajarajjvā k. . . nā(ka)rṣayanti*

Finally, the exhausted men had to give up their attempts at moving the stone. Exactly at this moment, the Buddha, leading the monks along the road, approached them. The Mallas welcomed him, paid him homage and told him about the situation.

After this passage there is a gap in the preserved Sanskrit text; on the basis of the fragments of Sanskrit manuscripts (ed. Wille-Peters, in press: 192, 195) and their resemblance to the text in the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* we can be assume that the story continues as follows (*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* [Mahā:]). The Buddha throws the rock up into the air with his toe, then he lays it down on the palm of his right hand after having caught it with his left (*Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*). Having been hurled up all the way to the Brahma heaven the rock there proclaims that all beings are impermanent; it then falls back down and comes to stand on the Buddha's palm. The Bhagavan, thereupon, creates a storm from his mouth and shatters the stone into dust particles which he then reassembles in the form of a rock. This rock he puts down at some other place <sup>(34)</sup>.

The text of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* continues in the following way: the Buddha preaches to the Mallas about the powers of the Tathāgata, the power inherited from his parents (*mātāpaitṛkabala*), the power of his merits (*puṇyabala*), the power of his wisdom (*prajñābala*), his supernatural power (*ṛddhibala*) and his meditative power of creation (*bhāvanābala*). The Mallas ask the Buddha if there exists any power exceeding his strength. The Buddha answers that this is the power of impermanence (*anityatābala*) which on that very day will seize his body despite his numerous powers. Thus the Mallas learn about the approaching death of the Buddha and

*parika. . . . . phalaśatair mūlata uddbartum . . . . . ntum* (31.10:) *kecid vajraprabhāraīs cūrṇayitum kecid charīrabale(na) sann(adb)auṣṭr. . . . . cālayitum kecid ṛsabha . . . . . ś(c)a pātayitum kecid dbastiyūtha . . . . . yitum kecid auśadbabalair nāśayitum kecid mantrabalair antarbhāpayitum kecid icchanti/*  
<sup>(34)</sup> *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (after Mss Pell. Skt. bleu 342, SHT VII 160, SHT 399 ed. Wille-Peters, in press: 192 and 195): *n/v. ddb. . . ya (vām)ena pāninā (dh)isṭhāya d(a)kṣ(īn)*. . . . . (completed by Dieter Schlingloff, in personal correspondence: *(caranānguṣṭhe)n(o)d[gha](t)ya*); cf. (the Buddha's interpretation): . . . *(vā) m(e)na pāninādhiṣṭhāya dakṣiṇe (pānital(e) . . . ; Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā XV. 12: ity uktvā caranānguṣṭhaghātītām vāmapāninā/ vinayasya dakṣiṇe pānau Bhāgavān vipulām śilām// MPS 1650v: b/// . kam kṣipati [s]. ūrdhva(m) kṣ[i]///; completed: (brahma)[lo]kam kṣipati[s](ū) ūrdhva(m) kṣ[i](pyamānā) (cf. also 399 vb: b/// [śe] k[ṣ]ipti[ā] n. . . . ///; completed: (ākā)[śe] k[ṣ]ipta[ā]?)*; BAK XV.13-14: *viṣṭya brahmalokāntam aparantaparākrāmā/ cacārāścaryacaryāyām dūtām iva jagattraye// kṣiptāyām sabasā tasyām tenātyadbhuta-kāriṇā*; MPS: . . . *(śa)bd(a)m (a)kārṣīt sarvasaṃskārā ani(t)yā a. . . ; cf. (the Buddha's interpretation): ya (Vā)siṣṭhā mahatī pṛthvīśilā śabdām ak(ārṣīt). . . ; BAK XV.14-15: udabhūd gaganodbhūta iva vyāptajānaḥ svaṇaḥ// anityaḥ sarvasaṃskāra ity abhrānta vidhāyinaḥ/ sarvadbarmā nirātmanāḥ śānta nirvāṇam eva tat//; MPS: c/// . . . ai[va] pānitala [a] . ā///; completed: (Buddhasya)ai[va] pānitala [a](sth)āt?*; BAK XV.16 *ity sphuṭodite śabde śilā Bhagavataḥ kare/ girindrasīrṣakākārā sthūtā punar adṛśyata//; MPS: . . . le asthāt tam Bhagavām mukhaṃ v. y. . . . . ; BAK XV.17: kṣaṇena sā Bhagavatā kṣiptā vadanamārutaib/; MPS cf. in the Buddha's interpretation: g/ś. m n/di g. paramānucūrṇavarṣam. . ; BAK XV.17: kṛtā visāriṇī dīkṣu paramānuparamparā// MPS cf. in the Buddha's interpretation: śilācūrṇam anūnam avikal(am ekadbye) 'bbisaṃkṣīpya*; BAK XV.18: *punar ekīkṛtām eva Bhagavān paramānubhib/; BAK XV.18: śilām anyatra nidadhe viśmayam ca jagattraye// MPS: . . . tum ārabdhāḥ atha tasya Mallagaṇasya . . . ; BAK XV.19: āścaryaniścaladrśas tato Mallā balorjītam/ vīryam Bhagavato vīkṣya pranatās tam babbhāsire//*

despair. In order to calm them down the Buddha tells them about the transience of the world, using the example of the stone. He shows the Mallas traces on the stone's surface and explains that those are finger-marks (*āṅgulicibhnā*) of the giant people of the past aeon who used this very stone as a bar for weightlifting (*vyāyāmasilā*)<sup>(35)</sup>.

Certainly, adding the sermon about the Buddha's powers to the story about the last day of his life had a considerable didactic function: the rock, which was too heavy for the Mallas to cope with, was lifted by the old, weak and sick Buddha, himself on the verge of death. Furthermore, the proclamation of the power of the impermanence and the fact that the episode ends with the sermon about this power in correspondence with the approaching *parinirvāṇa* constitute a well-constructed entity appropriate to the whole *sūtra*.

The story about the rock on the road to Kuśinagara was well known in the tradition of 'northern' Buddhist schools, as can be seen from the existence of numerous translations and adaptations. The narrative is preserved not only in the already mentioned Sanskrit poetic adaptation by Kṣemendra in his *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*<sup>(36)</sup> but also in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* preserved in Tibetan<sup>(37)</sup> and Chinese<sup>(38)</sup>, in the *Ekottarāgama*, probably of the Dharmaguptaka School<sup>(39)</sup>, the *Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra*<sup>(40)</sup> and the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*<sup>(41)</sup> preserved in Chinese translation; furthermore there is the Chinese work *Li shih i shan ching*<sup>(42)</sup>. These versions differ from each other in many respects.

The *Sīlānikṣepāvādāna* in the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, which, as shown above, is probably based directly on the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*<sup>(43)</sup>, describes the futile efforts of the strong Mallas (*mallānā balāśalinā*) to remove the rock by using hoes (*kuddala*) and ropes (*rajjū*)<sup>(44)</sup>. In the *Li shih i shan ching* the Buddha kicks the

<sup>(35)</sup> *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, Vorgang 31.74, ed. Waldschmidt 1948: 86: *iyam Vāsiṣṭhā mahatī pṛthvīśilā pūrvakalpikānām manuṣyānām vyāyāmasilā babbūva tathā hy aysā adyāpi drśyante 'ṅgulicibhnāni/ evam anityā Vsiṣṭhāḥ . . .*

<sup>(36)</sup> *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* XV, pp. 126-27.

<sup>(37)</sup> *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, Vol. XLI (Ge), p. 142.1.3, analys. Panglung 1981: 25.

<sup>(38)</sup> T 1448 (*Ken pen chouo yi ts'ie yoeu pou p'i nai ye yao che; Mūlasarvāstivādinaya-bhaiṣajyavastu*) Vol. 24, pp. 30c-31b; transl. Waldschmidt 1948: 121-24; summary in Waldschmidt 1944-48: 174-86.

<sup>(39)</sup> T 125 (*Tseng yi a han king, Ekottarāgama*), Vol. 2, pp. 749a-751b; transl. Bareau 1987: 14-19; summary in Waldschmidt 1944-48; cf. fn. 28.

<sup>(40)</sup> T 1546 (*A p'i t'an p'i p'o cha louen, Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra*), Vol. 28, p. 119.

<sup>(41)</sup> T 1545 (*A p'i ta mo ta p'i p'o cha louen, Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra*), Vol. 27, pp. 156a-156b.

<sup>(42)</sup> T 135, *Li che yi chan king* (*Sūtra* spoken by the Buddha on the Mallas who where trying to move a mountain), Vol. 2, pp. 857c-859b; summary in Waldschmidt 1944-48: 172-86.

<sup>(43)</sup> This assumption seems to be justified on the grounds of several details in the description of the events, cf. *supra*, fn. 34.

<sup>(44)</sup> *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* XV 5-6: *madhye samāyayau bhūminimagnā mahatī śilā/ avasannā visannā ca vadhūr Vindhyagirer iva// tām utpāyayatām teṣām kuddālabhujarajjubhiḥ/ māso jagāma na tv aśyāḥ sabasrāṁṣe 'py abbūt kṣatīḥ//*

rock to a considerable height with his toe and then crumbles it with his hand, whereas in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* he throws the rock up with his hand. Only in the version in the *Ekottarāgama* the crumbling of the rock is not mentioned at all; here the Buddha throws it up with his hand, then catches it and puts it in an upright position on the ground. This version (Bareau 1987: 14-16) describes, at first, the attempts of the Mallas at dealing with the stone: after seven days they have failed to move it even by an inch. Then the Buddha comes and asks them if they want him to put it upright. When the Mallas agree the Buddha tosses the stone up into the skies with his left hand and then turns it when it is high above the earth. When the stone starts falling down the Buddha reaches out and catches it with his left hand, takes it with his right hand, and finally puts to the ground it in an upright position <sup>(45)</sup>.

The survey of the literary versions proves, without any doubt, that the Gandhara reliefs generally interpreted as Devadatta's assault depict in fact the Buddha's meeting with the Mallas on the road to Kuśinagara. In order to present the literary tradition in reliefs the best way is to resort to the examples showing two depictions of the stone, namely, firstly, in the process of being erected and, secondly, in its final upright position. One such relief (like all the others hitherto identified as 'Devadatta's assassination') can be found in Zurich (Fig. 11 = No. 2.16). In this example the identification of the scene as the meeting of the Buddha with the Mallas is additionally justified by the neighbouring scene showing the *parinirvāṇa*, which completely relates to the chronology of the Buddha's legend.

In the 'relief with the stone' in Zurich (Fig. 11) we can see the Mallas on the lefthand side (i.e. the side of Kuśinagara, where the *parinirvāṇa* is presented) who, using a club as a lever, are trying to move the square stone stuck in the ground diagonally. The artist probably wanted to show that the rock was thrust in the ground by presenting it stuck in the bottom fillet of the relief. The Buddha is standing on the righthand side, his hand resting on the stone; his companions, the monks and Vajrapāṇi, as we know them from other depictions, are not preserved here. The Buddha's hand gesture can probably

<sup>(45)</sup> Bareau 1987: 14-15: 'Il y a avait alors, non loin de la ville de Kuśinagara, une grande pierre carrée, longue de cent vingt pas et large de soixante pas. "Tous ensemble, mettons-la debout!" dirent-ils. Ils employèrent toutes leurs forces en désirant la mettre debout, mais ils ne purent le faire ni même la faire bouger, à plus forte raison la soulever. A ce moment, le Bienheureux étant arrivé auprès d'eux, leur dit: "O jeunes gens, que désirez-vous faire?". Les jeunes gens dirent au Buddha: "Notre intention était, après en avoir discuté, de dresser cette pierre afin que, de génération en génération, se transmette notre renommée. Nous avons déployé nos efforts pendant sept jours, mais nous n'avons pas été capable de faire en sorte que cette pierre se dresse ni se meuve". Le Buddha dit aux jeunes gens: "Messieurs, désirez-vous que le Tathāgata mette pierre debout?". Les jeunes gens répondirent: "A présent, c'est juste le moment où nous désirons seulement que le Bienheureux place cette pierre convenablement". Aussitôt, le Bienheureux frota la pierre de sa main droite, puis, l'ayant soulevée et mise dans sa main gauche, il la lança dans l'espace et la pierre arriva dans le ciel de Brahma. [...] la pierre revient dans l'espace et il tomba une pluie de fleurs divines de plusieurs centaines de sortes. [...] Le Buddha dit aux jeunes gens: "Ne craignez rien! Le Tathāgata connaît lui-même le moment". A ce moment, le Bienheureux tendit sa main gauche, prit la pierre et, la mettant sa main droite, il la mit debout'.





Fig. 11 - Coninx Collection, Zürich, © Coninx Museum.

be understood as his putting the stone into the upright position. The demonstration of supernatural powers of the Buddha was beyond the abilities of the artists.

The literary tradition relevant for this depiction can only be a work which tells the episode as part of a sequence of events preceding the *parinirvāna*, i.e. the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Ekottarāgama*. The literary version corresponding with the relief to the highest degree is the *Ekottarāgama* because in this text the rock is described as quadrilateral stone (in contrast to the *prthvisīlā* of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*), and the undertaking of the Mallas is explained as putting it into an upright position, i.e. exactly as it is shown in the depictions. This remarkable similarity between the literary and pictorial traditions, however, does not necessarily have to be seen as a confirmation of the dependence of the Gandharan artist on the *Ekottarāgama*. It seems far more probable that a reverse process has taken place: the *Ekottarāgama* is a later text, translated into Chinese by the end of the 4th century; its author or translator may well have been inspired by the reliefs which in his time were commonly known. Thus, the literary basis of the reliefs eventually is the Malla episode of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

The Tibetan painter presenting the episode on a Tanka was not faithful to the tradition of the square stone but rather showed it like a natural rock. His literary tradition was the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* (identif.: Tucci 1949, Vol. 2: 461) (Fig. 12). The Mallas try to move the boulder using poles as levers, pulling it with ropes or crashing it with hacks. The Buddha, upon approaching the Mallas in the company of his monks, is witness to the commotion. At the top of the composition we can see the Buddha tossing the rock up in the air with his hand, and again then with some tiny objects in front of him – this is the rock crushed into pieces (which is not described in the *Ekottarāgama*). At the bottom of the painting the Buddha is shown as catching the falling rock and then giving the sermon about the powers of the Buddha, sitting on the rock between Brahma and Indra.



Fig. 12 - Detail on the Tibetan Tanka. (Drawing by the Author after Tucci 1949, Vol. 3: pl. 105).

It is crucial to notice that in Tibetan tradition, too, the Mallas engaged in trying to remove the rock are presented almost naked, wearing only bands around their hips. This iconographic detail found in all known depictions of the scene is doubtlessly of considerable importance and, as stated above, has been noticed already since Foucher. However, nobody has reminded us so far that in Sanskrit the word *malla* means both the inhabitant of the country where the Buddha went into *nirvāṇa* as well as 'wrestler'. The term for a professional wrestler was most probably adapted from a tribal name of that martial clan (*Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, Vol. VI.4: 594; *ibid.* lit. references). As stated above, the episode with the rock is only an introduction to the lengthy sermon about the various types of the Buddha's powers. It was aptly inserted into *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*; due to the fact that this moment of the biography was selected the demonstration of power becomes much more expressive: The Buddha shows his all-exceeding power even though he is in a very bad physical condition on the day of his death. Furthermore, the approaching *parinirvāṇa* provides an excuse for a discussion about the power of impermanence which seizes even the Buddha. The



Fig. 13 - (Jamalgarhi) Calcutta, Indian Museum, No. G-12 / A 23280. (After Mitra 1971: fig. 18).

presence of the Mallas in the passage preceding the sermon is also of substantial significance. The comparison of the Mallas and the Buddha emphasises the degree of his power and might – the athletes were unable to move an object that could easily be tossed up in the air by the Buddha singlehandedly. In the last part of the story about the stone in the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra*, in which the Buddha tries to comfort the Mallas in their despair after they were informed that on that night he would reach *nirvāna*, he tells them about transience, using as an example the episode of the rock they had tried so hard to move. The Buddha says that the rock was used as a bar (*vyāyamasīlā*) for weightlifting by extremely strong people living on earth in the previous epoch. This detail may provide an explanation for the regular shape of the block of stone and the dependency of the reliefs on the pictorial pattern of the western depictions like ‘amorini trying to move Hercules’ club’ (cf. above, Taddei: 1963). According to the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra* tradition (not mentioned in the *Ekottarāgama*) the Buddha furthermore shows the Mallas the traces of those giants’ fingers on the stone used for gymnastic exercises. This is doubtless the detail that the artists from Gandhara wanted to present by showing holes and marks on the block (Fig. 13 = No. 2.8).

These examples sufficiently demonstrate that the whole series of reliefs with the square block represent the Malla episode from the *Mahāparinirvānasūtra* and not the attempted assassination of the Buddha by Devadatta and his *bravi*. Apart from the relief in Zurich (Fig. 11) the *parinirvāna* is depicted in the neighbouring scene in two other preserved examples (Nos. 2.4 and 2.18 [= Fig. 10]). In only eight out of twenty known reliefs a neighbouring scene is preserved at all: except for the *parinirvāna* it is a ‘scene of invitation’ in two cases (Nos. 2.2 [on the left side] and 2.6 [= Fig. 8] [on the right side]), the sermon in one case (No. 2.5 [on the left side]),

in one case the neighbouring scene cannot be identified due to a lack of clues (No. 2.10) and in only one case (No. 2.19) the selection of the scenes is accidental. The ‘scene of invitation’ can be connected with the invitation to the last meal by Cunda or the invitation to visit Kuśinagara. The sermon corresponds precisely with our text and the depiction on the Tanka (Fig. 12). In none of the cases we encounter anything connecting the depictions with a narrative about Devadatta.

Crucial for the identification of the reliefs is the representation of the Mallas – note the similarity of Mallas in the ‘scene with the stone’ and in the *parinirvāṇa* in the relief in Zürich (Fig. 11). According to literary sources, Mallas were from a noble lineage. In all our reliefs they are, however, depicted in the outfit of wrestlers (*malla*) – probably because of the historical reminiscence or maybe because of the coincidental similarities of names. This athletic attire was certainly the reason for the incorrect interpretation of the reliefs. But even though depicted as athletic, the Mallas in the reliefs are not aggressive and the Gandharan artists succeeded in expressing their behaviour in an outstanding way. As stated in several texts, the Mallas carry mattocks (No. 2.12) and ropes (Nos. 2.6 [= Fig. 8], 2.19, 2.20), but the most frequently occurring item is a club (Nos. 2.5, 2.7, 2.8 [= Fig. 13], 2.11, 2.13, 2.14, 2.16 [= Fig. 11], 2.17) which they use to lever the stone (2.16 [= Fig. 11]). In a very convincing way the Gandharan sculptors depicted the amazement of the Mallas while looking at the Buddha, i. e. while observing his supernatural power. In some reliefs they fall down on their knees (2.8 [= Fig. 13], 2.12, 2.14, 2.16 [= Fig. 11], 2.18 [= Fig. 10]), in several others they stand with one arm pointing upwards, looking up into the sky or putting their fingers to their mouths (2.3, 2.4, 2.8 [= Fig. 13], 2.13) – this might be interpreted as observing the stone falling back down from heaven.

In all reliefs the Buddha is depicted as holding his right hand in such a way that it touches or nearly touches the stone. The Mallas also tap the standing stone in several instances (2.3, 2.4, 2.5 [= Fig. 7], 2.7, 2.8 [= Fig. 13]). The marks on the stone which the Buddha explains as finger-marks of the giants of old are shown in at least five reliefs (2.3, 2.8 [= Fig. 13], 2.11, 2.16 [= Fig. 11], 2.18 [= Fig. 10]).

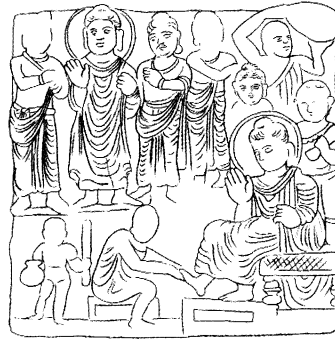
As stated earlier, the Malla episode is a ‘Sanskrit-Sondertext’ in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, existing only in its Sanskrit version but not in Pali, Chinese or Tibetan. However, as the other versions of the story – incorporated into the textual traditions of the *vinaya* or the *abhidharma* – show, the episode was given immense importance. The Gandhara reliefs prove the old age of the ‘special Sanskrit text’ since most of them can definitely be dated to at least the 3rd century. The reliefs and re-narrations also confirm the significance assigned to the episode in the Buddha’s life-story. Shortly before his death the Master shows for the last time his immense power – not to manifest it for the sake of moving people to conversion but to reveal the foremost doctrine of the Buddhism: even though the Buddha possesses strength superior to all other powers of the world, stronger still is the supremacy of the all-including power of the impermanence: *evam anityatā Vāsiṣṭhāḥ sarvasaṃskārā evam adhruvā evam anāśvāsikā. . .*

1. *The rock in Rājagṛha*

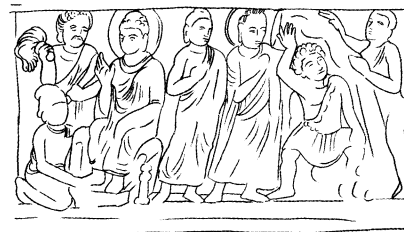
- 1.1. Taxila Museum, Case III B,  
publ.: Marshall 1951: pl. 222, no. 136;  
Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 431;  
S.A.A.P.C. I-1242. 1:42 = Fig. 1.



- 1.2. Private Collection, Japan,  
publ.: Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 2: fig. 878  
= Fig. 2.



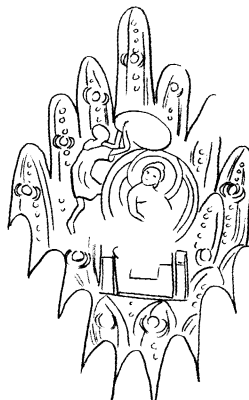
- 1.3. Private Collection, Japan,  
publ. Kurita, 1988-90, Vol. 1, Fig. 566  
= Fig. 3



- 1.4. Kizil, Cave 32, barrel vault, right side,  
publ.: Xu et al. 1983-85, Vol. 1: fig. 76.



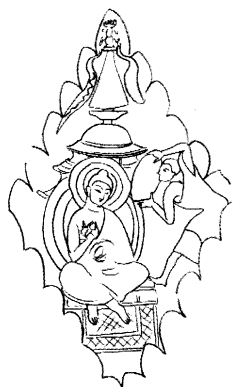
- 1.5. Kizil, Cave 171, barrel vault, right side,  
publ.: Tan et al. 1981, Vol. 2: fig. 79;  
Xu et al. 1983-85, Vol. 3: fig. 5.



- 1.6. Kizil, Cave 175, right side-wall,  
publ.: Tan et al. 1981, Vol. 2: fig. 95;  
Xu et al. 1983-85, Vol. 3: figs. 23-24 =  
Fig. 5.



- 1.7. Kizil, Cave 188, barrel vault, left side,  
publ.: Xu et al. 1983-85, Vol. 3: fig. 58.



- 1.8. Kizil, Cave 224, barrel vault, right side,  
publ.: Xu et al. 1983-85, Vol. 3: fig. 151.



- 1.9. Kizil, Cave 181 (Hochliegende Höhle  
der 2. Schlucht), left side-wall, Berlin,  
Museum für Indische Kunst,  
publ.: Grünwedel 1920: pls. 26-27,  
fig. 1 = Fig. 6.



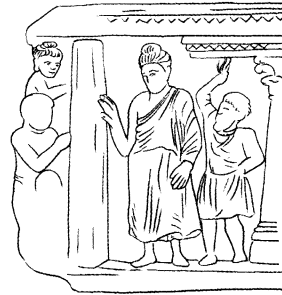
- 1.10. Kumtula, Cave 46, barrel vault, left side,  
publ.: Zhao et al. 1985: fig. 116 = Fig. 4.



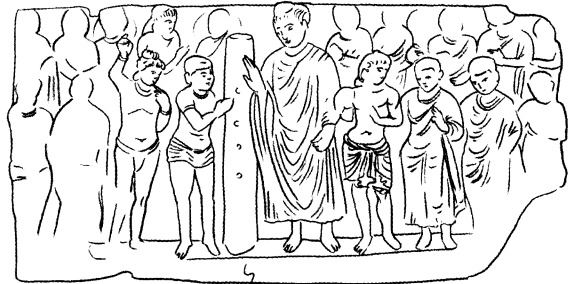
2. *The Rock on the Road to Kusinagara*

2.1. Chandigarh Museum, No. 730 (after Foucher 1905-55, vol. 1: 541 and Zwalf 1996, vol. 1: 193).

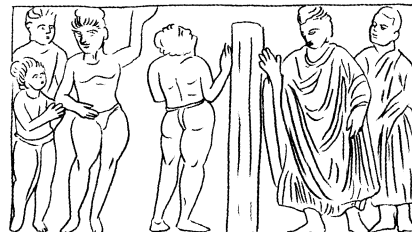
2.2. Lahore Museum, No. 1289, NN G-60, publ.: Ingholt 1957: fig. 114; Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 429.



2.3. Lahore Museum, No. 1637, NN G-100, publ.: Ingholt 1957: fig. 113; Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 428; S.A.A.P.C.: I-1209.9:33.

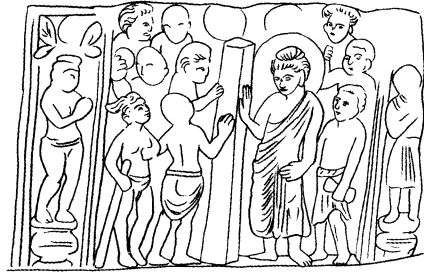


2.4. (Takh-i-Bahi) Peshawar Museum, No. 1844, publ.: Ingholt 1957: fig. 166; *Gandhara Art of Pakistan*, 1984: pl. II-16; Tissot 1985: fig. 32; Faccenna 2001: pl. 157a; S.A.A.P.C.: I-1241.2:5, 7.

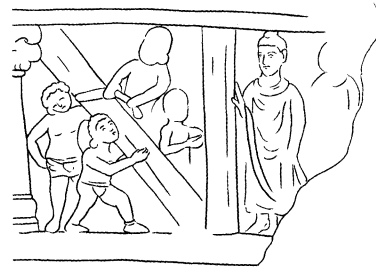




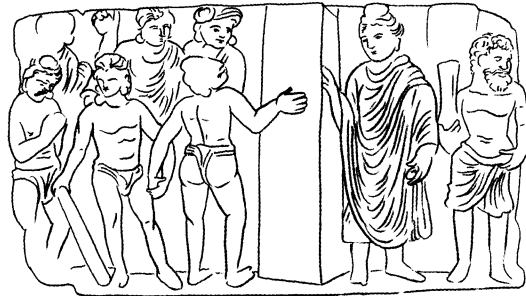
- 2.5. Peshawar Museum, No. 2031, NN 112,  
publ.: Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 427  
= Fig. 7.



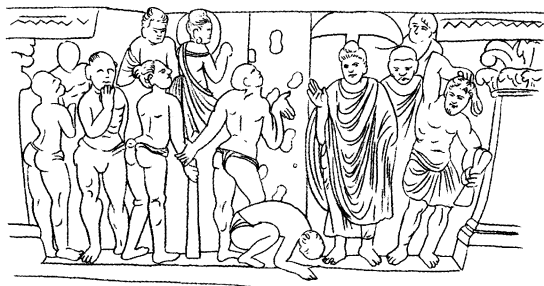
- 2.6. Peshawar Museum? (earlier Malakand  
Agency),  
publ.: Hargreaves 1924-25: pl. 39.3;  
Vogel 1927: pl. 3.d; Taddei 1963: fig. 3  
= Fig. 8.



- 2.7. (Jamalgarhi) Calcutta, Indian Museum,  
No. G-10 / A 23281,  
publ.: Burgess 1897-1911, Vol. 1: fig.  
79; Foucher 1905-55, Vol. 1: fig. 266;  
Tissot 1985: fig. 100; *The way of the  
Buddha*, 1993, no. 28; S.A.A.P.C.:  
I-1209.9:32.

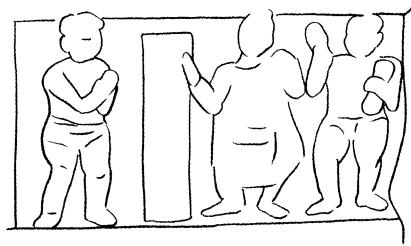


- 2.8. (Jamalgarhi) Calcutta, Indian Museum,  
No. G-12 / A 23280,  
publ.: Foucher 1905-55, Vol. 2: fig.  
302; Majumdar 1937, Vol. 2: pl. 9a;  
Mitra 1971: fig. 18; S.A.A.P.C.: I-1209.  
9:34 = Fig. 13.

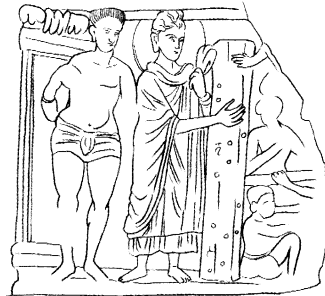


2.9. Calcutta, Indian Museum, No. 5127,  
(after Taddei 1963: 40, fn. 10).

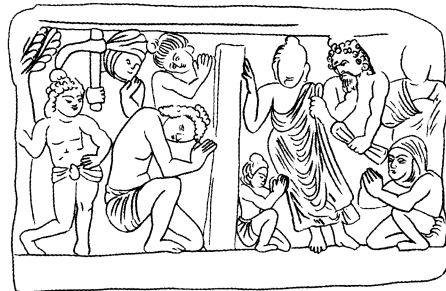
2.10. Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst,  
No. I 410.



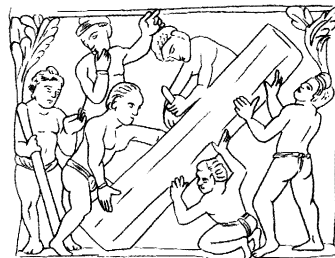
2.11. (Swat or Buner) London, British  
Museum, No. OA1902. 10-2. 15,  
publ.: Bussagli 1984: 199; Zwalf 1996:  
no. 213.



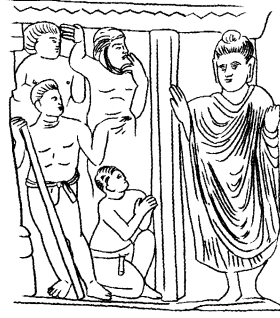
2.12. (Swat or Buner) London, British  
Museum, No. OA 1913. 11-8. 22,  
publ.: Silva-Vigier 1956: 186; Zwalf  
1996: no. 212.



2.13. Rome, Museo Nazionale d'Arte Ori-  
entale, No. 427,  
publ.: Bussagli 1984: 234; Taddei  
1963: fig. 1.



- 2.14. Private Collection, Rome,  
publ.: Taddei 1970: 40, fig. 65.

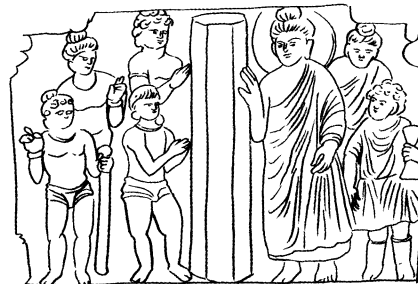


- 2.15. Private Collection, Rome (after Taddei,  
1963: 40, fn. 10).

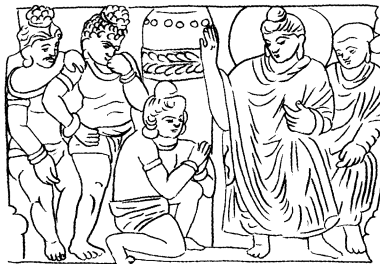
- 2.16. Coninx Collection, Zürich, © Coninx  
Museum,  
publ.: Russek 1987: no. 55 = Fig. 11.



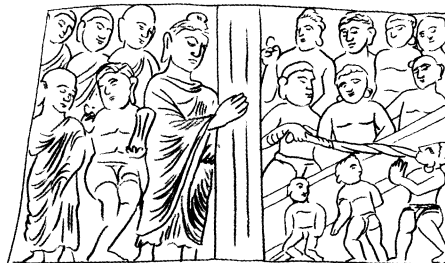
- 2.17. Private Collection, USA,  
publ.: Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 426.



- 2.18. Private Collection, Japan,  
 publ.: Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: pl. P4-I;  
 Faccenna 2001: pl. 144a = Fig. 10.



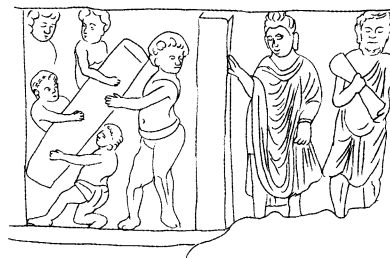
- 2.19. Private Collection, Japan,  
 publ.: Kurita 1988-90, Vol. 1: fig. 357.



- 2.20. Private Collection,  
 publ.: Taddei 1963: fig. 2; Kurita 1988-  
 90, Vol. 1: fig. 359.



- 2.21. Private Collection, Zurich, Russek  
 Collection, no. 4564.



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