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► **To cite this version:**

Claudine Bautze-Picron. The five Dreams of the Bodhisatta in the Murals of Pagan. *Berliner Indologische Studien*, 2003, 15-17, pp.341-368. hal-00547441

HAL Id: hal-00547441

<https://hal.science/hal-00547441>

Submitted on 16 Dec 2010

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The Five Dreams of the Bodhisatta in the Murals of Pagan

Claudine Bautze-Picron

‘Meanwhile the Bodhisatta, who had dreamt the five great dreams that night, arrived at the conclusion, on examining their significance, that without doubt he would become a Buddha that day; and having attended to his bodily ablutions, on the elapse of that night he went early in the morning and sat at the foot of that tree, illuminating the whole tree with his bodily radiance, awaiting the time of setting out for alms.’¹

The authors of the *Nidāna-kathā* knew very well what was meant by the ‘five great dreams’ made by the future Buddha during the night preceding his Enlightenment. Taken as omens, they announced that the Bodhi was nearing, that, in fact, Sakyamuni had spent his last night as a Bodhisatta. At dawn, he underwent a ritual cleaning, before sitting below the tree where he would take his last meal before the ultimate meditation would take place. As he did so, the well-known phenomenon of light irradiating from his body took place, transforming the tree into pure radiance.

Before considering these dreams in a more detailed manner, let us shortly remember the context in which they took place. Having thus renounced the pleasures of life, the future Buddha became an ascetic and joined a group of ‘five religious mendicants ... [who] became his constant companions during the six years he was engaged in his great striving, and they served him attending to various duties such as sweeping the cell and so forth’ (JAYAWICKRAMA 1990: 89). In this period, the Bodhisatta ‘who was determined to practise austerities in their most extreme form began to subsist only on one grain of sesame or rice a day. He even took to complete fasting’ (*ibid.*). But ‘realising that the practice of such austerities was not the path to Enlightenment he went about gathering alms in villages and townships in order to revert to solid food, and he subsisted on it’ (*ibid.*: 90). Disappointed, his five companions abandoned him; they would, however, meet him again when the time had come for the Buddha to preach.

¹ JAYAWICKRAMA 1990: 91; also quoted by BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: 35-36.

The Bodhisatta went his own way, until he reached the vicinity of Gaya, and crossed the Naranjaya. While asleep, he made the five dreams mentioned in the passage of the *Nidāna-kathā* quoted above, and which are fully detailed in different texts, such as the *Supina-Sutta* contained in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, book V.196 (appendix 1), and a lengthy passage in the second part of the *Mahāvastu* (appendix 2). In both texts, the dreams, or better said the visions included in these dreams, are described in detail and their meaning is, moreover, explained.²

From these ancient sources, the description of the visions was transmitted in biographies of the Buddha written at a recent period in Burma and Thailand. In this context, the *Mālālaṅkaravatthu* was written in AD 1773, before being translated into English by BENNETT in 1853, BIGANDET in 1880 and EDWARDES in 1959, while the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, which might have been already written in parts in Burma during the eleventh-thirteenth centuries, was finally compiled in Thailand, possibly at Sukhot'ai in the fifteenth century, at Chieng-Mai in the sixteenth century or at Ayuth'ya even at a later period! It was finally completed in 1845 by Paramānugit, prince of Siam, and consulted by ALABASTER for his 'Wheel of the Law' published in 1871.³

In a Chinese text, the *Fo pen-hsing chi ching* (see appendix 3), and in the *Lalitavistara* (appendix 4), the five dreams are considered to have been made in the night of the great departure. Since this paper considers murals at Pagan, it will essentially deal with the sources which were definitely read in Burma, and the fact that the dreams take place, in the southern tradition, in the night prior to the Enlightenment, is of major importance as we shall see. For information, I reproduce, nonetheless, the passage from the *Fo pen-hsing chi ching* in its French translation by Paul MUS, and the text, less explicit, from the *Lalitavistara* in the translations by Ph.Ed. FOUCAUX and R.L. MITRA.

This night of dreams ends, moreover, a series of three dreams narrated, for instance, in the *Lalitavistara*, and which were respectively made by Māyā,

² Translation of the first text by ÑĀNAMOLI 1998: 21-22 and, in French, by ESNOUL 1959: 241; of the second by JONES 1976: 131-134. Both texts are mentioned by THOMAS 1927: 70-71 and fn. 4 on p. 70, and analysed by YOUNG 1999: 24-32. In fact, it is possible that the source lied in the *Mahāvastu*: in his study of the *Lokapaññatti*, DENIS 1977: XXIX-XXXVII, already surmised a relation concerning the description of the hells.

³ Concerning the *Paṭhamasambodhi*, consult COEDÈS 1968: 218ff. The dreams described in the *Mālālaṅkaravatthu* and the *Paṭhamasambodhi* are respectively translated by BIGANDET 1880, I: 80-81 who is quoted by MUS 1934: 215 note 4 (or EDWARDES 1959: 37), and ALABASTER 1871: 144-145.

Śuddhodana and Gopā, i.e. the mother, the father and the wife of the Bodhisattva.⁴ Those dreams took respectively place before the birth and before the great departure, anticipating thus a change — from conception to birth, from life as a prince to life as an ascetic —, just as the five dreams analysed here announce the Enlightenment — from ascetism to the Enlightenment.

* * * * *

What were these dreams ? They reveal his cosmological nature to the Bodhisatta once he becomes a Buddha. And they teach us that the birth of the Buddha out of the Bodhisatta is a cosmogonic process.⁵

‘What five ? While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, the great earth was his couch; Himalaya, king of mountains, was his pillow; his left hand lay in the Eastern Ocean, his right hand lay in the Western Ocean, his feet lay in the Southern Ocean. That was the first dream ... While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, a creeper grew up out of his navel and stood touching the clouds. This was the second dream that appeared to him ... While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, white grubs with black heads crawled from his feet to his knees and covered them. That was the third dream ... While he was still only an unenlightened

⁴ ESNOL 1959: 236-240; MITRA 1998: 88-89, 234, 240; FOUCAUX 1884: 55-56, 166, 172. The dream of the father and wife of the Bodhisatta are likewise described in the *Mahāvastu* (JONES 1976: 120-131; see YOUNG 1999: 21-24, 33-41 for a presentation and analysis of these dreams), just before the five dreams under scrutiny are described – which leads YOUNG 1999: 27 & 29, to select this night of the great departure rather than the night before the Enlightenment for the moment of the five dreams. The authoress recalls, pp. 29-30, the various opinions concerning the exact moment when these dreams took place; for instance Buddhaghosa, in his commentary of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, also dates the dreams in the night before the Enlightenment. Most contemporary scholars, she reminds us, also selected this moment whereas she seems to prefer the night of the great departure, contradicting in this respect the conclusions of authors such as THOMAS or JONES (in his translation of the *Mahāvastu*). On the whole, however, the precise moment of the dreams does not affect our understanding of the cosmogonic process which these dreams enact.

⁵ In fact, and although this should be further analysed, it might be possible to observe similarities between the birth of the Buddha and the events which then took place, with the visions of the five dreams. The Buddha is the first in this world, as seen in the first dream. He is the highest, and has the head lying on Meru or Himālaya. He is admired and worshipped by the gods. He looks in six directions, is worshipped by the Lokapālas, and is at the centre where birds fly from the four main directions. He makes seven steps towards the north, enhancing this position and his head lies in the north. Lotus flowers rise below his feet and thus, he does not walk on the soil. See KARETZKY 1992: 15-18, BIGANDET 1880, I: 37-38, IRWIN 1981 *passim*. That the Enlightenment is similar to the birth, is said by the Buddha himself, proclaiming that he has broken the cosmic egg, i.e. the shell of ignorance (ELIADE 1957: 80, with further reference to the literary sources and to the analysis made by Paul MUS).

Bodhisatta, four birds of different colours came from the four quarters, and, as they alighted at his feet, they all became white. This was the fourth dream ... While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, he walked upon a huge mountain of dirt without being fouled by the dirt. This was the fifth dream ...' (ÑĀNAMOLI 1998: 22).

The differences noted between this version of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, and the depiction given by the authors of the *Mahāvastu* (both reproduced below in the appendix) are minor and do not affect the whole presentation : in the first dream, mount Sumeru acts as the pillow of the future Buddha, not the Himālaya; in the third dream, the small creatures are red with a black head; in the fourth dream, the birds are four vultures.⁶

* * * * *

The topic of the five dreams has never been illustrated, to my knowledge, in Indian art, while it has been depicted in murals from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries at Pagan — which might explain how the narration of the dreams was transmitted in late renderings of the Buddha's biography from Burma and Thailand that are mentioned above. As a fact, we observe the representation of this iconographic theme in the following monuments:

1. Maung-yon-gu (monument 600), AD 1271. Figs. 1 and 2. In the mural located in the south-east corner, south wall (location on fig. 3),⁷ the Buddha reclines on the cosmic waters. The painter has depicted him as he was used to represent the monk in a reclining position on his death bed, but the overwhelming presence of the water, all around the Buddha, relates to the first dream. Similarly, the creeper of the second dream grows out of his navel, and both dreams are also clear reminders of Viṣṇu

⁶ MUS 1934: 215-216 and note 5 on p. 215 mentions some more differences which are noticed in the Singhalese tradition, an arrow replaces, for instance, the creeper, worms replace the ants, the birds turn gold and not white, ... More differences are even noted in the passage from the *Lalitavistara* translated by MITRA: dream 1 does not locate in space the future Buddha lying on the cosmic waters; dream 2 replaces the creeper with an umbrella as high as the three regions and bringing light out of the darkness in which the earth lies; dream 3 evokes four black animals scratching the earth with hands and feet; dreams 4 and 5 are combined: one bird of four colours walk on a mountain of dirt. Two further dreams are added, showing the Buddha transporting beings across the water, being himself a physician, and finally seated on Meru where he is venerated by the gods. The French version of the text, as presented by FOUCAUX (1884: 173-174) shows closer similarities to the version which we study here: whereas dream 2 again introduces the umbrella in place of the creeper, dream 3 presents four black and white animals licking the feet of the Buddha, dream 4 speaks of the four birds of different colours which all become similar, and dream 5 mentions that the Buddha walks on a mountain of dirt without soiling himself. See also YOUNG 1999: 27. See appendix 4.

⁷ PICHARD 1994: 74-76. The dreams scene is seen in the lower right part of his fig. 600j. Colour illustration in BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: fig. 40.



Fig. 1. Maung-yon-gu (monument 600), AD 1271, mural located in the south-east corner, south wall (location on fig. 3). Photo: J. Bautze

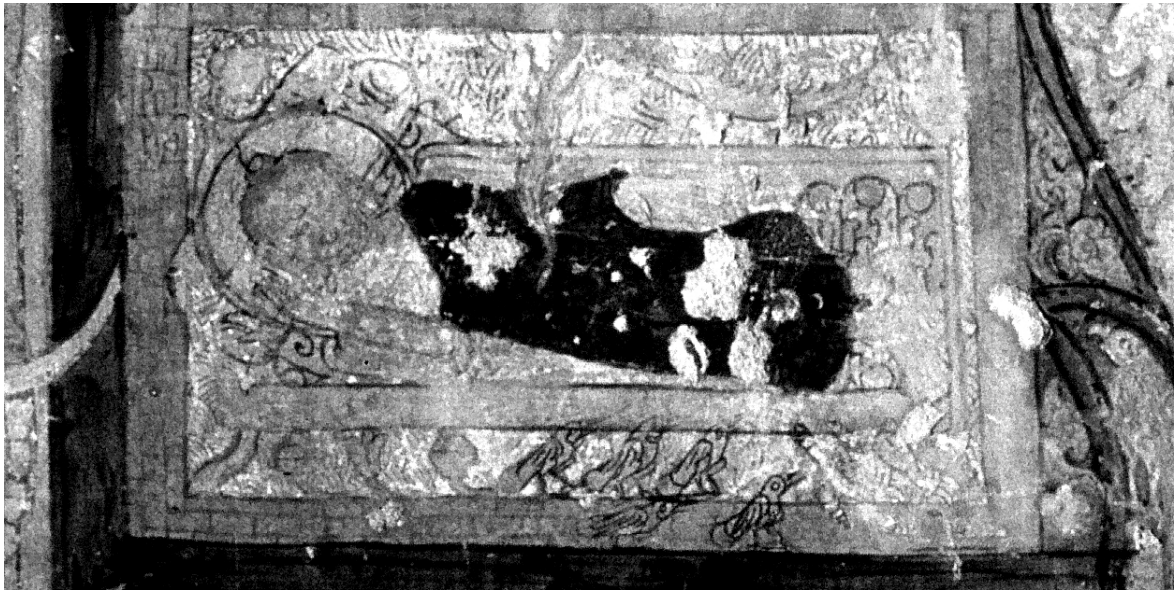


Fig. 2. Detail of fig. 1

lying on the cosmic waters while a lotus rises out of his navel, supporting Brahmā (see below). As for the birds of the third dream, they are all painted, walking in the lower part of the panel: four birds of different colours fly from the four directions towards

the Buddha standing at the centre of the universe, and miraculously turn white once they have reached this point. This cosmological structure is made evident through the presence of five rather than four birds in the paintings, the fifth bird being the unifying element, i.e. the centre or, in this case, the Buddha himself.

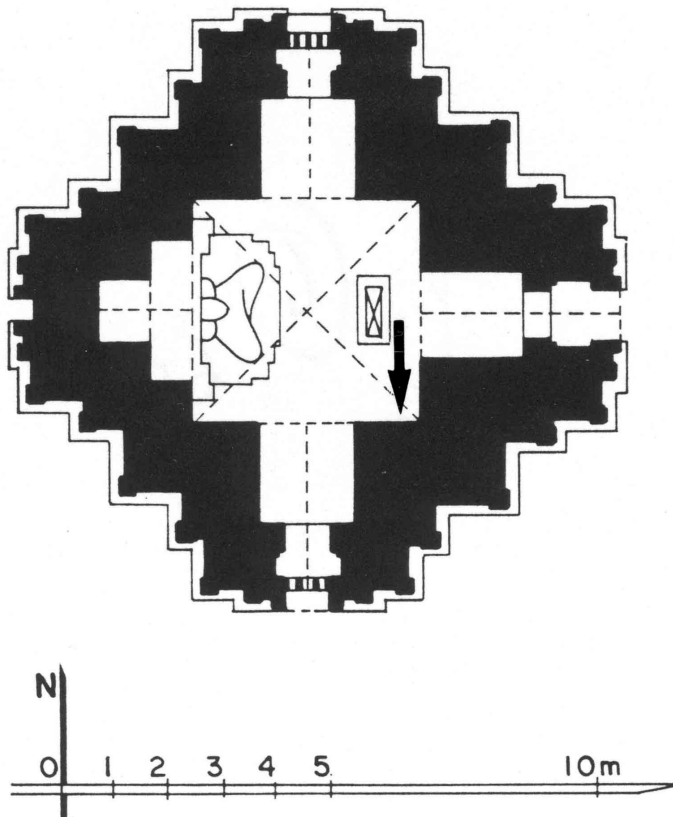


Fig. 3. Maung-yon-gu (monument 600), ground plan, after PICHARD 1994: 74, with indication of the mural illustrated in figs. 1 and 2

The scene with the dreams is painted at ground level, below the depiction of the Buddha seated and protected in his meditation by the *nāga* Mucalinda: while the serpent spreads his multiple heads around the Buddha, the two tails of his body are wound round each other in the water where a large number of fishes swim.

2. Monument 585, 13th century. Figs. 5 and 6. West wing, north wall (ground plan: fig. 4).⁸

The representation of the dreams is clear: the Buddha lies in a large circle of water where the four continents are distributed, identified with their different shapes, each bearing a tree. Birds of various types are distributed at the four corners around the cosmic waters, flying towards the Buddha.⁹ Thus, we recognise the Uttarakuru above the Buddha, a continent located in the north, shaped as a square, and the Aparagodāniya, located in the west and shaped as a full moon, while below him, the Pūrvavideha, continent of the east, is shaped as a

half-moon and the Jambudvīpa, continent of the south, is shaped as a triangle near the head of the Buddha (fig. 6).¹⁰ The four continents also appear in four successive panels on the buddhapadas painted on the ceilings in the temples of Pagan (BAUTZE-PICRON [in the press]).

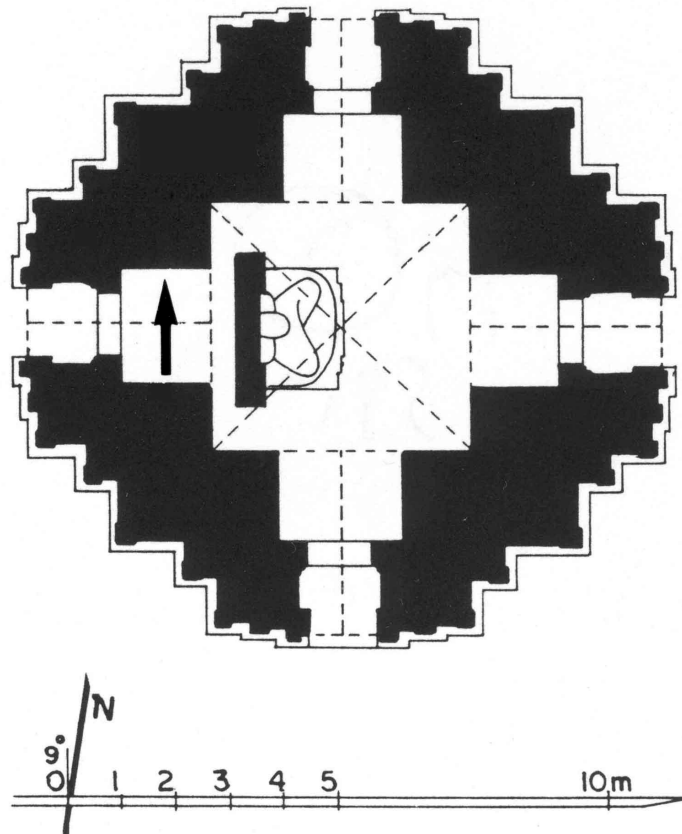


Fig. 4. Monument 585, ground plan, after PICHARD 1994: 49, with indication of the mural illustrated in figs. 5 and 6

⁸ PICHARD 1994: 49-51, fig. 585I. Colour illustration in BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: fig. 32.

⁹ Four flame-like motifs are depicted as if arising out of the Buddha; however, they might also be the birds approaching the Buddha and in fact, merging into him (or do they refer to the plant which grows out of the future Buddha's body?). Another particular aspect of this panel is the fact that the Buddha lies on his left side and that his left shoulder is naked. In the absence of any solid scriptural testimony, I would suggest that the visual experience here took precedence over the rules of iconography. This mural faces a representation of the Parinirvāṇa, today largely destroyed (fig. 66 in BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003), but what remains shows that the head was 'correctly' positioned towards the left. In short, both Buddha images, on the death bed and on the cosmic waters, lie with the head towards the East, and both are perfectly symmetric.

¹⁰ KLOETZLI 1997: 25-27. They are also listed by KIRFEL 1990: 188-189. Needless to say that discrepancies may arise in the description of these continents: the relevant passage of the *Dīrghāgama* translated from the Chinese by HOWARD (1986: 117) and the *Traibhūmi* (COEDÈS/ARCHAIMBAULT 1973: 78) describe the west continent as a half-moon, while the east continent is round, for instance.

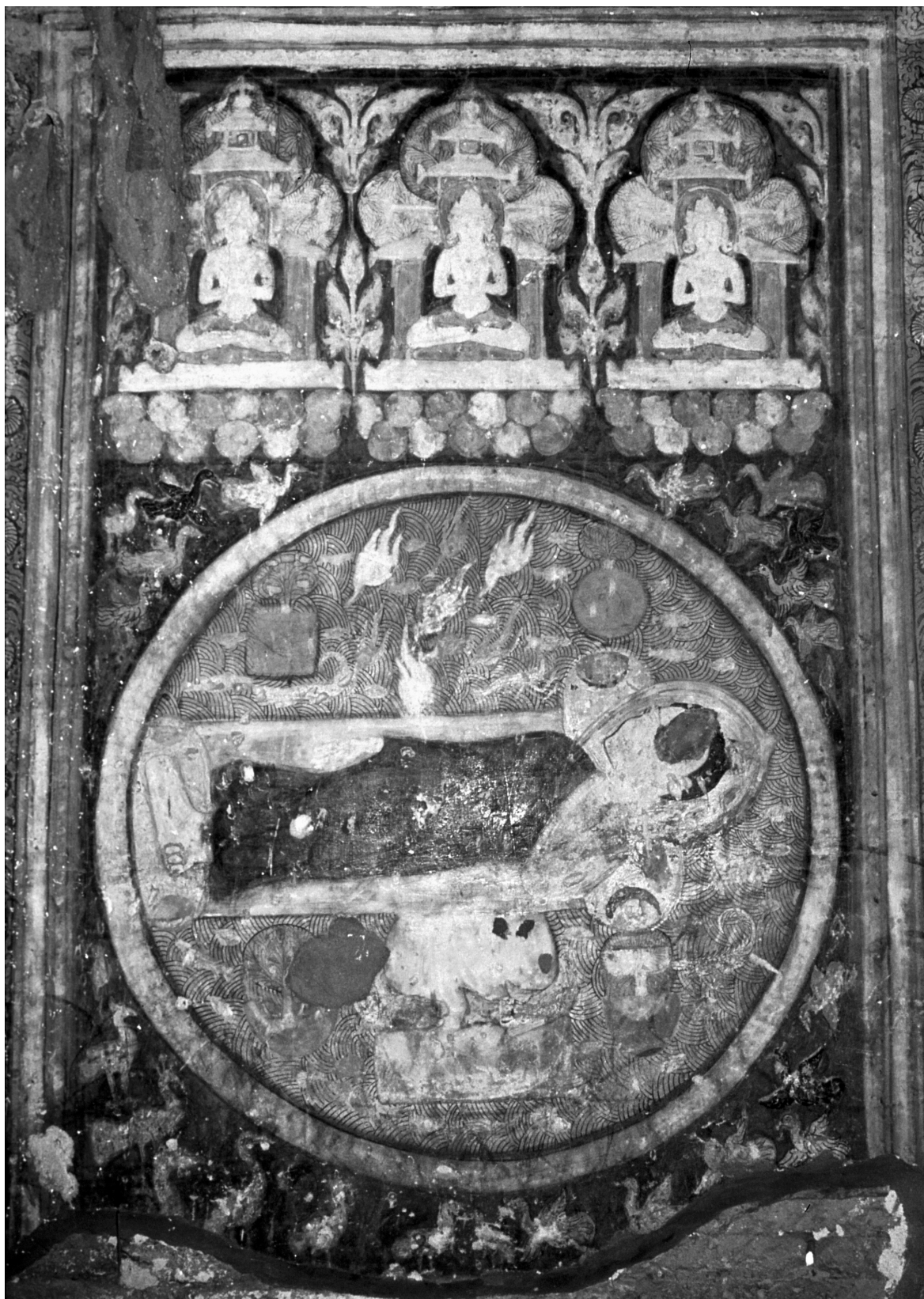


Fig. 5. Monument 585, 13th century. West wing, north wall (location on fig. 4). Photo: G. Heil

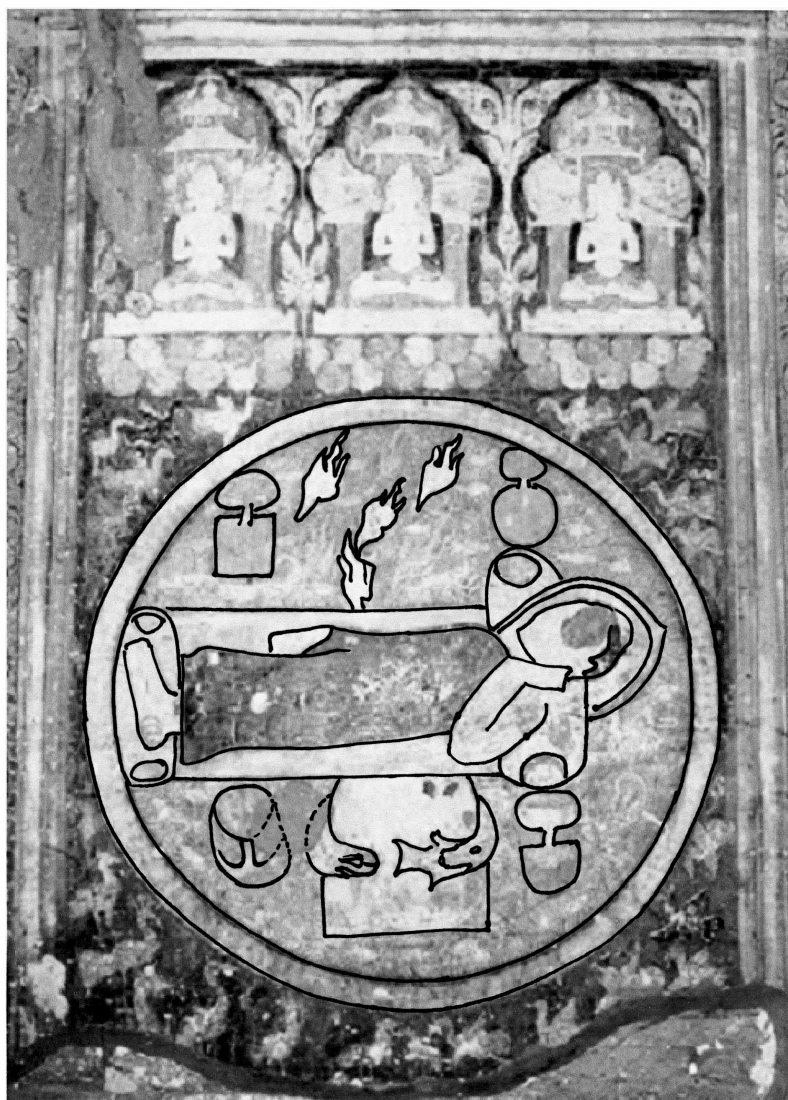


Fig. 6. See fig. 5

A large snake is coiled around the cosmic mountain which stands below the reclining Buddha. A proper look allows to recognise, superimposed on the tail of the snake – which seems more to be the tail of a fish –, another head of a snake shown as if having swallowed the body of the animal with the head at our left (fig. 6). The snake, usually painted as a kind of fish, occurs regularly at Pagan, coiled around the lower part of the Meru which is deeply hidden in the cosmic ocean, and as such appears in the *Loka-hteik-pan*, in monuments 1150 and 1170,¹¹ inaugurating a tradition still alive in the nineteenth century.¹² The snake is of course reminiscent of Ananta, Śeṣa, or Vāsuki, the endless cosmic serpent which hides in the cosmic waters. And as we recall it below, the Buddha evokes here Viṣṇu, reclining on Ananta.

¹¹ BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: figs. 49 and 52; PICHARD 1995: 1170d.

¹² *Buddha, radiant Awakening* 2001: cat. 48, a painting from Mandalay dated 1886.



Fig. 7. Yanzatthu (monument 92), Salay, west wall. Photo: J. Bautze

3. Yanzatthu (monument 92), Salay. Fig. 7. A similar, but more luminous, version of the dreams is illustrated in one of the temples at Salay, where it faces the deceased Buddha (fig. 8).¹³ It tops the composition on one of the side walls of this small shrine. Five white birds walk below the Buddha reclining on the waters whereas others are above trees growing on either side of the scene. Five more trees arise from behind the Buddha, which are most probably the Pāricchattaka, the ‘tree of desire’, which grows north of Indra’s palace on mount Meru, and the trees growing on each of the four continents, among which only the Jambu, on the Jambudvīpa, the Kalpavṛkṣa or the *āmra* on the Uttarakuru are identified in our sources.¹⁴



Fig. 8. Yanzatthu (monument 92), Salay, east wall. Photo: J. Bautze

¹³ Colour illustrations in BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: figs. 69-70.

¹⁴ COEDÈS/ARCHAIMBAULT 1973: 163; DENIS 1977: 42. HOWARD 1986: 117-118 provides Chinese names for the trees of the other two continents, i.e. the *ch'ieh-lan* growing on the Pūrvavideha and the *chin-t'i* for the tree of the Godāna.

* * * * *

The scene of the dreams clearly forms a pair with the final decease in these temples. The first moment precedes the period of Sakyamuni's life as a Buddha, the second concludes it. In monument 585, the Parinibbāna is painted on the south wall of the west wing,¹⁵ in monument 600, it belongs to the set of the 'eight great events' and, as such, is painted in the north wing, but faint traces of a reclining Buddha are still noted in the lower part of the north wall of the north-east corner, precisely facing the dreams scene (the painting in this corner is flaked off). And as noted, in temple 91 of Salay, both scenes face each other, each painted on the upper part of the side walls of the shrine.

That the scene was understood to conclude a phase in the life of Sakyamuni, is fully expressed in the murals of monument 101 at Salay (fig. 9) where a full wall is covered with a chequered structure, illustrating a succession of events of the Bodhisatta's life and ending in the lower right corner with the depiction of Sakyamuni, asleep.¹⁶

The dreams took place while the Bodhisatta was sleeping, the Parinibbāna is a moment of eternal sleep, and this might not have escaped the attention of monks and artists, this explains how the same visual pattern has been used in both cases. Both events complete, moreover, each other at a different level: while in the first scene, the Buddha is depicted on the cosmic waters, a scene which illustrates, in fact, the first dream, in the second panel, his dead body is incinerated and flames may, as a fact, be depicted. Thus, both scenes show how the (future) Buddha may lay in an ocean of water or of fire. The simultaneous presence of fire and water in relation to the personality of the Buddha is a permanent feature since the very beginnings of Indian art, extolled at its best in the illustration of the Sāvatti miracle in Gandhara: water pouring out of the feet, flames rising from the shoulders of the Buddha, or, as the textual sources describe,

'From the upper part of his body proceeded flames of fire, and from the lower part of his body a stream of water. From the lower part of his body proceeded flames of fire and from the upper part of his body a stream of water. From the front part of his body proceeded flames of fire, and from the back part of his body a stream of water. From the back part of his body proceeded flames of fire, and from the front part of his body a stream of water. Flames of fire and streams of water proceeded from his right and

¹⁵ Now very badly damaged. See PICHARD 1994: fig. 585k; BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: fig. 66.

¹⁶ Also illustrated by BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: fig. 6. What is particularly well illustrated on this wall, is that the life prior to Enlightenment spreads itself between two dreams: Māyā lies in the upper left corner, the future Buddha in the lower right corner, with eighteen panels in-between, narrating the succession of events having taken place between these two moments.

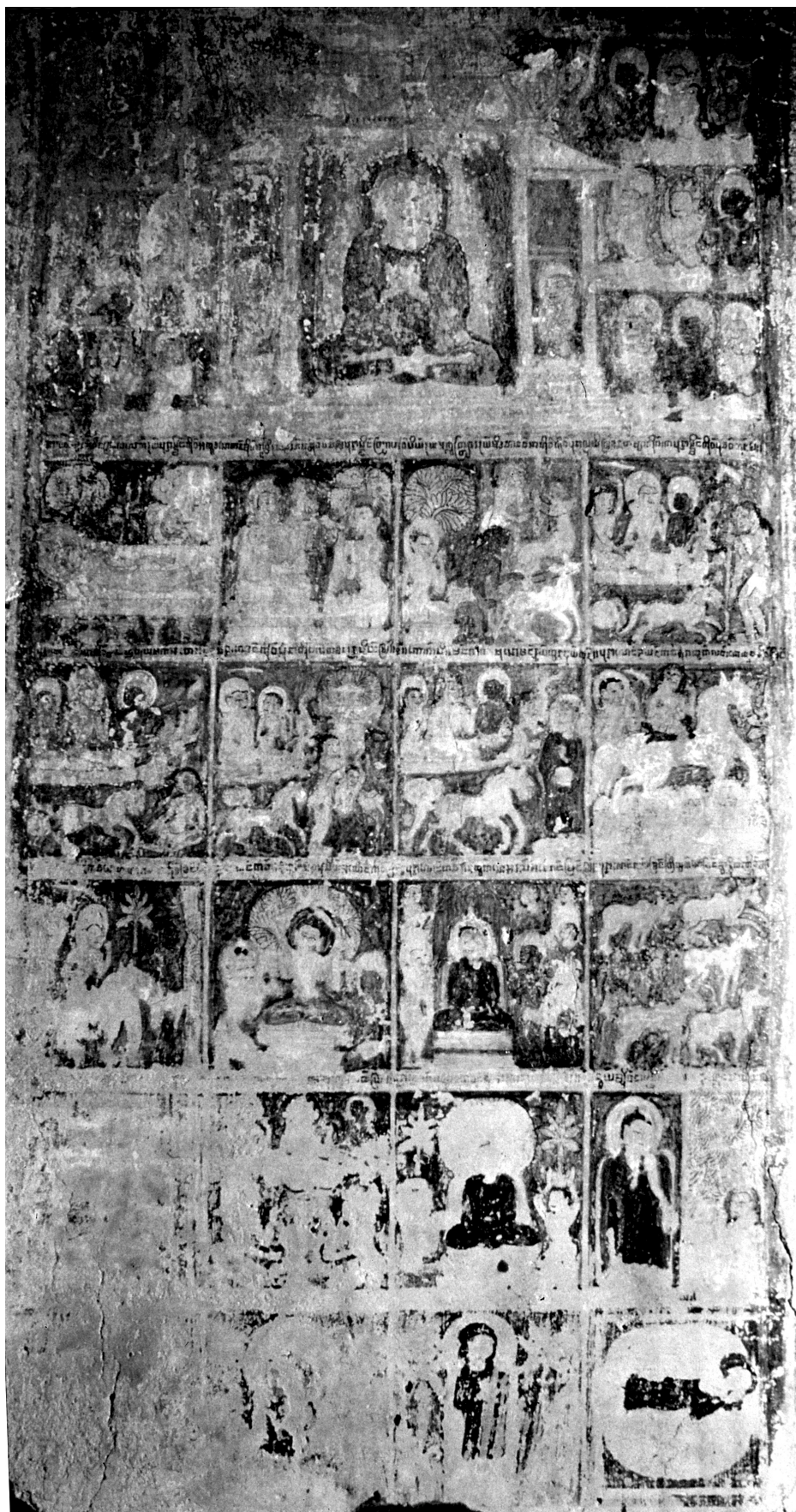


Fig. 9. Salay, monument 101, north niche, east wall. Photo: J. Bautze

left eyes, from his right and left ears, from his right and left nostrils, from his right and left shoulders, from his right and left hands, from his right and left sides, from his right and left feet, from the tips of his fingers and from the roots of his fingers; from every pore of his body proceeded forth flames of fire, and from every pore of his body proceeded forth a stream of water. Six-coloured were they: blue and yellow and red and white and pink and brilliant. The Exalted One walked, and a counterpart of him stood or sat or lay down; ...his counterpart lay down and the Exalted One walked or stood or sat.’¹⁷

Be that as it may, this moment is crucial in the life of Sakyamuni as a Buddha since he reaches, afterwards, the centre of our universe, mount Meru, where he teaches the Abhidhamma to his mother and the gods. Seated at the top of Meru, he dominates the universe all around, and repeats, in a certain way, the first dream, during which he lies with the head in the north, on Meru or the Himālayas, with one arm spread towards the east ocean, one towards the west and the feet towards the south: this unique description presents him as forming a cross covering the universe. He is at the centre, and takes possession of the periphery. One may argue that he is not really described as covering the universe centred on mount Meru, since he would then have the head lying in the north ocean, but the authors were probably aware that this would have appeared rather awkward: the body of the Buddha spread over Meru and ‘falling’ in all four directions (however, see fig. 5)!¹⁸ On the contrary, the head positioned in the north refers, once more, to the final decease, for it is with the head in this position and the body turned towards the west, that the Buddha died:

‘And the Exalted One proceeded with a great company of the brethren to the Sāla Grove of the Mallas, the Upavattana of Kusinārā [Kusinagara], on the further side of the river Hiranayati: and when he had come there he addressed the venerable Ānanda and said: —

‘Spread over for me, I pray you, Ānanda, the couch with its head to the north, between the twin Sāla trees. I am weary, Ānanda, and would lie down.’

¹⁷ BURLINGAME 1969, 3: 45-46; BIGANDET 1880, I: 216-219; EDWARDES 1959: 108-109. The *Traibhūmi Braḥ R'vaṇ* describes how the aura of the Buddha irradiates six colours, green, yellow, red, white, pink and brilliant comparing each of them to the colour of a specific flower (COEDÈS/ARCHAIMBAULT 1973: 184-189; REYNOLDS/REYNOLDS 1982: 263-268); these ‘six glories’ are also detailed in the version of the life translated by EDWARDES (1959: 46-48).

¹⁸ The head lying on the mountain, being the ‘pillow’ of the Buddha, is also, in a certain way, this mountain, just like the Buddha himself can be identified with the earth floating on the cosmic waters. Moving from the first to the third dream, we would assist to the birth of the Buddha out of the indistinct primordial mound, with the head first emerging out of it, till only the legs remain enclosed in it.

‘Even so, lord!’ said the venerable Ānanda in assent, to the Exalted One. And he spread a covering over the couch with its head to the north, between the twin Sāla trees. And the Exalted One laid himself down on his right side, with one leg resting on the other; and he was mindful and self-possessed.’¹⁹

* * * * *

Although the vision included in the first dream recalls the lying position at the Parinibbāna, the position of the Buddha, however, expresses the identification of the latter with the universe. This identification is corroborated by some of the following dreams. The fourth dream, for instance, explains how four birds of varied colours flew ‘from the four quarters’ (JONES 1976: 131) towards the Buddha supposedly standing at the centre of the universe, these four birds landing at his feet, eventually kissing them and turning white before flying away (in the four directions most probably). We are evidently anticipating here the system with the five Tathāgatas, where four are positioned in the four cardinal directions, each of a different colour, whereas the central Buddha Vairocana is white.²⁰ The explanation given for this dream enhances the position of the Buddha as fundamental, central in the society: ‘these four colours, monks, correspond to the four castes.’²¹ The Buddha stands at the centre of Jambudvīpa, and ‘those ... who live the holy life steadfastly under the Tathāgata realise deliverance of heart and emancipation through wisdom.’ (*ibid.*: 133).

The second dream illustrates the Buddha as a creator: while lying, a creeper grows out of his navel and rears to the sky. Moreover, the creeper rising out of the Buddha is the axis in the centre of the creation, relating the earth to the sky. This image is

¹⁹ In the *Mahā Parinibbāna Suttanta* (RHYS DAVIDS 1971: 149). See also: BIGANDET 1880, II: 44-68; EDUARDES 1959: 164-165; FOUCHER 1949: 304-314; NAUDOU 1973: 230-244; HUNTINGTON 1986; KARETZKY 1992: 191-203; EBERT 1985.

²⁰ VERARDI 1999/2000: 71 already surmised that the tradition of the five colours related to the five directions, and supposed that the system, as it is formulated in late Buddhism with the five Buddhas, finds in fact its origin in an earlier period. From a later tradition, let us evoke, for instance a description mentioned by Bernard FRANK (2000: 181), from a text translated into Chinese around the middle of the seventh century (‘Sūtra of the purifying formula of Samantabhadra, uttered by Avalokiteśvara’), of the Buddha Śākyamuni sitting in the centre of the composition, his body being of a golden carnation while his dress is five-coloured. This shows that the idea of the central Buddha, whatever his name, as a centralising image, is to be found in very different trends of Buddhism – which implies that the origin of such an idea is much more ancient than thought, and predates, in India, the development of Mahāyāna.

²¹ JONES 1976: 133; ÑĀṆAMOLI 1998: 22. The four colours are white (Brāhman/west), red (Kṣatriya/north), yellow (Vaiśya/east) and black (Śūdra/south); see LYLE 1982: 28-29, or SNODGRASS 1994: 133, who gives another distribution.

evidently borrowed from the iconography of Viṣṇu reclining on his serpent Ananta, himself lying on the cosmic waters, while a creeper rises out of the god's navel, carrying Brahmā, and the universe is afresh created.²² The mural in temple 585 (fig. 5) seems to be based on such an image of Śeṣaśāyī Viṣṇu: the Buddha lies on the cosmic waters and three gods sit in their respective shrine in the upper part of the mural, hands clasped in the gesture of veneration.²³ We are strongly reminded here of the three gods, Brahmā, Śiva and Viṣṇu himself, sitting on full-blown lotuses which rise out of the god's navel, and are depicted in badly damaged steles found in different Burmese sites.²⁴ The illustration of this iconographic theme is more complex in India where a large number of gods usually surround the scene,²⁵ but is reminiscent of a small bronze from south-east Bangladesh where the three above-mentioned gods occupy a prominent position in the upper part (BAUTZE-PICRON 1994: fig.10).

This dream is related to the 'rolling [of] the incomparable wheel of dharma which is thrice-revolved and twelve-fold' (JONES 1976: 132-133), a wonderful event which had never occurred before and was admired by the entire universe, which is itself created at that moment:

'When they heard the shout of the devas of earth, the devas of the regions between heaven and earth, the Four Royal devas, the Three and Thirty devas, the Yāma devas, the Tuṣita devas, the Nirmāṇarati devas and the Paranirmittavaśavartin devas all instantaneously raised a shout that reached Brahmā's world ...' (*ibid.*: 133).

²² Having uttered the four Vedas, Brahmā can be seen as the ultimate teacher, just like the Buddha who spoke the four Noble Truths. The second dream which symbolises the preaching is particularly reminiscent of the Hindu myth. Émile SENART reminds us, moreover, that the voice of the Buddha as Mahāpuruṣa is compared to the voice of the god (1882:135, 137-138). Paul MUS recognised also the similarities with the image of the reclining Viṣṇu (1934: 216). See also BOSCH 1948: 53-64 and SNODGRASS 1992: 193-194 concerning the creeper rising out of the cosmic waters and the primordial egg which is also the navel out of which the creeper rises out.

²³ Could we also settle a link to the fact that the king of Pagan, Kyanzittha for instance, is named like the Hindu god, fully in a line with the Indian tradition where the king is identified with the god and is husband of the earth? (LUCE/BA SHIN 1961: 279).

²⁴ LUCE 1985, vol. 2: pls. 50 (vol.1: 148), 89 (vol. 1: 170-171), 90 (vol. 1: 171), 99 (vol. 1: 176). See also RAY 1932: 28-33, figs. 4-6.

²⁵ See the numerous illustrations in PARIMOO 1983. The god lies on the serpent of eternity, Ananta, also named Śeṣa. Although we shall return to the topic below, let us mention that it is the slaying of the demon-serpent Vṛtra by Indra which is the act ensuring the process of cosmogony, as shown by KUIPER and BROWN, mentioned by IRWIN in a number of his papers (1981: 627-628, for instance).

These six categories of gods, starting with the four guardians of the universe, compose six layers below the worlds of the Brahmās.²⁶ Once more, we note that the entire cosmos is involved: this recalls the miracle which took place when the Buddha departed from mount Meru on his way to Saṅkassa:

‘On the occasion of the Descent of the Gods, the Teacher, standing on the summit of Mount Sineru, performed the Twin Miracle, and looked up. There was a clear view of the nine Worlds of Brahmā. As he looked down, he had a clear view as far as the Avīci Hell. Then he looked forth to the four cardinal points and to the four intermediate points, and there was a clear view of countless thousands of worlds. Gods looked upon men, and men looked upon gods ...’²⁷

At that point, the Buddha had been teaching to the gods, while seated on mount Meru, an event which was a prolongation of the Sāvatti miracles. Setting the Dharmacakra in movement, starting its rolling, again relates the Buddha to the function of creator at the same time that it designates him, as holding the keys to spiritual liberation.²⁸ The wheel of the Law is also the lotus, and, in the temples of Pagan, a large lotus flower spreads its concentric rows of petals on the keystone of the sanctum amidst smaller lotus medallions, or tiny depictions of the Buddha or of Brahmā, which constitute a probable reference to the brahmalokas.²⁹ This flower, which symbolises the spiritual purity, which sustains any divine image, which supports the creation out of the cosmic waters, refers also to upper worlds and symbolises the spiritual sun.³⁰ The lotus, or to be more precise, the ‘seed vessel of the lotus’, i.e. the *karṇaka/karṇīkā/kaṇṇīkā*, indicates the true centre of the monument, the place through which Heaven can be reached, through which the arhat breaks through after ascending in the air and as such, the motif has a long past since it occurred from the beginning of

²⁶ KLOETZLI 1997: 33; KIRFEL 1990: 195-197.

²⁷ BURLINGAME 1969, 3: 53 and BIGANDET 1880, I: 226 (EDWARDES 1959: 114): ‘He looked upwards, and all the superior seats of Brahmas were distinctly described; on ... looking downwards, his eyes could see and plunge into the bottom of the earth to the lowest hell. The Nats of more than a thousand systems could see each other: Men could perceive Nats in their fortunate seats, and Nats saw men in their terrestrial abode. The six glories streamed forth with an incomparable splendour from Buddha's person, which became visible to all the crowds.’

²⁸ Adrian SNODGRASS, in *Buddha, Radiant Awakening: 77-78*, ‘The cosmic Buddha’, recently reminded that, in the context of the Mahāyāna, the ‘thousand-petalled’ lotus ‘is the homologue of the Sun Wheel, whose opening is the deployment of the worlds.’ This led the way to the identification of the Buddha with the Sun at the centre of the universe, in the person of Vairocana.

²⁹ See also ONO/INOUE 1978: figs. 95, 169, 170, 172.

³⁰ As remembered by COOMARASWAMY, quoted by GUÉNON 1962: 333 footnote 2.

Indian art in this position and has been repeatedly painted on the ceilings at Ajanta or carved on those of Calukya temples from the 5th to the 8th centuries.³¹

The third dream shows white or red worms with black heads, climbing along the feet and legs of the Buddha, up to his knees. It is clearly reminiscent of Vālmīki, the ‘anthill’, the poet traditionally held to be the author of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, or of the ascetic Śyāmāyana ‘sitting in a termite mound entirely hidden except for his eyes’ (IRWIN 1982: 356). The (future) Buddha sacrifices himself, offering refuge to ‘many white-clothed laymen’ (ÑĀṆAMOLI 1998: 22), ‘and these on the dissolution of the body at death, will be reborn in the happy bourne, in heaven among the devas’ (JONES 1976: 133). These worms are these poor human beings who took refuge in the Buddha and are ensured, as a consequence, to be reborn in heaven.³²

As to the fifth dream, it presents the future Buddha as a god hovering above the earth, his feet not being soiled, and recalls the description of the gods Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Agni, in the tale of Nala and Damayantī included in the *Mahābhārata*:

‘ils ne transpirent pas, ils ne clignent pas des yeux, la poussière n'est pas collée à leurs pieds car ceux-ci ne touchent pas le sol, et leurs guirlandes de fleurs ne se fanent pas, bref, ils exhibent toutes les particularités propres aux dieux’ (BIARDEAU 2002, I: 484).

The explanation presented for this vision is that the Tathāgata remains ‘free from attachment and infatuation, and his heart is untainted,’ that ‘although ... [he] ... would obtain the requisites of robes, alms food, abode, and medicine, yet he would use them without greed or delusion or clinging, perceiving their dangers and understanding their purpose’ (JONES 1976: 134; ÑĀṆAMOLI 1998: 22). But the authors of the *Mahāvastu* detail this explanation in such a way that it remains difficult to ignore the relation of this vision to the presence of the four gods Indra, Yama, Varuṇa and Agni, among whom three Lokapālas. As a fact, the text repeats four times the same passage, locating the wanderings of the Buddha in each of the four directions :

³¹ As such, it occurs already on the lower surface of the lower architrave on the *torānas* of Sanchi. COOMARASWAMY 1997: 11-14, 226-227. This is the door which the Buddha opens (*ibid.*: 49 fn. 51 and RHYS DAVIDS 1971: 33: ‘Wide opened are the portals to Nirvana!’). VERARDI 1985: 79 with further references to an article by A.K. COOMARASWAMY. Consult also BIGANDET (1880, II: 68): before His death, the Buddha wished ‘to visit for the last time the abodes wherein his soul has so amorously dwelt during his long and lofty mental peregrinations. He entered into the first state of dhan, then the second, the third, and the fourth: he ascended therefrom successively to the first, second, third, and fourth immaterial seats ...’

³² More research should probably be done concerning the colour of these worms: the black head refers to the lower caste of the Śūdras, while the red or white colours are those of the Kṣatriyas and Brāhmins respectively (LYLE 1982: 26-31).

‘Now the Tathāgata while he tarries in the east is there honoured, reversed, esteemed, worshipped, and respected. He receives the requisites of robes, alms bowl, bed, seat and medicines for use in sickness. He is free from attachment and infatuation, and his heart is untainted.’

And the same situation repeats itself in the south, west and north (JONES 1976: 134).

* * * * *

In the murals of the monuments built at Minnanthu and in the area, during the 12th and 13th centuries, the biography of the Buddha is mainly centred on two series, that are the sequence of the ‘eight great events’ and the sequence of the ‘seven weeks’. Both share the common image of the Enlightenment that is not necessarily required to be painted, since it is always present with the cult image. What convinced then the monks to introduce the depiction of the dreams in these few monuments – without excluding the possibility that this representation might have also been painted in other monuments of the area?³³ The artists had to innovate, they created a new image, for which they found their inspiration in already existing models, i.e. the Parinibbāna and Viṣṇu lying on Ananta, both images being well known in Burma. The visions which the dreams contain are of a cosmological nature, as seen above, but also imply a cosmogonic process, as seen below. As such, they fit in the general understanding of the Buddha made out from the murals at Minnanthu.

It is not the place to detail here this important chapter of the Buddha iconography in the murals of the site – which would constitute in itself the theme of one or more articles –, but we may shortly mention that the ‘decorative’ painted ornamentation of the monuments help to transform them in images of the cosmos, and that the Buddha is depicted as existing from all eternity, and encompassing the entire universe, the total space. In this context, the five dreams, as well as the buddhapadas, sum up, through clear visions, this eternal and universal nature of the Buddha: the dreams illustrate a cosmogonic vision, the buddhapadas the Buddhist cosmology.

Cosmology and cosmogony were of major concern in Burma at that period. As shortly mentioned here, a significant aspect emerging from study of the murals is that the Buddha was perceived, at Pagan, as a cosmological being, while the temple was felt to be a reflection of the universe. Such concepts have been present in Buddhism since the beginning of our era,³⁴ but they were clearly structured in a text like the

³³ The Maung-yon-gu (temple 600) is constructed not far from the Winido-hpaya (monument 659) where the murals share stylistic features with temple 92 at Salay.

³⁴ HOWARD (1986: 6-17, 115-56): the ‘Sūtra of Cosmology’ was translated into Chinese towards the late fourth or early fifth century.

Lokapaññatti which must have been compiled on the basis of various Sanskrit sources in the eleventh or twelfth centuries in Burma – and most probably, we may surmise, at Pagan.³⁵ The cosmology described in this text, finds its most comprehensive and detailed description in the *Traibhūmi Braḥ R'vaṅ* or ‘The Three Worlds’, a work completed in 1345 by Phya Lithai, heir apparent to the throne in Sukhotai.³⁶

* * * * *

While the first dream is a vision of the Enlightenment, the second one illustrates the teaching of the four noble truths to the entire universe. Both dreams allude indeed to the two major moments of the Buddha’s life, without which there would be no Buddhism. Both events are moments of birth: birth to oneself, birth to the humanity.

The Enlightenment relates to the fact that the ‘sun ... for the first time released from the Cosmic Waters, [was] bringing light into the world ...’, while the word spoken by the Buddha spread ‘into the vacuum created by the separation of heaven and earth [where] entered wind and atmosphere, making Space.’³⁷ A cosmogonic process takes here place, reminiscent of the events consequent to the killing of the dragon Vṛtra by Indra, as summarised by John IRWIN from whom we borrow these various citations. At the very beginning, the Buddha lies on the earth, itself lying on the cosmic waters and he is identified with the total horizontal dimension, then, the vertical dimension emerges out of his body, right from his centre. At that very beginning, the Buddha is one and only with the earth.³⁸

³⁵ Though NORMAN 1983: 174-175 locates the source at Thatôn; DENIS 1977, I: VI-IX. The Burmese origin had already been mentioned in an earlier publication by Paul MUS as recalled by COEDÈS/ARCHAIMBAULT (1973: XIII) and DENIS (1977, I: VII). The *Mahāvastu* might have been one of these Sanskrit sources (DENIS 1977, I: XXIX).

³⁶ COEDÈS 1957; COEDÈS/ARCHAIMBAULT 1973 (French translation); REYNOLDS/REYNOLDS 1982 (English translation).

³⁷ IRWIN 1976: 739-740. Concerning the light which pervaded the universe at the moment of the Enlightenment, see BAUTZE-PICRON 1998: 5-7; BAUTZE-PICRON 2001: 280-282. We should recognise the clear understanding and presentation of the cosmogonic process by John IRWIN, which makes his articles precious testimonies of an iconological approach, which is only but too rarely met with in our field.

³⁸ The primordial mound of the cosmogonic process described by IRWIN 1981: 628-630, is here mount Meru or Himālaya, present from the very beginning. As also noted by this scholar (p. 628): ‘The important point ... is that it was only *after the Creation* that the Primordial Mound grew into hill and mountain ...’ In the present context, the ‘creation’ is the Enlightenment, and the primordial mound will expand into the universe consisting of seven rows of mountains separated by water, which encompass mount Meru while four continents are located outside these girdles, shaped differently: the Meru and the seven rows of mountains are described when the Buddha goes to heaven in order to teach the Abhidharma to his mother and the gods. This happens, thus, after the creative process of

The painters of temple 585 were aware of the central position of the Buddha and did not position mount Meru in the vicinity of the Buddha's head but well right below him, in the centre of the lower part of the large circle. It is not the place here to dwell on the meaning of the snake, of the dragon which hides in the depth of the cosmic ocean and which is part of the Meru iconography at Pagan, as noted above, but this presence is clearly reminiscent of the cosmogonic myth of the churning of the ocean, of the basic identification of this dragon with the cosmic waters on which also Viṣṇu reclines between periods of creation.³⁹ Moreover, mount Meru is introduced in two other iconographic themes in the murals of Pagan. It is the place where the Buddha sits when he taught the Dhamma to his mother and the gods and it is also a central element of the depiction of the universe, bearing eventually an image of the teaching Buddha.⁴⁰

The separation of heaven and earth allows the intermediary space to come to reality; the rise of the creeper is like the tree or pillar 'which pushed up the sky, also pegged down the Mound to the bottom of the Waters, giving it the stability it needed before it could expand into our universe'.⁴¹ And as we noted above, the word of the Buddha could spread in this newly created space. This image is also reminiscent of Brahmā seated on the lotus flower which grew out of Viṣṇu's navel, and who, having uttered the four Vedas, can be considered as a teacher, such as the Buddha who spoke the four Noble Truths.

The remaining three dreams enhance this process of cosmic creation. We already mentioned that the 'reddish creatures with black heads stood covering him from the

the Enlightenment. For a description of the complete process, see ELIADE 1959: 475-485. We should also quote COOMARASWAMY 1931: 2 who mentions a passage from the *Atharva Veda* reading 'A great Yakṣa in the midst of the universe, reclining in concentrated-energy (*tapas*) on the back of the waters, therein are set whatever gods there be, like the branches of a tree about a trunk.' Moreover, let us not forget that the seven rivers which encompass mount Meru, flew from Vṛtra's mouth when the dragon was sacrificed by the god (SNODGRASS 1992: 64-65, 120-121, 184, 313).

³⁹ Consult SNODGRASS 1992: 178f., 193f., 205, 292f., 304f.; VOGEL 1926: 192-203; COOMARASWAMY 1931: 24-25, concerning various aspects of the snake or dragon, as support of the god or in relation with the primeval egg or mount Meru. In the text translated by HOWARD 1986: 143, we are told that 'at the bottom of the Great Ocean there is the palace of the *nāga* king Sāgara which extends eighty thousand *yojanas* in both directions. The palace's walls are seven-fold, with seven rows of ramparts, seven nets, seven rows of trees; the handsome decorations, all around, are made with the seven jewels. Countless birds are singing harmoniously to each other. It is, indeed, like this.'

⁴⁰ Above note 11 (teaching on Meru); BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: fig. 143 and ch. 5, note 43; BAUTZE-PICRON [in the press]: fig. 3 (universe).

⁴¹ IRWIN (1981: 628), ELIADE (1959: 475f.) concerning the pillar, or COOMARASWAMY (1931: 25f.): 'The myth of actual creation takes the form of the origination of a tree from the navel of a Primal Male, who rests upon the Waters, and from whose navel the tree rises up; he is called a Yakṣa and was originally Varuṇa,' and p. 29.

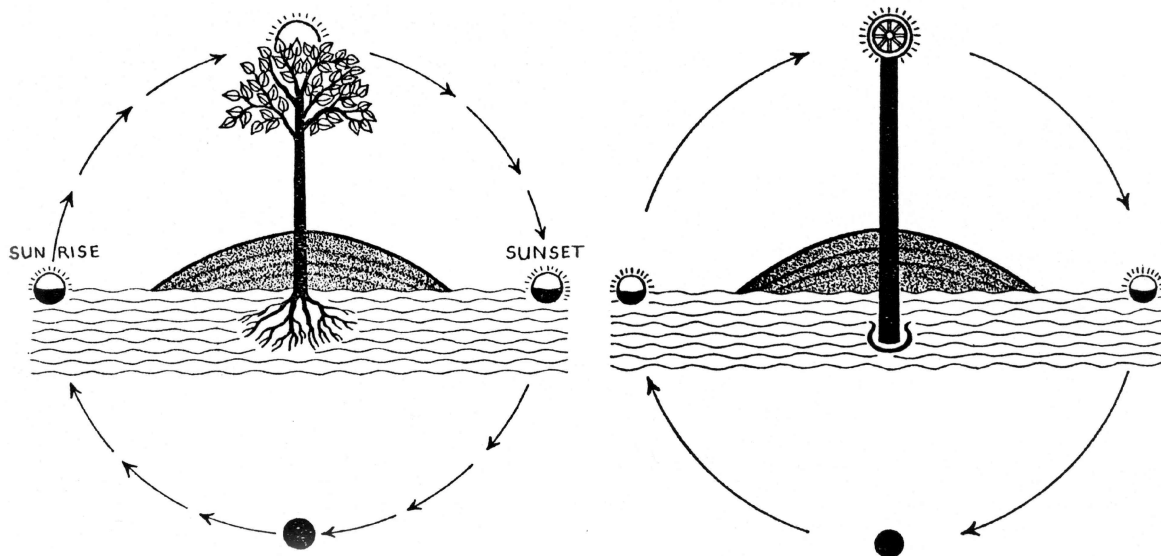


Fig. 10. a: 'The second stage of Creation; separation of heaven and earth by the World Tree',
 b: 'The World Pillar, ritually fashioned from sacred tree', drawn by Margaret Hall,
 after IRWIN 1981: 629 (see also IRWIN 1990: fig. 2 & 3)

soles of his feet up to his knee-caps', as the *Mahāvastu* tells (Appendix 1), recall the ants which covered Vālmīki. The (future) Buddha was most probably standing when this happened to him: the small creatures climbed on him, forming like an 'anthill' which strongly bound the Bodhisatta to the earth. Again, we are remembered here of 'Indra [who] simultaneously pegged the primordial hill to the bottom of the Cosmic Waters, thus stabilising the universe.'⁴² When the (future) Buddha has his feet fixed by this 'primordial mound', he becomes the pillar which rises out of the cosmic waters and sustains the disk of the burning sun or is the 'world tree' (fig. 10). In the act of creation provoked by Indra when he slays Vṛtra, 'as space expanded outwards horizontally, the Four Quarters were born' (IRWIN 1976: 740), these 'four quarters' which are centred on the Buddha, as the dream of the birds shows, and of which the Buddha took possession, as shown in the last dream.

In a sequence of five successive visions, it becomes clear to Sakyamuni that he is in a state of pregnancy – pregnant of himself –, and that the moment of delivery is close. What the dreams show, is the perfectly developed and ripe being, ready to realise these still hidden but real potentialities. The dream is similar to a pregnancy: it takes place in the head of the dreamer like the child grows in the womb of his mother, and as it can only be truly known and experienced by the dreamer, the baby can only be felt by his mother. If the dreamer is still a Bodhisatta in his outer appearance, his dreams reveal to him his true nature, which is to be a Buddha for all eternity.

⁴² IRWIN 1976: 740. And from the same author: 1981: 625-630; 1990: 48-52. ELIADE 1959: 485.

Appendix

In the *Mahāvastu*, the dreams are first told, then explained while in the *Supina sutta* (*Anguttara Nikāya*, V.196), each dream is directly followed by its explanation. Moreover, and as one could expect it, the language in the second text is much more factual and all fantastic details carefully avoided, the authors stressing more the ‘moral’ value of the dreams.

1. The dreams in the *Mahāvastu*, part 2

a. The dreams (136-137, transl. JONES 1976, II: 131-132)

‘The Bodhisattva, also, had five great dreams, which he interpreted to the monks at Śrāvastī after he had attained to the supreme enlightenment.

Monks, said he, before the Tathāgata had awakened to the full enlightenment, he saw five great visions in dreams. What five? Monks, before the Tathāgata had awakened to complete enlightenment, he dreamt that this great earth was a high vast bed to him. Sumeru, monarch of mountains, was his pillow. His left arm rested in the eastern ocean, his right in the western, and the soles of his two feet in the southern. This, monks, was the first great vision the Tathāgata saw before he had awakened to enlightenment.

When the Tathāgata, monks, as yet had not awakened to enlightenment, he dreamt that the grass called kṣīrikā sprouted from his navel and reared up to heaven. This, monks, was the second great vision the Tathāgata saw before he had awakened to enlightenment.

When the Tathāgata, monks, as yet had not awakened to enlightenment, he dreamt that reddish creatures with black heads stood covering him from the soles of his feet up to his knee-caps. This, monks, was the third great vision the Tathāgata saw before he had awakened to enlightenment.

When the Tathāgata, monks, as yet had not awakened to enlightenment, he dreamt that four vultures of different colours came flying through the air from the four quarters, and having kissed the soles of his feet went away all white. This, monks, was the fourth great vision the Tathāgata saw before he had awakened to enlightenment.

When the Tathāgata, monks, as yet had not awakened to enlightenment, he dreamt that he walked to and fro over a great mountain of dung without being soiled by it. This, monks, was the fifth great vision the Tathāgata saw before he had awakened to enlightenment.’

b. Explanation of the dreams (*ibid.*, 137-139, pp. 132-134)

‘[First dream:] Now when the Tathāgata awoke to perfect enlightenment, then was this great dream fulfilled ... [second dream:] The Tathāgata, monks, with his higher knowledge of this world, of the world beyond, of the deva world, of Māra's world, of Brahmā's world, and of the race of recluses, brāhmins, devas and men, in the Deer Park at Rīṣipatana in Benares set rolling the incomparable wheel of dharma which is thrice-revolved and twelve-fold and was never set rolling by any recluse, brāhman or deva, nor by Māra or anyone else. Again was he in the world with the dharma which consists of the four Aryan truths, namely, the Aryan truth

of ill, the Aryan truth of the origin of ill, the Aryan truth of the cessation of ill, and the Aryan truth of the way that leads to the cessation of ill ... [third dream:] Now, monks, there is a large number of people who have performed acts of service to the Tathāgata, and these on the dissolution of the body at death, will be reborn in the happy bourne, in heaven among the devas ... [fourth dream:] What four? Kṣatriyas, brāhmins, vaiśyas and śūdras. Those of them who live the holy life steadfastly under the Tathāgata realise deliverance of heart and emancipation through wisdom ... [fifth dream:] Now the Tathāgata while he tarries in the east [or: south, west, north] is there honoured, revered, esteemed, worshipped, and respected. He receives the requisites of robes, alms bowl, bed, seat and medicines for use in sickness, He is free from attachment and infatuation, and his heart is untainted.'

2. The dreams and their explanation in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, V.196 (*Supina sutta*), after ÑĀṆAMOLI 1998: 22 (quoted by BAUTZE-PICRON/BAUTZE 2003: 36)

'[first dream:] While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, the great earth was his couch; Himalaya, king of mountains, was his pillow; his left hand lay in the Eastern Ocean, his right hand lay in the Western Ocean, his feet lay in the Southern Ocean. That was the first dream that appeared to him, and it foretold his discovery of the supreme full enlightenment. [second dream:] While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, a creeper grew up out of his navel and stood touching the clouds. This was the second dream that appeared to him, and it foretold his discovery of the Noble Eightfold Path. [third dream:] While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, white grubs with black heads crawled from his feet to his knees and covered them. That was the third dream that appeared to him, and it foretold that many white-clothed laymen would go for refuge to the Perfect One during his life. [fourth dream:] While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, four birds of different colours came from the four quarters, and, as they alighted at his feet, they all became white. This was the fourth dream that appeared to him, and it foretold that the four castes, the warrior-nobles, the brahman priests, the burgesses, and the plebeians would realize the supreme deliverance when the Dhamma and the Discipline had been proclaimed by the Perfect One. [fifth dream:] While he was still only an unenlightened Bodhisatta, he walked upon a huge mountain of dirt without being fouled by the dirt. This was the fifth dream that appeared to him, and it foretold that although the Perfect One obtain the requisites of robes, alms food, above, and medicine, yet he would use them without greed or delusion or clinging, perceiving their dangers and understanding their purpose.'

3. The dreams in the *Fo pen-hsing chi ching*, translated into French by Paul MUS 1934: 215 (English transl.: BEAL 1875: 128-129).

Text translated in the sixth century by Jñānagupta (MUS 1934: 215 fn. 2)

'Or le Bodhisattva, cette nuit-là, eut lui-même cinq grands rêves. Le premier rêve, ce fut qu'il était étendu sur cette vaste terre, qui lui faisait comme un lit; il appuyait sa tête sur le mont Sumeru en guise d'oreiller; sa main gauche et son bras reposaient sur l'océan oriental; sa main

et son bras droits sur l'océan occidental; sur le grand océan méridional, ses deux pieds. Le second rêve, ce fut qu'une tige de *kien-li* jaillissant de son nombril, s'élevait en haut jusqu'au ciel des Akaniṣṭha. Le troisième rêve fut que quatre oiseaux de couleurs variées venus des quatre orient, se posaient à ses pieds, et que par un miracle spontané ils devenaient tous d'un blanc pur. Le quatrième rêve fut que quatre animaux blancs à tête noire lui léchaient les jambes du pied au genou. Le cinquième rêve lui fit voir une montagne d'ordure, haute, escarpée et vaste, lui-même en personne se tenait au sommet et il en faisait le tour, sans que ces ordures pussent le moins du monde le souiller.'

4. The dreams as described in chapter XIV of *Lalitavistara*, entitled 'The dream'

a. English translation from R.L. MITRA 1998: 242

'The being who was full of the glory of virtuous deeds, whose head was the fountain of vigour, dreamt the premonitory dreams which become manifest at the time of departure from home of the noblest of beings, full of the merits of former good deeds.

'He beheld immense hands and feet immersed in the waters of the four great oceans, the earth was in deep sleep, and the noble mountain Meru had bend down its head.

'In dream a light was seen which showed that every one on the earth was immersed in dense darkness. An umbrella was uplifted on the earth, and it was resplendent in the three regions, and on whomsoever its light fell he was freed from all distress, and was restored to peace.

'Four beautiful animals of a black colour were scratching (the earth) with their hands and feet; a wonderful bird of four colours changed into one colour was seen walking over a mound of vile, disgusting filth without being in any way soiled.

'Again he saw in his dream a river full of water whereby were millions of beings, and he was ferrying them over and placing them on firm ground where there was neither fear nor grief.

'Again, he beheld numerous decrepit people, afflicted with disease, devoid of the capacity for recovery, and totally bereft of strength, and he, becoming a physician, was, by the administration of various medicaments, curing them by millions.

'He saw himself seated on a throne on the top of the Sumeru mountain, and disciples with folded hands were humbly saluting him. He saw himself victorious in the midst of a battle, and the immortals in the sky were cheering him with delightful sounds.

'These were the dreams which the Bodhisattva dreamt; they were full of auspicious and charming deeds, and by hearing of them men and gods were filled with delight. It will not be long before this noble being will become the god of gods and men.'

b. French translation: FOUCAUX 1884: 173-174

'Celui qui porte l'éclat des bonnes oeuvres, qui a pour matrice une noble splendeur, voit en songe ces signes précurseurs qui apparaissent au temps de la sortie de la famille des chefs des hommes qui ont accumulé précédemment les bonnes oeuvres.'

‘Celui-là voit de grandes mains et de grands pieds se jouant dans l'eau avec les quatre grands océans; cette terre tout entière (devenue) une couche bien ornée et le Mérrou, le meilleur des monts, (devenus) un oreiller pour sa tête.

‘Il voit alors en songe, une lumière vive répandue dans le monde, les ténèbres profondes éclairées, et un parasol sortant de terre éclairant les trois mondes. Par le contact de cette lumière, les souffrances du mal sont apaisées.

‘Quatre animaux blancs et noirs lèchent ses pieds; des oiseaux de quatre couleurs étant venus deviennent d'une seule couleur. En gravissant une montagne d'ordures les plus repoussantes, il marche là sans être souillé.

‘Il voit encore en songe plusieurs centaines de millions d'êtres vivants remplissant l'eau d'un fleuve par laquelle ils sont entraînés. Et lui, devenu vaisseau, après être passé, fait passer les autres et les établit sur le sol excellent où il n'y a ni crainte ni chagrin.

‘Il voit encore beaucoup d'êtres languissants atteints de maladie, privés de l'éclat de leur beauté et dont les forces sont affaiblies; et, devenu médecin, il donne en abondance des plantes médicinales et délivre des millions d'êtres atteints de nombreuses maladies.

‘Assis sur un côté du mont Mérrou qui lui sert de trône, il voit les disciples et les dieux, qui, les mains jointes, s'inclinent. Il voit sa victoire au milieu du combat et les dieux jetant dans le ciel des cris de joie.

‘Telles sont les choses que le Bôdhisattva a vues en songe, à l'accomplissement parfait de ses vœux pieux et méritoires.’

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