The Vicissitudes of the Story of Therī Paṭācārā: From Early Buddhism to the Mahāyāna

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Abstract: In Pāli commentaries, there is a famous story about Therī Paṭācārā, who was plagued by a chain of catastrophes and was finally left bereft of all her kin. Similar stories appear in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist literature but with apparent variations. This is a salient case of the appropriation and assimilation of Indian Buddhist literature by Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists. This paper focuses on variations in these narratives of 'The Paṭācārā Story' in Buddhist literature. It explains how these variations came into being by comparing different texts and studying their contexts. First, this paper presents why these stories that share a main theme have different protagonists. Second, it suggests that during the transmission and development of Buddhism, some 'prototype' stories were combined and revised by subsequent generations, perhaps for moral education purposes. Finally, this paper identifies some elements as later additions, such as those regarding burial customs, and identifies the element of a mother being forced to eat her son as a possible misinterpretation during the transmission of the Buddhist texts.

Keywords: Buddhist narratives, Therī Paṭācārā, Sinicisation, *putta-khādini*

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1. Introduction and Literature Review

Therī Apadāna (second–first c. BCE, henceforth 'Thī-ap') tells the famous story of Therī Paṭācārā (henceforth 'The Paṭācārā Story'), who was plagued by a chain of catastrophes that led to the deaths of all her kin. Pāli commentaries keep this story with only some details changed. Similar stories also appear in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist literature but with obvious variations.

First, in the Chinese and Tibetan versions, three different *therī*s (elder nuns)—Therī Paṭācārā, Therī Kisāgotamī, and Therī Utpalavarṇā (Utpala)—are the main characters in different accounts. Second, the Chinese and Tibetan records usually contain more story elements than those in Pāli, and the female protagonist in the Chinese and Tibetan versions endures more suffering after the death of her kin, such as being buried alive with her dead husband and being forced to eat her own son after remarrying. Third, some Chinese and Tibetan records include stories of the protagonist's or her family members' past lives to explain the karmic results.

Works on the images and stories of early Buddhist women always contain 'The Paṭācārā Story', such as *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*,[1] *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentary on the Therīgāthā*,[2] *Women of the Way: Discovering 2,500 Years of Buddhist Wisdom*,[3] and 'The Stories about the Foremost Elder Nuns'.[4] All these works, based on Pāli sources, put Therī Paṭācārā in the main role of 'The Paṭācārā Story'. None of them mention that in some versions, like in some Chinese and Tibetan records, Therī Kisāgotamī or Therī Utpalavarṇā (Utpala) is the protagonist.

Nevertheless, Norman, the translator of *Therīgāthā* (henceforth 'Thīg'), has pointed out in his translation that the introductory story of Paṭācārā as told by Dhammapāla (sixth c.) aligns closely with the Therī Kisāgotamī verses in Thīg (vv.213–23). Norman proposes

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1 Horner, *Women Under Primitive Buddhism*, 194.

2 Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women*, 81–83, 87–88.

3 Tisdale, *Women of the Way,* 72–77.

4 Ānandajoti, 'The Stories about the Foremost Elder Nuns', 61–66.

that the story has become attached to the wrong *therī* and that Therī Kisāgotamī should be the protagonist of 'The Paṭācārā Story'.[5] Of course, Norman makes this claim without referring to Chinese and Tibetan sources.

In addition, Sumet compared 'The Paṭācārā Story' in two Chinese sūtras, *Xianyu jing* 賢愚經 [The Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish, Skt. *Damamūka Nidāna Sūtra*, *T* no. 202],[6] *Dafangbian fo baoen jing* 大方便佛報恩經 [Great Skillful Means Sūtra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness, *T* no. 156] and *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye zashi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (Skt. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayaksudrakavastu*, *T* no. 1451), with reference to Thīg, and suspected it to be a misidentification that Therī Utpalavarṇā and Therī Kisāgotamī take the main role in 'The Paṭācārā Story' in the latter two Chinese records respectively.[7] However, Sumet did not verify this suspicion in this paper.

In sum, though some scholars have pointed out that there are disagreements on who should be the main character of 'The Paṭācārā Story', to my best knowledge, a thorough examination of this story across Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan Buddhist literature does not yet exist. Moreover, this research does not only study the disagreements on the protagonist of this story but also scrutinises other variations in those texts as introduced above because this is a salient and typical case of the appropriation and assimilation of Indian Buddhist literature by Chinese Buddhists and merits a thorough study to gain some insight into the development of Buddhist narratives.

Similar comparative text studies have been carried out by many other scholars for different research purposes. For example, Bhikkhu Anālayo has compared relative passages in Chinese *Āgama*s and Pāli *Nikāya*s to discuss the differences concerning qualities of eminent bhikkhunīs and the attitudes towards women in Pāli and Chinese traditions.[8]

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[5] Norman, *Elders' Verses II*, 85–86.

[6] '*T*' is the abbreviation for *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*.

[7] Sumet, 'Butsuden bungaku ni okeru patāchārā bikuni no shukke monogatari no ichi to sono imi'.

[8] Anālayo, '*Aṅguttara-nikāya/Ekottarika-āgama*'; *idem*, '*Saṃyutta-nikāya/Saṃyukta-āgama*'.

Bingenheimer has identified some later additions in the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama*[9] as two sūtras without Pāli parallels.[10] Durt has identified variants in different narratives of the story of Vāseṭṭhī/Vasiṣṭha from the *Therīgāthā* to Mahāyāna scriptures and claimed that these differences illustrated an evolution in Buddhism.[11] Durt also has studied different narratives of the story of Kajaṅgalā, who could have been the last mother of the Buddha, in Pāli, Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan, and proposed that these narratives not only share the same educational value of Buddhist legends but also manifest a doctrinal evolution in Buddhism.[12] Moreover, Choong has made several comparative studies between the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama*[13] and Pāli *Saṃyukanikāya*s on the Buddhist discourses on Venerable Vaṅgīsa, the priestly Brāhmaṇas, and Brahmās, the exalted Gods, and revealed some disagreements in the teachings on these aspects between these versions.[14]

Similar to previous comparative studies, this research asks how the variations in the Paṭācārā story came into being. The element of a wife being buried alive with her dead husband does not seem to accord with Indian culture, and a mother being forced to eat her own son is also an unknown theme in Pāli literature. Were these additions simply textual corruptions made during the story's transmission, or was the story revised intentionally by its Chinese and Tibetan translators and compilers? Also, when did the variations come into being?

In all, by scrutinising and comparing different narratives and studying the contexts of these records, this paper does not intend to explore what really happened to the early Buddhist women in India

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9 *Za ahan jing*, *T* no. 99. *Bieyi za ahan jing, T* no. 100.

10 Bingenheimer, 'Two Sutras in the Chinese *Samyuktāgama*'.

11 Durt, 'The Vicissitudes of Vāseṭṭhī/Vasiṣṭha'.

12 Durt, 'Kajaṅgalā'.

13 *Za ahan jing*, *T* no. 99. *Bieyi za ahan jing*, *T* no. 100.

14 Choong, 'A Comparison of the Pāli and Chinese Versions of the Vaṅgīsa-thera Saṃyutta'; *idem*, 'A comparison of the Pāli and Chinese versions of the *Brāhmaṇa Saṃyutta*'; *idem*, 'A Comparison of the Pāli and Chinese Versions of the *Brahmā Saṃyutta*'.

but tries to explain the differences among all the versions with regard to their socio-historical contexts. First, this paper discusses why these stories share the same main theme yet have different protagonists. Second, this paper suggests that during the transmission and development of Buddhism, some 'prototypical' stories were combined and adapted along the way, perhaps to serve a moral education purpose. This paper also identifies some of the story elements as later developments. For example, the description of burial customs might reflect the cultural influence of China or other countries along the Silk Road. Moreover, by examining the relevant Pāli and Sanskrit texts, this paper views the story element of a mother being forced to eat her son as a possible misinterpretation of the original Pāli records.

I must point out that I chose the Thī-ap as the basis for comparison because it was compiled much earlier than the other records. Nevertheless, an earlier version of this narrative might exist. The *apadāna* story might not be the 'primitive version'; it just serves as the basis for my comparison in this paper.

2. Different Narratives of the story of Therī Paṭācārā

2.1. Therī Paṭācārā's story in Pāli

2.1.1. The Therīgāthā (fifth–third c. BCE)

There are two sets of verses related to Therī Paṭācārā in Thīg. The first set is vv.112–16, entitled 'Therī Paṭācārā'. In vv.114–16, Therī Paṭācārā describes how she has developed her concentration by paying attention to the water, watching it move from high to low,[15] and how her mind was completely released, like extinguishing a lamp.[16] These verses denote the cultivation of Therī Paṭācārā's mental

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[15] *Pāde pakkhālayitvāna udake su karom' ahaṃ/ pādodakañ ca disvāna thalato ninnam āgataṃ/tato cittaṃ samādhemi assaṃ bhadraṃ va jāniyaṃ* (v.114).

[16] *Tato sūciṃ gahetvāna vaṭṭiṃ okassyām' ahaṃ/padīpasseva nibbānaṃ vimokkho ahu cetaso* (v.116).

acuity, rather than focusing on her background.

Another set of verses is vv.127–32, entitled 'Pañcasatā Paṭācārā'.[17] According to *Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*(henceforth 'Thīg-a'), the verses vv.118–20 in Thīg were spoken by five hundred *therī*s, all of whom had lost children before renunciation. When they lost their children and were overcome with grief, they went to Paṭācārā, paid homage to her, sat down, and explained their struggles. Therī Paṭācārā dispelled their grief and taught them the doctrine with four verses (vv.127–30). After hearing the doctrine, the five hundred women went forth (joined the monastic order) and later attained arahantship, after which they repeated the four verses of Therī Paṭācārā and added two more (vv.131–32). Verse 131 precisely describes how Paṭācārā enlightened the women: 'Truly she has plucked out my dart, hard to see, nestling in my heart. She has thrust away that grief for my son for me, overcome by grief'.[18] Therefore, this set of verses again testifies to Therī Paṭācārā's mental strength, yet there is still no information about Paṭācārā's previous experiences.

2.1.2. Therī Apadāna (second–first c. BCE)

Therī Paṭācārā's experience before going forth is detailed in Thī-ap. Paṭācārā was born into a wealthy family in Śrāvastī and eloped with a man from the country as a young woman. In due course, she gave birth to a son. She travelled with her husband to visit her parents when pregnant with her second child.

Along the way, she went into labour. Seeing a massive rain cloud in the sky, her husband gathered grass to build a temporary shelter. While cutting the grass, he was bitten by a venomous snake and died. Miserable and helpless, Paṭācārā continued her journey after giving birth. She next encountered a stream overflowing its banks. She left her eldest son on one side of the creek and crossed it with her newborn baby. After settling the baby on the other side, she went

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[17] Thīg, 152.

[18] *Abbahī vata me sallaṃ duddasaṃ hadayassitaṃ/yā me sokaparetāya puttasokaṃ byapānudi* (v.131).

to retrieve her other son. At that moment, an osprey carried off her newborn baby, and the current swept away her elder child.

Already experiencing profound grief, Paṭācārā finally arrived in Śrāvastī, whereupon she was informed that all her kin had died. In response, she spoke the following verses:

> Both of my sons have passed away, my husband died on the road;
> Mother, father, and brother are burning on a single pyre.[19]
> *Ubho puttā kālakatā panthe pati mama mato*
> *mātā pitā ca bhātā ca ekacitamihi ḍayhare*. (v.31)

Growing pale and thin, she wandered around depressed. In this condition, she met the Buddha, who converted her and led her onto his path.[20]

2.1.3. Thīg-a (sixth c.), AN-a (fifth c.), and Dhp-a (fifth c.)

In Thīg-a, *Anguttarnikāya-aṭṭhakathā* (henceforth AN-a), and *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* (henceforth Dhp-a), the stories are similar to those in Thī-ap, albeit with some details added. For example, in Thīg-a, AN-a, and Dhp-a, Paṭācārā's husband is identified as a household servant.[21] In Dhp-a, the river that swept away her elder son was called Ciravatī.[22]

The three commentaries also explain how Paṭācārā's parents and brother died. In two of them, the flood (*avattharamāna*)[23] was caused by rain that had fallen overnight (*sabba rattiṃ vuṭṭhi*).[24] This caused the house to collapse and kill her family inside. In the other commentary, a whirlwind (*vātappahāra*)[25] caused the tragedy. Her

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[19] Unless indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author.

[20] Thī-ap, 557. Walters, *Legends of the Buddhist saints,* 1068–73

[21] Thīg-a, 106–10; AN-a I, 356–60; and Dhp-a II, 260–70.

[22] Dhp-a II, 260–70.

[23] Thīg-a, 108; Dhp-a II, 265.

[24] Thīg-a, 108; Dhp-a II, 265.

[25] AN-a I, 359

kin were already burning on a single funeral pyre when Paṭācārā arrived.

The commentaries also explain the origins of Paṭācārā's name. In Thīg-a, she was given that name because she walked around (*acaraṇato*) without clothes (*paṭena*) while mourning, and also because she had engaged in 'fallen conduct' (*patitācārattā*).[26] AN-a states that she was given the name either because people said that she wandered without wearing garments out of grief (*ayaṃ paṭācāraṃ paṭapariharanaṃ vinā carati*) or because of their sarcastic comment: 'This is a wise way of going about' (*paṭu ācāro assa*).[27] However, Dhp-a explains that she was given this name after her ordination because of her happy demeanour (*paṭitācārattā*).[28]

2.1.4. The Overlap between the Stories of Therī Paṭācārā and Therī Kisāgotamī in Pāli

Although the commentaries describe Paṭācārā as suffering from a series of catastrophes, the verses of Paṭācārā in the *Therīgāthā* do not describe how she lost her family members. Nevertheless, the verses of Kisāgotamī in Thīg seem to include the chain of catastrophes that befell Paṭācārā according to the commentaries:

> *Upavijaññā gacchantī, addasāhaṁ patiṁ mataṁ;*
> *Panthamhi vijāyitvāna, appattāva sakaṁ gharaṁ*. (v.218)
> Going along, about to bring forth, I saw my husband dead;
> Having given birth on the path, (I had) not yet arrived at my own house. (v.218)

> *Dve puttā kālakatā, Patī ca panthe mato kapaṇikāya;*
> *Mātā pitā ca bhātā, Ḍayhanti ca ekacitakāyaṁ* (v.219)
> Two sons dead and a husband dead upon the path for miserable me,
> Mother, father, and brother were burning upon one pyre. (v.219)

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[26] Thīg-a 108.

[27] AN-a I, 359.

[28] Dhp-a II, 269.

Khīṇakulīne kapaṇe, Anubhūtaṁ te dukhaṁ aparimāṇaṁ;
Assū ca te pavattaṁ, Bahūni ca jātisahassāni. (v.220)
O miserable woman, with family annihilated, immeasurable pain has been suffered;
Your tears have been shed for many thousands of births. (v.220)

Vasitā susānamajjhe, Athopi khāditāni puttamaṁsāni;
Hatakulikā sabbagarahitā, Matapatikā amatamadhigacchiṁ. (v.221)
Then I saw the flesh of my sons eaten amid the cemetery;
With my family destroyed, despised by all, with my husband dead, I attained the undying. (v.221)[29]

However, in Thī-ap, Kisāgotamī's life leading up to the time when she goes forth is not related to the loss of all her kin. Her story can be briefly summarised as follows.[30]

Kisāgotamī was poor but married into a rich clan. She was despised by all until she gave birth to a son. Unfortunately, after some time, the child died. Unable to bear the grief, she carried her son's dead body around, asking for medicine to bring her son back to life. Eventually, she approached the Buddha and made the same request. The Buddha advised her to get some white mustard seeds from a home where no people had ever died. Kisāgotamī looked everywhere for such a home, but it was, of course, an impossible mission. When she was finally exhausted by her fruitless search, she gained the wisdom to recognise that no one can escape death. With this paradigm-shifting wisdom, she then went forth.

This famous 'mustard story' was also introduced in the commentaries of Thīg-a, AN-a, Dhp-a, and *Saṃyuttanikāyaṭṭhakathā* (henceforth SN-a),[31] albeit with slight variations.

Norman, the translator of Thīg, has already pointed out in his translation that the introductory story of Paṭācārā as told by

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[29] Thīg, 144; Norman. *Elders' Verses II* (trans. of Thīg, henceforth 'EV'), 24.

[30] Thī-ap, 564.

[31] Thīg-a, 169; AN-a I, 378–80; Dhp-a II, 272–75; SN-a I, 190.

Dhammapāla aligns closely with the Kisāgotamī verses (vv.213–23) and proposes that the story has become attached to the wrong *therī*. Norman has furthermore suggested that Paṭācārā may have belonged to the Gotama clan (*gotra*); therefore, Paṭācārā's clan name, Gotamī, is the same as that of Kisāgotamī's, as suggested by the full name of the latter. This might have created confusion in the tradition.[32]

In my opinion, aside from Kisāgotamī and Paṭācārā sharing the same clan name, the verses with the title of 'Pañcasatā Paṭācārā' (vv.127–132) might have contributed to connecting Paṭācārā to the loss of a son. Verses 127–132 are said to have been spoken by five hundred *therī*s, all of whom had lost children and were enlightened by Paṭācārā.[33] Therefore, the experience of Paṭācārā in Thīg was somewhat related to the loss of a son.

In the Pāli texts in which Kisāgotamī appears, her character is usually related to the loss of a son. Besides the abovementioned literature, the *Saṁyutta Nikāya* (henceforth SN) records a visit paid by Māra, the Evil One, while she sat resting in Andhavana. Their conversation also suggests this theme.

The Māra addressed her in verses:

> *Kiṃ nu tvaṃ hataputtāva, ekamāsi rudammukhī;*
> *Vanam ajjhogatā ekā, purisaṃ nu gavesasī*
> Why now, when your son is dead,
> Do you sit alone with a tearful face?
> Having entered the woods all alone,
> Are you looking for a man?

Kisāgotamī identified the Māra and replied in verses, too:

> *Accantaṃ hataputtāmhi, purisā etad antikā;*
> *Na socāmi na rodāmi, na taṃ bhāyāmi āvuso.*
> *Sabbattha vihatā nandī, tamokkhandho padālito;*
> *Jetvāna maccuno senaṃ, viharāmi anāsavā.*

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[32] EV II, 85–86.

[33] Thīg, 152.

I've gotten past the death of sons;
With this, the search for men has ended.
I do not sorrow, I do not weep,
Nor do I fear you, friend.
Delight everywhere has been destroyed,
The mass of darkness has been sundered.
Having conquered the army of Death, I dwell without defiling taints.[34]

Māra was thus defeated.

In sum, there seem to be some disparities between the canonical verses, the apadāna story, and the commentaries. The background story of Paṭācārā shares similarities with the verses of Kisāgotamī in Thīg. Bhikkhu Thanissaro holds that such disparities resulted from different Buddhist traditions attributing different stories to the elders while keeping the canon intact, even when they did not agree with it.[35] This issue will be further discussed in section 3.1.

2.2. Therī Paṭācārā's Story in Buddhist Chinese Scripture

The story of Paṭācārā is barely mentioned in the Sanskrit versions, yet it is told in more complicated versions in three Chinese sūtras. In all three, the name of the protagonist is translated as bhikṣuṇī Weimiao 微妙比丘尼. This name evokes a happy and delicate demeanour, which accords with the definition (*paṭitācārattā*) in Dhp-a.[36]

In *Xianyu jing*, at first, the story closely resembles those found in the Pāli tradition. En route to her parents' home, Paṭācārā's husband was killed by a venomous snake (被蛇毒), her elder son was swept away by the current (浮沒而去), and the newborn was eaten by a wolf (狼已噉訖). Moreover, she discovered that all her kin, including her parents, had died, but their deaths were caused by a fire (父母大小, 近日失火, 一時死盡) instead of a storm or whirlwind, as described in the Pāli tradition.

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[34] SN I, 129; Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The connected Discourses of the Buddha*, 223–4.

[35] Thanissaro, *Poems of the Elders*, 146.

[36] Dhp-a, 269.

Unfortunately, the tragedies that befell Paṭācārā did not end here—more twists and turns are depicted in this sūtra.

After the death of her kin, she married a Brahmin. One night, she was at home giving birth to a baby alone. Therefore, she was slow to answer the door when her husband returned, drunk. Her angry husband broke into the house and killed the newborn boy (即取兒殺). Then, he cooked the baby and forced Paṭācārā to eat it (以酥熬煎, 逼我使食). She was beaten and forced to do it. After her husband fell into a deep sleep, Paṭācārā ran away (棄亡去).

Then, Paṭācārā arrived at Vārānasī (Ch. Boluonai 波羅柰) and married an elder there. After some time, the elder died of sickness. According to the law of that country, whatever the recently deceased cherished most in life should be buried together with them (時彼國法若其生時, 有所愛重, 臨葬之日, 並埋塚中). Since her husband cherished her most, Paṭācārā was buried alive with him. Fortunately, some grave robbers opened the tomb in search of fortune, and Paṭācārā escaped alive.

The leader of the thieves then took Paṭācārā as his wife. Sometime later, after he had been caught and executed, she was buried alive once again, only this time by the thieves alongside their leader. After being trapped in the tomb for three days, wolves, foxes, and dogs broke in to eat the flesh of the dead. Yet again, Paṭācārā escaped (時在塚中, 經於三日, 諸狼狐狗, 復來開塚, 欲噉死人, 我復得出).

After that experience, Paṭācārā decided to seek refuge with the Buddha and therefore rushed to Jetavana Vihāra (馳趣祇洹). The Buddha told Ānanda to give clothes to the naked Paṭācārā and led her to Mahāprajāpatī. After listening to the teachings of Mahāprajāpatī, Paṭācārā realised the karmic cause of her misfortunes.

In a past incarnation, Paṭācārā was married to a wealthy elder. Since she did not produce any offspring, the elder took another younger wife. The younger wife soon had a son, who was cherished by the husband. The senior wife (Paṭācārā's earlier incarnation) was jealous of the baby, thinking that he would eventually control her husband's fortune, so she pierced the baby's head with a needle and the baby died. When accused by the younger wife, the senior wife denied her guilt and even swore that if she had caused the baby to die, in every rebirth, she would suffer her husband being killed by a

venomous snake, her sons being eaten by wolves or carried away by currents, her parents and kin dying in a fire, and being forced to eat her own son and then be buried alive (若殺汝子, 使我世世, 夫為毒蛇所殺, 有兒子者, 水漂狼食, 身見生埋, 自噉其子, 父母大小, 失火而死). Therefore, in her current incarnation as the reborn murderous senior wife, Paṭācārā suffered all these misfortunes. Even after she became an arahant, she always felt that there was a needle piercing her from head to toe.

The reason for her achievement of the arahantship was also explained here. It was because, in one of her past births, she made offerings to an arahant and swore to get the same accomplishment.[37]

Besides *Xianyu jing*, later works produced during the Tang dynasty, like *Fayuan zhulin* 法苑珠林 [Forest of Gems in the Garden of the Dharma][38] and *Zhujing yaoji* 諸經要集 [A Collection of Essentials to All Sūtras], cited this story and retained Paṭācārā as the protagonist (Bhikṣuṇī Weimiao 微妙比丘尼). Moreover, in the Mogao Grottoes 莫高窟, cave 296 of the Northern Zhou 北周 period (557–581) and caves 85 and 96 of the late Tang 晚唐 period (875–907) contain similar murals that Chinese scholars have identified as narrating the story of Paṭācārā as told in *Xianyu jing*.[40]

As demonstrated above, there are three significant differences between the Chinese records and the Pāli commentaries of Paṭācārā. First, the Chinese records described Paṭācārā marrying three times, being forced to eat her own son, and being buried alive twice. Second, the Chinese records added a past life story to explain her karma. Third, in the Chinese records, her parents and kin died in a fire rather than in a storm or whirlwind, as in the Pāli texts. These differences will be discussed further in later sections.

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37 *Xianyu jing*, *T* no. 202, 4: 3.367b22–368b26.

38 *Fayuan zhulin*, *T* no. 2122, 53: 58.725a2–c6.

39 *Zhujing yaoji*, *T* no. 2123, 54: 9.80c22–81b13.

40 Shi, 'Cong Dunhuang bihua "weimiao biqiuni bian"', 8–12

2.3. The Story of Therī Kisāgotamī in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism

Kisāgotamī was translated as Shou qutanmi 瘦瞿曇彌, Jilishe qutanmi 吉離舍瞿曇彌, Chishe qiaotanmi 翅舍憍曇彌 in Chinese Buddhism, and *skem mo gau ta ma* in Tibetan. The following is a general introduction to her story in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism.

2.3.1. The *Saṁyuttāgama* 雜阿含經

As in SN, in its Chinese counterpart, the *Saṁyuttāgama* (henceforth 'SA') records Kisāgotamī defeating Māra. In the two SA translations, Kisāgotamī's (translated as Jilishe qutanmi 吉離舍瞿曇彌 and Chishe qiaotanmi 翅舍憍曇彌, respectively) loss of her son was mentioned by Māra: 'You have lost your son (child), crying and sad'.[41]

As in SN, no detailed information is given.

2.3.2. *Da bo niepan jing* 大般涅槃經

The Chinese *Da bo niepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (Skt. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*) mentions that Kisāgotamī (Shou qutanmi 瘦瞿曇彌) had lost her mind (狂心錯亂) after but regained her sanity after seeing the Buddha (因見我故, 還得本心).[42]

2.3.3. *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論

Da zhidu lun 大智度論 (Skt. *Mahāprajnāpāramitā-śāstra*) mentions that before going forth, Kisāgotamī (Chishe qiaotanmi, 翅舍伽憍曇) suffered the loss of seven children, and therefore she went mad from severe grief (本白衣時, 七子皆死, 大憂愁故, 失心發狂). The number of sons she lost is not detailed in the first two sources listed.[43]

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[41] *Za ahan jing*, *T* no. 99, 2: 45.326b29). 汝今者何為, 懷憂坐樹下, 歔欷而流淚? 將不喪子乎? *Bieyi za ahan jing*, *T* no. 100, 2: 12.454a27–28.

[42] *Da bo niepan jing, T* no. 374, 12: 26.520 a22–23.

[43] *Da zhidu lun, T* no. 1509, 25: 8.118c23–24.

2.3.4. *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye zashi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 and its Tibetan counterpart

Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye zashi 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (Skt. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayaksudrakavastu,* henceforth MVV) depicts a much more detailed story in which Kṛṣā Gautamī (P. Kisāgotamī; Ch. Shou qudami 瘦瞿答彌) was born in Vārānasī (婆羅疤斯) to a wealthy householder named Gautama. At birth, her father promised her to the son of his friend in Takṣaśilā (得叉城).

After detailing her background, MVV introduces Kṛṣā Gautamī and her husband's experience of associating with courtesans. Both were cheated by cunning and greedy courtesans.[44]

Similarly, en route to her parents' home to give birth, Kṛṣā Gautamī experienced a chain of catastrophes. Her husband died of a snake bite; her elder son was swept away by the currents; the newborn was then taken and dropped by a jackal (Ch. *yegan* 野幹, Skt. śṛgāla), and so died too. Her parents and relatives were killed by a thunderbolt (霹靂).

The rest of Kṛṣā Gautamī's experiences resemble those of Paṭācārā in *Xianyu jing*. When Kṛṣā Gautamī delayed opening the door for her drunken husband because she was giving birth, her husband, an evil weaver, flung the newborn into oil, boiled it, and ordered Kṛṣā Gautamī to eat its flesh. She left the weaver and became the wife of a caravan leader. Afterwards, a robber chief (賊帥) took her as his wife after killing the caravan leader. When the robber chief was subsequently sentenced to death by the king of the North (北方國主), Kṛṣā Gautamī was then transferred to the king and was made chief queen (大夫人) to the king. Upon the king's death, she was buried alive in the king's tomb. Fortunately, when the grave robbers opened the king's tomb, they found Kṛṣā Gautamī alive. Due to her extreme hunger, thirst, and grief, Kṛṣā Gautamī went out of her mind. She wandered around naked, with mud all over her body and

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[44] These narratives are not found anywhere else concerning the story of Kisāgotamī and seem to be irrelevant to the main theme of Kisāgotamī's suffering. Therefore, they are not detailed here.

with cracked hands and feet (遍體泥塗手足皴裂, 露形而去), until she reached Śrāvastī (室羅伐), where she met the Buddha and went forth.

In addition, the Buddha explained to the monks why Kṛṣā Gautamī's family members suffered the catastrophes.[45] It was because they cursed an arahant with these catastrophes. Nevertheless, the reason for the suffering of Kṛṣā Gautamī herself was not mentioned.

The story in the Tibetan counterpart resembles that in the Chinese version.[46]

2.4 Other Relevant Records in Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist Literature

Besides Kisāgotamī and Paṭācārā, there are other protagonists in Chinese Buddhist literature who also experience a series of catastrophes echoing the principal themes of the Paṭācārā story. These records will be introduced in the following sub-sections.

2.4.1. Utpalavarṇā in the Chinese Records

In four Chinese records, the protagonist is Utpalavarṇā, which literally means the colour of blue lotus.

One Chinese sūtra, *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* 大方便佛報恩經 [Great Skillful Means Sūtra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness] relates Utpalavarṇā (Huase biqiuni 華色比丘尼) to a chain of catastrophes. The story is generalised as follows.[47]

Utpalavarṇā lived in Śrāvastī (Ch. Shewei guo 舍衛國) and married a man from the north. Following the northern customs, she returned to her parents' home to give birth to her baby, accompanied by her husband and two sons (instead of one son as in previous records).

The chain of catastrophes happened again. Her husband was bit and killed by a large venomous serpent. The eldest son was swallowed

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[45] *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye zashi*, *T* no. 1451, 24: 30.352b24–357a9.

[46] *'dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*. Kangyur 11-122a to 134b.

[47] *Dafangbianfo bao'en jing*, *T* no. 156, 3: 5.152c19–153b21.

by tigers, and the two younger ones were both swept away by the current. Her parents had been killed in a fire and that their home and all their belongings had been reduced to ash (昨夜失火, 所燒蕩盡, 父母亦喪).

Later marriage experiences are also similar. Thereafter, she was taken to be the wife of a bandit chief, for whom Utpalavarṇā was supposed to open the door quickly when he returned from carrying out robberies. Again, one day Utpalavarṇā was delayed because of labour. When the husband got inside and figured out what had happened, he thought the baby was inauspicious and therefore killed it out of anger. Then he forced Utpalavarṇā to eat their newborn baby.

Later, when the chief bandit was caught and executed, Utpalavarṇā was buried alive with him according to the law. When a grave robber opened the tomb, he took Utpalavarṇā away and made her his wife. When the grave robber was also caught and executed, Utpalavarṇā was again buried alive. However, because the tomb was not securely sealed, tigers and wolves opened it at midnight to eat the corpse. This gave Utpalavarṇā another opportunity to ssurvive. She then wandered the roads and was later led to the Buddha.

The whole story was again repeated by *Jinglü yixiang* 經律異相 [Miraculous Events in Sūtras and Vinayas][48] and in *Yaoshijing shu* 藥師經疏 (Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru-vaiḍūryaprabha-rāja-sūtra-śāstra*).[49]

Besides these three accounts, the Dunhuang scripture *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji* 佛說諸經雜緣喻因由記 [*Avadāna* Stories by the Buddha in all the Sūtras] introduces a similar story and refers to Utpalavarṇā (蓮花色尼) as the protagonist. In this story, Utpalavarṇā gave birth on the road while travelling back to her parents' house. Her husband, two sons, and parents died in the same way as in the previous literature. Then, she married a Brahmin and was buried alive after his death. Again, Utpalavarṇā married the grave robber who opened the tomb and discovered her. One day, the robber came home drunk. Utpalavarṇā delayed opening the door for her husband until she had delivered the boy. The robber suspected

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[48] *Jinglü yixiang*, *T* no. 2121, 53: 7.37b12–c14.

[49] *Yaoshijing shu*, *T* no. 2767, 85: 1.316b13–317a12.

that Utpalavarṇā was slow to open the door because she had other men in the house. He even thought that the child was not his (元來更有外人, 汝不開門急來. 既不急來, 兒亦不是我生之子).[50] Therefore, he killed and cooked the newborn and forced Utpalavarṇā to eat it. Later, when the robber died, Utpalavarṇā was buried alive with him. Finally, wolves opened the tomb to eat the corpse and allowed her to escape.[51]

This scripture also included the past life element, just as it is recounted in *Xianyu jing*. Utpalavarṇā was considered the rebirth of the jealous elder wife who had killed the son of the younger wife.

2.4.2. Utpala in Tibetan Dsanglun

In the Tibetan literature, *mdzangs blun zhes bya ba'i mdo* [The Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish, also known as '*Dsanglun*'][52] the counterpart of *Xianyu jing*, the protagonist is spelled as Utpala (ud pa la), which means blue lotus, instead of Paṭācārā. As Utpalavarṇā (Uppalavaṇṇā in Pāli), was also translated as 'the blue lotus' (Qinglianhua 青蓮花/青蓮華) in Chinese, and *Dsanglun* was said to be translated from Chinese. Therefore, it is reasonable to take Utpala and Utpalavarṇā as the same figure.

2.4.3. An Unknown Woman in Another Two Chinese Sūtras

Another two Chinese sūtras, *Foshuo furen yugu jing* 佛說婦人遇辜經 [Sūtra on a Woman Who Encountered Misfortune] and *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* 佛說現報當受經 [Sūtra on the Cause for the Retribution in this Life], tell similar stories, but the protagonist is an unnamed woman.

In *Foshuo furen yugu jing*, in a similar situation, the unnamed poor woman's husband was killed by a serpent. Her eldest son, who was seven years old (大子七歲), was eaten by a wolf (狼食其子), and her younger son was carried away by the current (墮水隨流). With

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[50] See note 49.

[51] Wang, 'Dunhuang xieben *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji*'.

[52] *mdzangs blun zhes bya ba'i mdo*. Dege Kangyur 74-214b to 218a.

extreme anguish, the woman lost her mind, fell into water and suffered a miscarriage (迷惑失志頓躓水中, 墮所懷子). She subsequently discovered that her parents' home had been destroyed by fire and her parents had died the day before (昨家失火, 皆燒父母, 悉盡無餘). Moreover, all her kin had been killed by robbers. The woman lost her mind and wandered naked (心迷意惑, 不識東西, 脫衣裸形, 迷惑狂走) until she met the Buddha and went forth.[53]

In *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing*, the story takes a slightly different direction. In this story, a woman was buried alive with her husband who had died from disease. Then a grave robber opened the tomb and took her as his wife. When the grave robber was caught and executed, she was buried alive again. After wild animals opened the tomb in search of a corpse to eat, she escaped and wandered alone.

The woman subsequently married an elder and had two sons. One day, she delayed opening the door for her husband because she was in labour. Her drunken husband then killed the newborn and forced her to eat it. Yet the woman forgave her husband, and she went to visit her parents with her husband and two sons. (This record does not mention if she was pregnant.) On the way, the husband died due to a serpent bite, the elder son was eaten by tigers and wolves, and the younger son was swept away by the current. Moreover, she discovered that her parents and all her kin had died in a fire (失火).

The past life story of the unknown woman is also introduced, exactly as depicted in *Xianyu jing*. The unknown woman here was the reborn jealous elder wife who had killed the son of her husband's younger wife.[54]

3. Discussion

In the following, twelve key elements are identified in the records introduced above, and a table is made to indicate the presence of these key elements in the abovementioned literature.

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[53] *Foshuo furen yugu jing*, *T* no. 571, 14: 1.944a6–b15.

[54] *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing*, *T* no. 2892, 85: 1.1409c18–1410c18.

TABLE 1 A comparison of the key elements in different Buddhist narratives Legends

			Paṭācārā	**Kisāgotamī**	**Utpalavarṇā**	**unknown**
Pāli		Thīg	1	1, 2, 3	–	–
		Thī-ap	1, 2, 3, 9, 10	1, 5, 9	–	–
		SN	–	1	–	–
	Commentaries	Thīg-a	1, 2, 3, 9, 10	1, 5, 9	–	–
		SN-a	1, 2, 3, 9, 10	1, 5, 9	–	–
		AN-a	1, 2, 3, 9, 10	1, 5, 9	–	–
		Dhp-a	1, 2, 3, 9, 10	1, 5, 9	–	–
Chinese	*Xianyu jing* (Cited by *Fayuan zhulin* and *Zhujing yaoji*)		1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	–	–	–
	SA		–	1	–	–
	Da bo niepan jing		–	1, 9	–	–
	Da zhidu lun		–	1 (7 sons), 9	–	–
	MVV		–	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,12	–	–
	Da fangbian fo baoen jing (cited by *Jinglü yixiang* and Y*aoshijing shu*)		–	–	1, 2 (3 sons), 4, 6, 7	–
	Foshuo zhujing zayuan yu yinyou ji		–	–	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8	–
	Foshuo furen yugu jing		–	–	–	1, 2 (did not give birth), 4, 6, 7, 9, 10
	Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing		–	–	–	1, 2 (did not give birth), 4, 6, 7, 8

		Paṭācārā	**Kisāgotamī**	**Utpalavarṇā**	**unknown**
Tibetan	*'dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*	–	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,12	–	–
	Dsanglun	1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10			

Legend:

1. The general introduction of the protagonist's loss of her son(s).
2. The principal theme of the Paṭācārā story that her husband was bitten by a serpent, her elder son was eaten by animals, her younger son was swept away by the current, and her parents and all her kin died.
3. Her parents and kin were killed by floods caused by a storm or by winds.
4. Her parents and kin died in a fire.
5. The famous 'mustard seeds story'.
6. Being buried alive with her dead husband.
7. Being forced to eat her own son.
8. Her past life as the jealous elder wife.
9. Losing her mind.
10. Wandering naked.
11. Stories concerning courtesans before her marriage.
12. Her family members' past life story

Based on the above comparisons, the protagonist of this tale will first be discussed in the next sub-section, followed by the development of the tale in Buddhist literature from India to China.

3.1. The Protagonist

As seen above, different Buddhist narratives which contain the main theme of 'The Paṭācārā Story', have four different protagonists: Paṭācārā, Utpalavarṇā (ud pa la), Kṛṣā Gautamī (skem mo gau ta ma), and an unknown woman. Table 2 shows the details.

TABLE 2 A comparison of the protagonists in different Buddhist narratives which contains the main theme of 'The Paṭācārā Story'.

			Date of compilation	Protagonist
		Thī-ap	second–first century BCE	Paṭācārā
	Commentaries	Dhp-a	fifth century CE	Paṭācārā
		SN-a	fifth century CE	Paṭācārā
		AN-a	fifth century CE	Paṭācārā
		Thīg-a	sixth century CE	Paṭācārā
Chinese	*Xianyu jing* (Cited by *Fayuan zhulin* and *Zhujing yaoji*)		455	Paṭācārā
	MVV		710	Kṛṣā Gautamī
	Da fangbian fo baoen jing (cited by *Jinglü yixiang* and *Yaoshijing shu*)		third century CE or sixth century CE	Utpalavarṇā
	Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji		ninth century CE	Utpalavarṇā
	Foshuo furen yugu jing		fourth–fifth century CE	An unknown woman
	Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing		seventh–eighth century CE	An unknown woman
Tibetan	*'dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*		tenth–eleventh century CE	Kṛṣā Gautamī (skem mo gau ta ma)
	Dsanglun		ninth century CE	Utpalavarṇā (ud pa la)

3.1.1. Paṭācārā

Pāli literature, from *Therī Apadāna* to the commentaries of Buddhaghosa and Dhammapāla in the Theravāda tradition, consistently put Paṭācārā as the protagonist who is left bereft of all kin, whereas Kisāgotamī is connected to the famous mustard story.

Though the records from the Theravāda tradition accord with Thī-ap, it seems to conflict with their verses in Thīg. Therefore, in EV, Norman was prone to accept Kisāgotamī as the protagonist and claimed that 'the story has somehow in the tradition become attached to the wrong *therī*'.[55]

Theravāda tradition explains away this conflict with the verses of Kisāgotamī in the *Therīgāthā* as her citing other people's experiences to explain dharma. This is not the only case of Theravāda tradition treating verses and background stories in this way. For example, Dhammapāla also explained that it was the experience of Gaṅgātīriya's mother, not her own, that made Therī Uppalavaṇṇā reproach the danger, degradation, and defilement of sensual pleasures in two verses of hers in Thīg (vv.224–225),[56] though Therī Uppalavaṇṇā used the first person in the narrative.[57] Theravāda tradition might have made such a judgment based on solid proof that the *therī*s (Therī Uppalavaṇṇā and Therī Kisāgotamī) were citing others' experiences in their verses to explain Dharma. However, we are not aware of such relevant proof in the present.

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[55] EV II, 85–86.

[56] 'The two of us, mother and daughter, were co-wives! I experienced a profound stirring, amazing, hair raising.' (*Ubho mātā ca dhītā ca, mayaṁ āsuṁ sapattiyo/ Tassā me ahu saṁvego, abbhuto lomahaṁsano.*) Thīg, 144, v.224. 'Woe upon sensual pleasures, impure and foul, troublesome, wherein we, mother and daughter, were co-wives!' (*Dhiratthu kāmā asucī, duggandhā bahukaṇṭakā; Yattha mātā ca dhītā ca, sabhariyā mayaṁ ahuṁ*). Thīg, 144, v.225.

[57] 'One day, considering the danger, degradation and defilement of sensual pleasures regarding the mother and daughter of Thera Gaṅgātīriya who lived together as his co-wives, she repeated the verses that were spoken (by the mother) when a profound stirring arose.' (*sā...kāmānaṃ ādīnavaṃ okāraṃ saṃkilesañ ca paccavekkhamānā Gaṅgātīriyatttherassa mātuyā dhitāyā saddhim sapattivāsaṃ uddissa saṃvegajātāya vuttagāthā paccanubhāsanti.... Tā pana tāya vuttagāthā va kāmesu ādīnavadassanavasena paccubhāsantī*). Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 260; Thī-ap, 188–89.

3.1.2. Kriśa Gautamī

Contrary to the Pāli tradition, in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, it is Kriśa Gautamī who suffered the loss of all her kin, as evidenced by MVV. The Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition might have referred to the verses of Kisāgotamī in Thīg to make such an attribution. Nevertheless, this attribution does not seem to accord with Thī-ap.

As seen above, ever since the Pāli commentaries were written, the commentators and Buddhist scholars of different schools have disagreed on the protagonists of some background stories. As discussed above, some scholars hold that such disparities resulted from different Buddhist traditions attributing different stories to the elders while keeping the canon intact, even when they did not agree with it.[58] This might be the reason why Kriśa Gautamī and Paṭācārā took the protagonist in different schools' records of 'The Paṭācārā Story'.

3.1.3. Utpalavarṇā

As for Utpalavarṇā, in my understanding, casting Utpalavarṇā as the main character of this tale of consecutive catastrophes is most probably a misidentification, based on her other background stories in Buddhist literature. I base this argument on the following.

First, Utpalavarṇā (or Uppalavaṇṇā in Pāli) seems to have her own independent background story which is totally different from the main theme of the Paṭācārā story in Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan.

In Pāli tradition, before going forth, Uppalavaṇṇā was an unmarried, beautiful girl born into a rich family. She went forth to prevent her powerful suitors from fighting.[59] Thī-ap explains that her verses in Thīg cite another's experiences to warn against the danger of sensual pleasures.[60]

Chinese and Tibetan *vinaya*s mention that she was previously married before going forth. In those *vinaya*s, Utpalavarṇā had lived

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[58] Thanissaro, *Poems of the Elders*, 146.

[59] Thī-ap, 556; AN-a I, 355; Dhp-a II, 48; Thīg-a, 183.

[60] Thī-ap, 188–89.

with her mother and, later, her daughter as rival wives, which made her feel ashamed and prompted her to go forth. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, the story of Utpalavarṇā involved her marrying her own son, with her own daughter as a co-wife.[61]

In summary, in Pāli, then, Uppalavaṇṇā was a decent unmarried girl before going forth. By contrast, in Chinese and Tibetan *vinaya*s, Utpalavarṇā went forth after several unusual polygamous marriages. Nevertheless, none of these records mention that Uppalavaṇṇā had lost all her kin or even her son. Her background story is not related to the principal theme of experiencing a chain of catastrophes, as in the Paṭācārā story.

Furthermore, some traditions like Theravada and Mūlasarvāstivāda consistently and clearly treated Paṭācārā and Uppalavaṇṇā, or Kṛṣā Gautamī and Utpalavarṇā, as two different figures.

In Pāli, it is always Paṭācārā who has lost all her kin, whereas Uppalavaṇṇā is a decent unmarried young girl. In Mūlasarvāstivāda traditions, Kṛṣā Gautamī suffered a chain of catastrophes that led all her kin to die,[62] while Utpalavarṇā suffered from several unusual polygamous marriages and her former life as a courtesan.[63] In *Genben shuo yiqie youbu bichuni pi'naiye* 根本說一切有部苾芻尼毘奈耶 (Skt. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Bhikṣuṇī Vinayavibhaṅga*), when Thullanandā taught her disciple how to verbally attack the other bhikṣuṇīs, Thullanandā attacked Kṛṣā Gautamī for having been forced to eat her own son's flesh, which was a major element in the Paṭācārā stories. By contrast, she attacked Utpalavarṇā for 'selling her beauty' (engaging in prostitution) in six major cities,[64] which is one element of the story

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[61] *Mishasaibu hexi wufen lü*, *T* no. 1421, 22: 4.25a8–25b27. *Sifen lü*, *T* no. 1428, 22: 6.605c06–606a28. *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye*, *T* no. 1442, 23: 49.897a32–899a11. *'dul ba rnam 'byed*, Dege Kangyur 8-1-217b to 227b.

[62] *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye zashi*, *T* no. 1451, 24: 30. 352b24–357a9. *'dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*. Kangyur 11-122a to 134b

[63] *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye*, *T* no. 1442, 23: 49.897a32–899a11. *'dul ba rnam 'byed*, Dege Kangyur 8-1-217b to 227b

[64] '吐羅尼曰:……蓮花色尼,"於六大城衒色自活" ……瘦喬答彌,"被他抑令食其子肉者"'. *Genben shuo yiqie youbu bichuni pi'naiye*, *T* no. 1443, 23: 18.1007a1–5.

of Utpalavarṇā in the *Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 (Skt. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayavibhaṅga*).

Second, only in some Chinese and Tibetan records does Utpalavarṇā take the main role of 'The Paṭācārā Story'. Some Chinese scholars have found disagreements in the stories concerning the backgrounds of Utpalavarṇā and tried to make sense of them. But their efforts to merge these different stories of Utpalavarṇā in the Chinese *vinaya*s, *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji*, and *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* seem to have been unsuccessful.

The renowned Chinese scholar Chen Yinke 陳寅恪 (1890–1969) argued that Utpalavarṇā's several unusual polygamous marriages were the result of one of the seven oaths of the elder wife in *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji*: it states that the jealous elder wife who had murdered the son of the younger wife made seven oaths, but only six are clearly listed in the text. Chen suspected that the seventh oath of the elder wife was related to the unusual polygamous marriages and thus explained why Utpalavarṇā suffered in that way. On this basis, Chen claimed that all the elements, including the chain of catastrophes and the indecent marriages, should be attributed to Utpalavarṇā. Moreover, Chen further explained that the seventh oath was deliberately deleted from the text to appease conservative Chinese culture.[65]

However, recent scholarship based on Thīg, Chinese *vinaya*s, and *Xianyu jing* has suggested that Utpalavarṇā in *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji* and *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* is a misidentification of Paṭācārā in *Xianyu jing*. Pu and Zhao reasonably point out Utpalavarṇā's misidentification, although they solely based their argument on Chinese records.[66] In fact, Pāli commentaries offer more evidence than Chinese literature that the story of Uppalavaṇṇā does not align with the principal themes of the Paṭācārā story. They also did not notice that in Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition, Kisāgotamī also has taken the role of protagonist in the Paṭācārā story.

Furthermore, one missing oath in one Dunhuang scripture seems

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[65] Chen, 'Lianhuase ni chujia yinyuan ba', 39–45.

[66] Pu and Zhao, 'Hanyi fodianzhong lianhuaseni wenxuegushi leixing kaoshu', 31–54.

a questionable basis for merging Uppalavaṇṇā's marriage experience into this chain of catastrophes that characterises the Paṭācārā story. Only *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji* pointed out that the elder wife made seven oaths. The other two Chinese sūtras, *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* and *Xianyu jing*, similarly refer to the elder wife swearing oaths but do not indicate there were seven in total.

In addition, this misidentification is further supported by the background of *Da fangbian fo baoen jing*, the Dunhuang scripture *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji* , and the Tibetan *Dsanglun.*

Though the scripture of *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* was affiliated with the Buddhist sūtra catalogue of the Eastern Han dynasty (20–220) in the Taishō canon, with its translator unknown, there are several controversies regarding this sūtra.

Many scholars have argued that it constitutes apocrypha compiled by native Chinese monks. For example, Lin suggested that it was compiled by Chinese monks based on *Xianyu jing* and *Sapoduo pinipiposha* 薩婆多毘尼毘婆沙 (Skt. *Sarvāstivāda Vinayavibhāṣā, T* no. 1440).[67] Fang and Gao, based on a textual study, suggested that *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* was not likely translated from an Indian text but compiled by native Chinese Buddhists in the Southern and Northern dynasties (420–589) around the time that *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 [Records on the Production of the Chinese *Tripiṭaka*] (510–514) and *Jinglü yixiang* (516) were compiled.[68] Their argument is based on some terms in this sūtra that only appear in Buddhist literature written by native Chinese and that appear more frequently during that period.

In all, numerous scholars have viewed *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* as apocryphal, and compiled by native Chinese without Indian origin after *Xianyu jing.* Therefore, the record of Utpalavarṇā in *Da fangbian fo baoen jing* could be a misidentification of Paṭācārā in *Xianyu jing:* when writing the story of Utpalavarṇā in *Da fangbian fo baoen jing*, the author might have adopted the story of Paṭācārā from *Xianyu jing.*

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[67] Lin, 'Dafangbianfo bao'en jing zuanzhekao jiqi tangdai bianwen', 65–91.

[68] Fang and Gao, 'Cong Fojiao ciyu kaobian Dafangbianfo bao'en jing de shidai', 140–47.

Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji is an abridged *bianwen* 變文 (transformation text), composed by monks in Dunhuang to popularise Buddhist doctrines. *Bianwen* was a form of Chinese literature which originated in the popularisation of Buddhist doctrines through storytelling and pictorial representation during the Tang dynasty (618–907) and the Five Dynasties (907–960). Historical and contemporary stories have both been found in Dunhuang *bianwen* manuscripts. According to some scholars, most of the stories, including the story of Utpalavarṇā in *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji*, were adapted from *Xianyu jing*.[69] Consequently, Utpalavarṇā in *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji* might again be a misidentification of Paṭācārā.

Nevertheless, some scholars have suggested that some of these *bianwen* might also have been derived from an oral tradition circulating in Central Asia.[70] In this sense, the assignment of Utpalavarṇā to the Paṭācārā story might have already existed in this oral tradition in Central Asia. Therefore, it makes sense that some misidentification might have occurred through the story's oral transmission, especially when different languages were utilised.

The Tibetan *Dsanglun* is said to have been translated from *Xianyu jing* by Chos-grub (or Mgos-Chos-grub) around 850. Again, if Chos-grub exclusively based the story in the *Dsanglun* on the *Xianyu jing*, then Utpalavarṇā could be a misidentification of Paṭācārā.

Nevertheless, Mair has pointed out that by the time Chos-grub produced his *Dsanglun*, there were already *avadāna* and other types of collections in the Khotanese, Sogdian, Uighur, Tocharian, and Indian languages of Central Asia containing the same stories as those found in *Xianyu jing*. Moreover, these recensions might have even taken place prior to the writing of *Xianyu jing*.[71] Considering this, Chos-grub might have consulted these non-Chinese versions of *avadāna* collections. The assignment of Utpalavarṇā to the Paṭācārā

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[69] Liang, '*Xianyu jing* zai Dunhuang de liuchuan yu fazhan', 123–62.

[70] Mair, 'The Linguistic and Textual Antecedents of the Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish', 361–420.

[71] Ibid.

story in the *Dsanglun* might then be traceable to those non-Chinese collections. Further research could be done on these non-Chinese collections in the Western Regions 西域.

In summary, in the earliest record, *Therī Apadāna*, Paṭācārā is the woman left bereft of her all kin. However, in later records, there are disagreements over the protagonist. Theravādin nominated Paṭācārā, while Mūlasarvāstivādin claimed Kisāgotamī to be the story's protagonist. Both might have had valid justifications, of which we are now ignorant; however, attributing Utpalavarṇā to this story is more likely a misidentification caused by the story's distribution over time, as supported by other evidence connected to this figure.

3.2. Added Elements in the Mahāyāna Sūtras

One salient difference between the Pāli records and the Chinese (Tibetan) records is that the latter usually include more elements of the story, and these added elements seem to be complete enough to narrate an entirely separate story.

First, in every Chinese record, the protagonist (whether Paṭācārā, Kṛṣā Gautamī, or Utpalavarṇā) endured a terrible marriage after the death of all her kin, during which time she was buried alive and forced to eat her own son. These elements are not found in any Pāli records.

Second, four Chinese records out of six give their protagonists similar past lives involving a jealous elder wife (*Xianyu jing*, *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji, Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing*, and MVV). Neither the Pāli records nor the other two Chinese sūtras (*Da fangbian fo baoen jing* and *Foshuo furen yugu jing*) contain this element.

Third, the Chinese *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayaksudrakavastu* and its Tibetan counterpart, which was written last, contain even more elements not found in any of the others, such as the protagonist's (Kṛṣā Gautamī) association with a courtesan.

How did these extra elements come into being? One incomplete Dunhuang scripture might offer some insight. Dunhuang scripture 256 (*Dunyan* 敦研 256) has been identified as dating back to the Northern dynasty (386–581 CE) and contains eleven very concise

avadāna stories in thirty-three lines. Taken together, the different stories served as a reminder for the monks in Dunhuang to popularise Buddhist doctrines through storytelling.[72] In this scripture, lines sixteen to seventeen introduce the story of the jealous elder wife, who killed the son of the younger wife, leaving the latter to seek retribution in the elder wife's next seven rebirths.[73] Lines twenty one to twenty five introduce the famous story of Paṭācārā, who was bereft of her kin.[74] Between the two stories, lines eighteen to nineteen introduce another story about the son of the elder wife mistreating the younger wife of his father after his father's death. This story is irrelevant to stories of Paṭācārā.

Based on this scripture, three issues should be discussed. First, at least in some early versions of the Chinese *avadāna* stories, the main theme of the Paṭācārā story itself, as contained in the Pāli version, is a complete story without the addition of later marriage experiences, which are also absent from this Dunhuang scripture.

Second, the elder wife killing the son of the younger wife seems to also be a separate story deviating from the main theme of the Paṭācārā story, at least in some early versions, because this scripture listed the two stories separately.

Third, the story of the jealous elder wife in this scripture seems to fit with the thirty-seventh *avadāna* story in *Zhongjing zhuan za piyu*. In this story, the barren elder wife put a needle into the head of the son of the younger wife, which made the baby cry and stop eating. The baby died seven days later. This part accords with line sixteen: 'Once, a man had two wives. The elder wife killed the younger wife's son out of jealousy' (昔人有兩婦, 大婦妒嫉, 煞小婦子). The resentful younger wife received the eight precepts from the monks, hoping to fulfill her wish to avenge the elder wife in her next

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[72] Chen, 'Fojiao piyu gushi lüeyaoben zai Xiyu he Dunhuang de liuchuan', 201–28.

[73] '(昔人有兩婦, 大婦妒嫉, 煞小婦子, 小婦惱死, 作大婦女七返.' Ibid.

[74] '(舍)衛城人天竺(娶)婦, 到產二子. 婦任(妊)身, 夫婦乘車, 欲至天竺. 蛇煞牛, 煞夫, 兒狼噉, 婦復傷身. 問人父母平安不? 雲:失火燒盡. 問姑姊平安, 遇賊死盡.' Ibid.

life. Hence, she was reborn as the elder wife's daughter seven times. Each time, the daughter died at a very young age, making her mother grief-stricken. This part accords with line sixteen: 'The younger wife died with resentment. Hence, she was reborn as the elder wife's daughter seven times' (小婦惱死, 作大婦女七返). In the end of the story, a monk explained the karmic cause to the elder wife, and she felt regret for what she had done. At the same time, the younger wife, having been reborn seven times as the elder wife's daughter, was then reborn as a venomous snake that wanted to kill the elder wife. The monk enlightened the snake and taught it not to reciprocate hatred in future rebirths (世世莫復惡意相向).[75]

That teaching at the end of the story reminds us of another Pāli story based on the stanza 'hatred is never appeased by hatred' in the *Dhammapada* (henceforth Dhp).[76] In the Dhp–a, the elder barren wife was worried that the younger wife would be the only mistress of the household once she had a child. Therefore, she caused the younger one to suffer two miscarriages. During the younger wife's third pregnancy, with a fully mature baby in her womb, the elder wife put a drug in her food that killed both the child and its mother. Before she died, the younger wife made an earnest wish to kill the elder wife's children in her future rebirth. Then the younger wife was reborn as a cat. The cat ate the eggs of the hen, who was the reborn elder wife, three consecutive times. Then, there was a role-reversal. The former elder wife was then reborn as a resentful leopardess to take revenge. It devoured three times the offspring of a doe, who was the rebirth of the former younger wife. Again, there was a role-reversal. In her third rebirth, the younger wife took the form of an ogress to take revenge, while the elder wife was reborn a young woman. The ogress disguised herself and devoured the children of the young woman twice. The third time, when trying to escape the ogress, the young woman entered the temple Jetavana and asked the Buddha to

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[75] *Zhongjing zhuan za piyu, T* no. 208, 4: 2.540a28–c29.

[76] '*Nahi verena verānī – sammantidha kudācanṃ, averena ca sammanti – esadhammo sanatano*' (Dhp, 5). Translation: Indeed, hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is appeased by non-hatred; this is the eternal law.

save the life of her son. The Buddha explained the karma between the two, and spoke: 'Hatred is never appeased by hatred'. Finally, the two made peace with one another.[77]

This story differs somewhat from the one in Dunhuang scripture and Kumārajīva's story, with regard to how the elder wife murdered the baby of the younger wife and what happened in their later rebirths. Nevertheless, their storylines are largely similar and share the same morals; therefore, they could be viewed as having the same origins. It is noteworthy that in both *Zhongjing zhuan za piyu* and *Dhammapada*, this story is independent, just as in this Dunhuang scripture 256.

Therefore, it might be reasonable to conjecture that in the four Chinese sūtras, two originally independent *avadāna* stories have been combined into one, perhaps for moral education purposes. After all, the past life story explains why Paṭācārā suffered so much in this life and admonishes people to refrain from engaging in evil behaviour. Moreover, considering how these four records came into being, this conjecture seems plausible.

First, the Chinese *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayaksudrakavastu*, which was translated later than the other three, apparently added more elements to the story than were recorded anywhere else. While combining or inserting elements is not rare in Buddhist literature, it is not clear whether the changes came from the original Sanskrit version or were made during the Chinese translation.

Second, the procedure of compiling *Xianyu jing* implied the possibility of such a combination taking place. How *Xianyu jing* was compiled is described in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*. In the late Northern Liang 北涼後期 period (the early fifth c.), eight monks, including Tanjue 曇覺 (or Huijue 慧覺) and Weide 威德, attended a *pañcavārṣika* assembly (般遮於瑟之會)[78] in Khotan (Yudian 於闐, now Hotan 和田 in Xinjiang province of China) on their way west in search of true Buddhist dharma. They individually recorded and translated what

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[77] Dhp–a I, 45–53.

[78] A *pañcavārṣika* assembly was a great quinquennial assembly instituted by King Aśoka for the confession of sins, the inculcation of morality and discipline, and the distribution of charity to the laity who gathered.

they heard from the elders from the Western Regions and middle East Asia in sūtras and vinayas. In Kocho (Gaochang 高昌, now Turfan), they compiled their eight separate works into a single text. When they were back in Liangzhou 涼州 (now Wuwei 武威 in Gansu province), the monk Huilang 慧朗 named the book the *Damamūka Sūtra* in 445.[79]

In summary, *Xianyu jing* was compiled based on eight different Chinese monks' records of what they had learned from the senior monks of different countries. Through the oral transmission and transcription of these records, the stories might have been combined and altered.

Third, as has been mentioned earlier, *Foshuo zhujing zayuan yuyin youji* was an abridged *bianwen* composed by the monks in Dunhuang to popularise Buddhist doctrines based on original sūtras, among which the *Damamūka Nidāna Sūtra* is important.[80] If the combination of information had already taken place in the *Damamūka Nidāna Sūtra*, then its *bianwen* would naturally do the same.

Fourth, *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* was again a Dunhuang scripture. Though it was contained in the Taishō canon, it is still suspected to be apocryphal. If it was written by native Chinese, then it was understandable for them to add the past life story to explain the karmic results for educational purposes, as many other Chinese sūtras have done.

Of course, some scholars still believe that *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* has a genuine Indian origin,[81] just as *Xianyu jing* does. The *Damamūka Nidāna Sūtra* spread to Dunhuang in the fifth century,[82]

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[79] 河西沙門釋曇學威德等. 凡有八僧. 結志遊方遠尋經典. 於於闐大寺遇般遮於瑟之會……學等八僧隨緣分聽. 於是競習胡音折以漢義. 精思通譯各書所聞. 還至高昌乃集為一部. 既而踰越流沙齎到涼州. 于時沙門釋慧朗……以為此經所記源在譬喻……故因事改名. 號曰賢愚焉. 元嘉二十二年歲在乙酉. 始集此經. *Chu sanzang ji ji*, *T* no. 2145, 55: 9.67c10–68a1. Some scholars have argued that it should be 435 instead of 445, as mentioned in *Chu sanzang ji ji*.

[80] Liang, '*Xianyu jing* zai Dunhuang de liuchuan yu fazhan', 123–62.

[81] Shi, 'Dunhuang xieben *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing*', 54–94.

[82] Liang, '*Xianyu jing* zai Dunhuang de liuchuan yu fazhan', 123–62.

while *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* has also been identified as having been translated, or compiled, in the Southern and Northern dynasty.[83] Just as the copies of *Xianyu jing* appeared in Dunhuang, this Dunhuang scripture of *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* might have been compiled based on the *avadāna* stories that spread to Dunhuang from India via the Silk Road. The combination of *avadāna* stories might have happened during the compilation of *Xianyu jing*, or indeed of *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing*.

Therefore, no matter whether *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing* is apocryphal or not, its compiler might have combined originally independent *avadāna* stories into a single more complicated story.

In sum, in some of the Chinese sūtras, the past life story element in the narratives of the Paṭācārā story seems to represent a combination of originally independent *avadāna* stories. The prototypical *avadāna* story demonstrating that 'hatred is never appeased by hatred' in *Zhongjing zhuan za piyu* and Dhp is combined with the main theme of the Paṭācārā story. Moreover, the unique elements in MVV could be viewed as a unique aspect of Buddhist literature in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition because they do not have counterparts in other Paṭācārā stories. Third, for the later marriages, no prototypical stories have been identified in the Pāli tradition. How these narratives came into being warrants further research.

3.3. Later influence

3.3.1. Funeral Rites

There is one obvious difference between the Chinese (Tibetan) and Pāli records regarding how Paṭācārā's (or Kisāgotamī's) parents and brother died. In Thīg, Kisāgotamī said:

> *Mātā pitā ca bhātā, dayhanti ca ekacitakāyaṁ* (v.219)[84]

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[83] Shao, 'Dunhuang xieben *Foshuo xianbao dangshou jing*', 300–07.

[84] Thīg, 144.

Mother, father and brother were burning upon one pyre.

In Thī-ap, Paṭācārā said the same.[85]

How Paṭācārā's parents and brother died was further explained in the three commentaries: either an overnight storm[86] or a whirlwind[87] caused the house to collapse and kill its inhabitants. They were already burning on a single funeral pyre when Paṭācārā arrived.[88]

Burning dead bodies on pyres is a typical Indian cremation ritual. Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), in his *Da Tang Xiyu ji* 大唐西域記 [Buddhist Records of the Western World], explained that there were three kinds of Indian funerals: the first burns the corpse on a pyre; the second floats the corpse on water; and the third disposes of the corpse in the forest to be eaten by animals.[89] He did not mention burial as an option.

However, from Vedic times onwards, Indian corpses were disposed of using all four elements: earth, water, fire, and air.[90] In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, *Vāṇaprastins*[91] (forest dwellers) preferred to throw their

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[85] '*Māta pitā ca bhātā ca ekacitamihi ḍayhare*' (v.31). Thī-ap, 557.

[86] Thīg-a, 108; Dhp-a II, 265.

[87] AN-a I, 359.

[88] Thīg-a, 107–08: '*amma ajja rattiyaṃ seṭṭhi ca bhariyā ca seṭṭhiputto cā ti tayo jane avattharamānaṃ gehaṃ pati, te ekacitakāyaṃ jhāyanti, svāyaṃ dhūmo paññāyati ammā ti*'; AN-a (I, 359): '*tesaṃ vasanagehaṃ vātappahārena patitaṃ, tattha te sabbe pi jīvitakkhayam pattā, atha nesaṃ khuddakamahallake ekacitakasmiṃ yeva jhāpenti, passa esā dhūmavaṭṭi paññāyatī'ti*'; Dhp-a (II, 265): '*amma ajja rattiṃ seṭṭhi ca seṭṭhibhariyā ca seṭṭhiputtañ cā ti tayo jane avattharamānaṃ gehaṃ patitaṃ, te ekacitakāya jhāyanti, esa dhūmo paññāyati ammā ti*'. For the English translations, see Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therī*, 146; Bode, 'Women Leaders of Buddhist Reformation', 558; and Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends*, 253.

[89] '送終殯葬, 其儀有三：一曰火葬, 積薪焚燎. 二曰水葬, 沈流漂散. 三曰野葬, 棄林飼獸.' *Datang Xiyu ji*, *T* no. 2087, 51: 2.877c26–28.

[90] Flippi, *Mṛtyu*, 170.

[91] Vānaprastha is one of the four stages of human life (*caturāśrama* dharma) accepted by brahmins: 1. *Brahmacārī* (the student stage); 2. *Gṛhastha* (the householder stage); 3. *Vānaprastha* (the hermit stage); 4. *Sanyasi* (the wandering

deceased into the water, and sādhus (mendicants) still do the same.[92] As for exposure to the air, young men who died by violent means were left exposed on tree branches.[93] Although this custom was substituted with cremation centuries ago, in Xuanzang's time it might still have been carried out. In Pāli literature, there were also some cases in the *Satipatthana sutta* of corpses being disposed of in a cemetery. For example, the Buddha is said to have given teachings on impure meditation (*asubha bhāvanā*) in a charnel ground scattered with corpses. Some of them were pecked at by crows, ravens, and vultures and gnawed at by dogs and jackals, while some decomposed in the open air.

Also, some Indian communities at this time buried innocent children and saints below the earth. Children who died before the age of two, aborted foetuses, or stillborn infants were considered innocent and unable to realise any real action or ritual karma, and so were buried instead of being cremated. *Saṃnyāsin*s, the holy men considered free from all karma, were also buried in Vedic times. These two practices have continued to the present.[94] Nowadays, Lingayats, Christians, Dalit, and tribal communities in India still bury their dead.[95]

In all other cases, the deceased were cremated. Fire holds a unique place as a symbol of transcendence for Indians. Pāṇḍu, the protagonist of the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*, and Rāvaṇa, the protagonist of Indian epic *Rāmāyaṇa* were both cremated after their death. Over thousands of years, the use of fire to destroy corpses has become mainstream in India, and cremation is the most popular funerary rite. The *Dharmaśāstra*s describe in detail how the corpse should be prepared for cremation.[96] Even nowadays, most Hindus still treat cremation as an integral element of their faith.[97]

Cremation is also found in Buddhist literature. After taking

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ascetic stage).

92 Flippi, *Mṛtyu*, 171.

93 Ibid., 170.

94 Ibid., 172

95 Hockings, 'Mortuary Ritual', 1–71; Arnold, *Burning the Dead*, 62–67.

96 von Hinüber, 'Cremated Like a King', 33–66.

97 Arnold, *Burning the Dead*, 62–67.

advice from the wise Buddhist monk Nārada, King Muṇḍa finally accepted the death of his queen, Bhaddā, and therefore ordered: 'Burn now, friend Piyaka, the body of queen Bhaddā, and build a stūpa for her'.[98] In the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the pyre self-ignites to burn the corpse of the Buddha after Mahākāśyapa's arrival to pay his last respects.[99] The same happened in *Da bo niepan jing*.[100]

Just as cremation has been common in India, burial has a long history in China and was advocated by orthodox Confucianism. Chinese culture emphasises allowing the deceased to rest in peace underground (入土為安). The ancient Chinese believed that *Hun* (魂) controlled the spirit of a person, and *Po* (魄) controlled the body. According to the *Liji* 禮記 [Book of Rites], after death, the *Hun* goes to heaven while the *Po* should rest underground.[101] Therefore, the Chinese have emphasised burying the body (and *Po*) underground, and even burying the person's treasures, if possible. After Buddhism spread to China, some Chinese monks adopted cremation after death and even spread this new funerary rite to the laity during the Tang and Song (960–1279) dynasties.[102] Nevertheless, cremation was never a mainstream ritual in ancient China. This might explain why, when the records concerning cremation spread to China, the translators or compilers revised relevant narratives to accommodate the new cultural context. Perhaps it was for this reason that the parents and kin of the poor woman whose life was riddled with tragedy were not intentionally burned on a funeral pyre but accidentally killed in a fire.

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[98] '*tena hi samma Piyaka Bhaddāya deviyā sarīraṃ jhāpetha thūpañ c'assā karotha*'. AN III, 62.

[99] '*vandite ca pan'āyasmatā Mahā-Kassapena tehi ca pañcahi bhikkhu-satehi, sayam eva Bhagavato citako pajjali*. DN II, 16.

[100] '香積自然, 四面火起, 經歷七日, 寶棺融盡.' *Da bo niepan jing*, *T* no. 7, 1: 3.207a11–12.

[101] '魂氣歸於天, 形魄歸於地.' *Liji jijie*, 26.678.

[102] Wang, 'Shilun zhonggu shiqi sengren de quanshen', 107–14.

3.3.2. Human Sacrifice

Human sacrifice was not an uncommon practice in ancient India. Virtuous Indian widows followed their husbands into the pyre and burned themselves, performing the satī rite. As the Greek historian Diodoros reported, when the Indian general Keteus died in battle in 316 BCE, his two wives competed for the honour of being cremated with him. A memorial stone (*chāyākhambha*) for the first king of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, Vāsiṭhīputta Caṃtamūla, and his chief queen and twenty-eight other wives suggested he was cremated with his entire harem.[103] In fact, the satī rite in India was abolished not long ago.

Nevertheless, these women in India were cremated instead of being buried alive, as depicted earlier in the Chinese records. The human sacrifice of burying people alive with the deceased, however, has a long and complicated history in China. This kind of sacrifice first appeared in China in a primitive period; it then prevailed during the era of slavery, and reached its peak in the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1050 BCE). At that time, human sacrifice was offered to slave masters and noble men with the aim of offering the services of the sacrificed to the deceased in the afterlife. This custom declined from the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) to the Song dynasties when the national government abolished the rite and ordered people to replace live humans with pottery or wooden figurines. However, this rite resurged in the Yuan (1279–1368), Ming (1368 to 1644), and Qing (1636–1912) dynasties, mainly in the court and among the upper classes.[104] In short, the practice of human sacrifice by burying the living with the deceased never entirely disappeared in ancient China.

Xianyu jing was compiled by Huijue 慧覺 in 445 in Liangzhou 涼州 during the reign of Taiwudi of Northern Wei 北魏太武帝 (r. 423–452). In Northern Wei, the Xianbei ethnicity 鮮卑族 retained the practice of burying the living with the dead, and it was prevalent in northern nomadic societies. Wives, concubines, and slaves were sacrificed for deceased nobles, as recorded in the *Wei shu* 魏書 [Book

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[103] von Hinüber, 'Cremated Like a King', 33–66.

[104] Tang, 'Lun mingdai renxun zhidu de feichu', 120–24.

of Wei].[105] Nevertheless, with the Sinification endeavours of the Emperor of Xiaowen 孝文 (r. 471–499), human sacrifice declined yet did not disappear altogether. Moreover, within the court, the rule of the mother of the crown prince being sacrificed (子貴母死) always prevailed. Therefore, while the narrative element of burying a woman alive with her deceased husband might have seemed strange to Indian audiences, it would have been readily accepted by Chinese people in Northern Wei and other parts of China at the time.

To conclude, the element of burying the wife alive with her dead husband seems to lack an Indian origin. The idea could have been added by Chinese compilers of the texts, perhaps to demonstrate the misfortunes of women, since it accommodated Chinese funerary culture.

3.3.3. Lavish Burials and Grave Robbers

In both *Xianyu jing* and *Da fangbian fo baoen Jing*, grave robbers opened tombs with the aim of stealing the jewels buried along with the dead. This detail, again, seems to have originated from non-Indian sources.

As noted above, Hindus in ancient India usually only buried deceased children under the age of two and their saints, or Saṃnyāsins. For a deceased Saṃnyāsin, only his begging bowl and wooden drinking vessel were buried along with the body, while no jewels were buried alongside deceased babies.[106] Therefore, we can assume that there would be no jewels in those tombs to tempt grave robbers.

The custom of burying with the deceased what they cherished in life—lavish burials—also seems to accord with Chinese culture rather than Indian. The ancient Chinese believed in the afterlife, specifically that human beings would turn into ghosts after death and still be able to communicate with the living. They also believed that objects enjoyed in life could also bring pleasure in the

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[105] Li, 'Beifang shaoshu minzu xunzang xisu yanjiu', 60–65.

[106] Flippi, *Mṛtyu,* 170–72.

afterlife.[107] Therefore, a lavish burial was related to filial piety (孝), as it would provide deceased parents with a better afterlife. From as early as the *Liji*, people were instructed to serve their dead parents just as they served living parents according to the moral of filial piety.[108] Hence, parents should be buried with what they cherished. The famous jade clothes sewn with gold wire found in Han tombs, along with numerous jewels and golden utensils found in other ancient Chinese tombs, testify to this longstanding Chinese custom.

Referring to the murals painted in the Mogao Grottoes, which have been identified as depicting the story of Paṭācārā, Xie argued that these painted narratives reflect the Indian custom of burying the wife alive with her dead husband, as well as the severe penalty of sentencing grave robbers to death.[109] As discussed above, this type of human sacrifice was actually a Chinese custom rather than an Indian one, and because they did not contain any riches, there would have been no reason to rob graves in India. Hence, the severe penalty imposed on grave robbers seems again to have been a Chinese custom, rather than an Indian one.

Throughout Chinese history, treasure hidden in tombs has always attracted grave robbers. However, when grave robbers stole treasure, the Chinese saw it as offending the honour and lineage of the deceased's family, and sometimes even the power and dignity of royalty if royal tombs were robbed. Therefore, grave robbers usually received harsh punishments in ancient China.[110] For example, according to *Tanglü shuyi* 唐律疏議 [Tang Code], a grave robber who opened a coffin during the Tang dynasty would be sentenced to death.[111]

In summary, the lavish burial customs and severe sentences for grave robbers, as described in these stories, again accord more with Chinese culture and customs than those of India.

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[107] Song and Li, 'Tan woguo houzang louxi de xingcheng', 25–27.

[108] '事死如事生, 事亡如事存, 孝之致也.' Zheng, *Liji zhengzhu II*, 16.6.

[109] Xie, 'Dunhuang gushihua zhong de xingfa', 47–53.

[110] Ibid.

[111] '已開棺槨者, 絞.' *Tanglü shuyi*, 16.301.

3.3.4. The Element of a Mother Eating Her Son

In all the Pāli commentaries, Paṭācārā met the Buddha and went forth after all her kin died. However, in most of the Chinese records and the two Tibetan records containing the Paṭācārā story, the protagonist remarried several times after the death of her kin and endured further suffering. One of the dramatic elements of this suffering was being forced to eat her own infant son.

There seem to be no records in the Pāli tradition depicting a mother being forced to eat her own son; however, in the *Therīgāthā*, the verse of Kisāgotamī does refer to a mother's sons being eaten:

> *Passiṃ taṃ susānamajjhe, atho pi* ***khāditāni puttamaṃsāni;***
> *hatakulikā sabbagarahitā matapatikā amatam adhigacchiṃ.*
> (v.221)[112]
>
> Then I saw the flesh of my sons eaten amid the cemetery;
> With my family destroyed, despised by all, with husband dead,
> I attained the undying.[113]

According to this text, Kisāgotamī saw her sons being eaten instead of eating her own son. However, in the commentary of the *Therīgāthā*, Dhammapāla substituted '*passiṃ taṃ*' for '*vasitaṃ*'[114] and explained that 'as one who lived in a cemetery' means having become a female dog or female jackal eating human flesh, and 'I ate the flesh of my sons' means having eaten the flesh of one's sons when they were a tiger, leopard, or cat.[115]

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[112] Thīg, 144.

[113] EV II, 24.

[114] In Burmese and Sinhalese editions of Thīg, in this gāthā, 'vasitāṃ' is also used instead of 'passi taṃ' in the PTS version (EV II, 101).

[115] '*vasitā susānamajjhe ti manussamaṃsakhādikā sunakhī siṅgālī ca hutvā susānamajjhe vusitā, khāditāni puttamaṁsāni ti, vyaggha vā vyaggha-dīpi-biḷārādi-kāle puttamaṃsāni khāditāni*'. Thī-a, 173. See Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 228–29.

According to Dhammapāla, Kisāgotamī ate the flesh of her sons (***'khāditāni puttamaṃsāni'***) not in her present life but in her past lives as a wild animal. Dhammapāla further explained that v.221 discusses the three forms Kisāgotamī assumed in the past.[116] Pruitt listed them as follows: one life as 'a female dog or female jackal', one life as 'a tiger, leopard or cat', and one life as a widow. Again, Pruitt emphasised that this verse refers to Kisāgotamī's former lives.[117]

Besides, in the *Therīgāthā*, the verses about the Brahman-lady Vāseṭṭhī and her husband in the Sundarī chapter offer more information on the topic of 'sons being eaten':

> *petāni bhoti puttāni **khādamānā** tuvaṃ pure, tuvaṃ iva ca ratto ca atīva paritappasi*. (v.312)
> *Sājja sabbāni **khāditvā** satta puttāni brāhmaṇi Vāseṭṭhi kena vaṇṇena na bāḷaṃ paritappasi*. (v.313)
> Lady, formerly (when) causing to be. Eaten your sons who had passed away, you mourned excessively day and night.
> Today, having caused seven children in all to be eaten, O brahman-lady Vāseṭṭhī, why do (that same) you not mourn greatly?
>
> *Bahūni puttasatāni ñātisaṅghasatāni ca **khāditāni** atītaṃse mama tuyhañ ca brāhmaṇa*. (v.314)
> *Sāhaṃ nissaraṇaṃ ñatvā Jātiyā maraṇassa ca na socāmi na rodāmi na cāpi paritappayiṃ*. (v.315)[118]
> Many hundreds of sons, and hundreds of groups of relatives of mine of yours have been caused to be eaten, Brahman.
> (That same) I, knowing the escape from birth and death, do not grieve or lament; nor do I mourn.[119]

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[116] '*ime pana tayo pakāre purimattabhāve attano anuppatte gahetvā vadati*'. Thī-a, 173. See Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 229.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Thīg, 153.

[119] EV II, 33.

The Pāli verses in the Pāli Text Society (henceforth 'PTS') version and their corresponding English translation in *Elder Verses* are introduced above. The translator, Norman, explained how he translated in the book.[120] He suggested that ***khādamānā*** in v.312 is a corruption of the causative participle ***khādemānā***, meaning 'causing them to be eaten', for example, exposing them in a cemetery to be eaten by wild animals; ***khādetvā*** in v.313 is a causative perfect participle; and ***khāditāni*** in v.314 is the past participle of the causative verb.

Therefore, he translated vv.312–14 in the causative case, as in 'causing them to be eaten'.[121] In essence, the husband asks why the lady does not mourn greatly when she has caused seven of her children to be eaten. The lady replies that since she knows the truth, she does not grieve as she did before. It seems that causing one's children to be eaten is somewhat common to both the wife and husband.

Pruitt followed Norman in his translation of Thīg-a and put those verses in the causative case as well.[122] Durt, when discussing vv.314–15 in the *Therīgāthā*, attributed the 'eating' to a more abstract subject: death itself. He explained the relevant content as 'causing them to be eaten by death' or 'feeding death' as metaphors.[123] Durt's interpretation seems more reasonable than Norman's understanding of 'causing them to be eaten' by exposing them in the cemetery, given the context. Since exposing corpses in cemeteries or forests was not that common in ancient India, as discussed above, the idea of 'feeding death' instead can be applied in more situations and therefore makes more sense.

Nevertheless, since all major editions of Pāli texts include '***khādamānā***' in v.312 instead of '***khādemānā***', such as PTS, Buddha Jayanti Tripitaka Series (Sinhalese edition), and *Chaṭṭasaṅgāyanā*, it is hard to conclude that '***khādamānā***' in v.312 is a corruption of the causative participle '***khādemānā***'.

At the same time, while accepting '***khādamānā***' as the corrup-

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120 EV II, 127–28.

121 Ibid.

122 Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 294.

123 Durt, 'The Vicissitudes of Vāseṭṭhī/Vasiṣṭha'.

tion of '***khādemānā***', Pruitt has also shown his concern for the interpretation of '***khādamānā***', pointing out in a footnote that Dhammapāla probably interpreted '***puttāni khādamānā***' in v.312 literally, meaning that 'you have eaten your son', and '***khāditvā satta puttāni***' in v.313 literally as 'you have eaten seven children in all',[124] instead of taking the causative case.

Moreover, for the Dhammapāla's annotation of v.314, Pruitt agreed that '***khāditāni***' was clearly not a causative. In this annotation, Dhammapāla gave two explanations for '***khāditāni***': first, it is the same roundabout term used by Vāseṭṭhī when addressing the brahmin. Second, it means 'having eaten' during a previous rebirth as a tiger, leopard, or cat.[125] This interpretation echoes Dhammapāla's annotation for v.221 of Kisāgotamī, where Dhammapāla believes that Kisāgotamī ate her sons in her past rebirth as a wild animal.[126] In all, Pruitt was unsure whether Dhammapāla understood '***khādamānā***' in v.312 and '***khādetvā***' in v.313 as causative or not, but he was certain that Dhammapāla did not understand '***khādetvā***' in v.313 as causative.

Yet Pruitt still treated '***khādamānā***', '***khādetvā***', and '***khādetvā***' in vv.312–4 as causative in his translation of those verses. Maybe he found it difficult to make sense of the literal translation of 'eating sons' in that context.

Nevertheless, to me, Dhammapāla's explanation of '***khādamānā***' in the annotation to v.312 could help us make full sense of the word. Dhammapāla explained that '***khādamānā***' was not meant literally but rather employed figuratively in colloquial usage, '*khuṃsana-vacanaṃ*'. According to Dhammapāla, whenever an infant died, people would blame (***garahati***) and find fault with the mother for causing

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[124] Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs,* 294

[125] '*khāditāni ti, therī pi brāhmaṇena vuttapariyāyen' eva vadati. Khāditāni vā byagghadīpibiḷārādijatiyo sandhāy'evam āha*'. Thīg-a, 219. See Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 294.

[126] '*khāditāni puttamaṁsāni ti, vyaggha vā vyaggha-dīpi-biḷārādi-kāle puttamaṃsāni khāditāni*'. Thī-a, 173. See Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 228–29.

the death by calling her '***putta-khādinī***' (child eater).[127] As far as I am aware, Pāli colloquial usages should sometimes not be understood in the literal sense, and colloquial terms similar to '***putta-khādinī***' are still very common in India. A case in point is the legend of the Buddha Siddharth's birth: the Indian tradition say that he eats his mother. Of course, this colloquial usage is more frequently applied to women. When a woman's father dies, she is usually blamed for 'having eaten her father', although she bears no real responsibility for causing her father's death.

Based on this understanding of '***putta-khādinī***', in my opinion, '***khādamānā***', '***khādetvā***', and '***khāditāni***' in this context were not necessarily used to convey the meaning of 'causing them to be eaten' but rather to describe 'eating', 'having eaten', and 'eaten', respectively. Of course, 'eating' here is not a literal but a figurative term used to accuse a mother of failing to protect her sons and allowing them to die. In this sense, '***khādamānā***', '***khādetvā***', and '***khāditāni***' also could be liberally translated as 'causing them to die', 'having caused them to die', and 'caused to die', respectively.

Of course, neither being accused of eating one's own child in a past life as a wild animal nor being labelled a '***putta-khādinī***' unable to protect one's son(s) means a mother has literally eaten her own human child, as depicted in Chinese and Tibetan literature. Nevertheless, these Pāli records might have served as the basis for later developments made in non-Theravāda traditions.

However, in Sanskrit, there seems to be an example of using the expression 'eating one's sons' quite literally. In *Sphuṭārthā abhidharmakośa-vyākhyā* [Clear Meaning Explanation of (Vasubandhu's) *Abhidharmakośa*, henceforth, 'Abhidh-k-vy'], Yaśomitra introduces the story of Vasiṣṭha-sagotrā brāhmaṇī (a Brahmin lady from Vasiṣṭha clan). This story echoes the verses between Vāseṭṭhī and her husband in the Sundarī chapter of Thīg (vv.312–315), yet the narrative is slightly different, especially regarding what the husband asks. The

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[127] '*khādamānā ti, loka-vohāra-vasena khuṃsana-vacanaṃ etaṃ Loke hi yassā itthiyā jāta-jātā puttā maranti taṃ garahantā 'putta-khādinī' ti ādiṃ vadanti*'. Thīg-a, 219. Pruitt, *The Commentary on the Verses of the Therīs*, 293–94.

following is a comparison:

> *petāni bhoti **puttāni khādamānā** tuvaṃ pure, tuvaṃ divāiva ca ratto ca atīva paritappasi.*
> *Sājja sabbāni **khāditvā** satta puttāni brāhmaṇi Vāseṭṭhi kena vaṇṇena na bāḷaṃ paritappasi.* (vv.312–3)[128]
> Lady, formerly (when) causing to be eaten your sons who had passed away, you mourned excessively day and night.
> Today, having caused seven children in all to be eaten, O brahman-lady Vāseṭṭhī, why do (that same) you not mourn greatly?[129]

> *tvaṃ pūrvaṃ **putra-maraṇena** paritaptā'si.*
> *Idānīṃ nāsi paritaptā. Nūnaṃ te **putrās tvayā bhakṣitāḥ**? Yato na paritapyasa iti.*[130]
> You were lamenting the death of your children,
> and now this time you do not lament. Is it because your children have been eaten by you that you cannot lament?[131]

In Thīg, the husband said that Vāseṭṭhī had been a woman who had caused her son to be eaten ('***khādemānā***', according to EV), or was a woman who 'ate' her sons ('***khādamānā***', as discussed above), and accused her of doing the same again. Therefore, he wondered why she did not lament this time. Yet, in Abhidh-k-vy, the husband mentions the deaths of her sons in a previous time ('***putra-maraṇena***') but not whether they were eaten by her, whereas for this time, the husband thinks the wife 'has eaten them' ('***bhakṣitāḥ***') and therefore does not lament their deaths. According to this logic, the husband seems to think his wife 'did not eat' her sons previously. This differs from the account in Thīg.

The wife's reply in Abhidh-k-vy is similar to that in Thīg, but longer:

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[128] Thig, 153.

[129] EV, 33.

[130] Abhidh-k-vy, 397.

[131] Durt, 'The Vicissitudes of Vāseṭṭhī/Vasiṣṭha', 35.

> For a long time, O Brahmana, thousands of sons and grandsons, as well as hundreds of groups of relatives, have been eaten by me; and by you too. There is no measure of (how many) thousands of sons and grandsons who have been eaten by each other in those respective births. After knowing the escape of birth and death in the world, who would grieve, mourn, and lament (for their death)? I, having known the escape, do not grieve, mourn, and lament regarding the birth and death; duties of the dispensation of the Buddha have been fulfilled.
>
> *Putrapautrasahasrāṇi jñātisaṃghaśatāni ca dīrghe dhvani* ***mayā brahmaṃ khāditāni*** *tathā tvayā. Putrapautrasahsrāṇāṃ parimāṇaṃ na vidyate anyonyaṃ khādyamānānāṃ tāsutāsūpapattiṣu. kaḥ śocet paritapyeta parideveta vā punaḥ jñātvā niḥsaraṇaṃ loke jāteś ca maraṇasya ca. sāhaṃ niḥsaraṇaṃ jñātvā jāteś ca maraṇasya ca na śocāmi na tapyāmi kṛte buddhasya śāsana.*[132]

Here, she admits that she 'ate' ('***mayā khāditāni***') many thousands of sons and relatives formerly, as the word '*mayā*' here is an instrumental case, meaning 'by me'. However, she does not lament their deaths because now she knows the Buddhist dharma, not because she has 'eaten' them.

It seems that Dhamapāla's explanation of '***putta-khādini***' cannot make sense in the husband's words. If '***putrās tvayā bhakṣitāḥ***' is still understood as '***putta-khādini***' in Thīg-a, as a way of blaming the mother for her failure to protect her son, the husband's question is illogical. If, this time, the mother is culpable for the deaths of her children, she should lament more instead of less. In this sense, I think Yaśomitra has a different understanding from Dhamapāla of the logic of the abovementioned conversation. The following is my attempt to understand Yaśomitra's reason.

Regarding the husband's question, I am inclined to agree with Durt's interpretation that the expression 'having eaten your sons' ('***putrās tvayā bhakṣitāḥ***') is an insensitive joke made by the husband in its literal meaning, instead of an abusive slur.[133]

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[132] Abhidh-k-vy, 397.

[133] Durt, 'The Vicissitudes of Vāseṭṭhī/Vasiṣṭha'.

The term '***khāditāni***' is a roundabout term used by the wife in reply to her husband; in Abhidh-k-vy, moreover, I think it makes sense in all three above interpretations of Vāseṭṭhī's verses in Thīg. If we take '***khāditāni***' as a past participle and use its literal meaning, the wife might be talking about her former life as a wild animal. If we take '***khāditāni***' as a causative case, using a metaphor, the wife might be saying that she caused her sons, grandsons, and relatives to be consumed by death. If we take '***khāditāni***' as a past participle and an abusive slur, the wife might think that she was responsible for the deaths of many sons, grandsons, and relatives in her past lives, too. All these interpretations could ground this passage in sound logic. Nevertheless, none of these interpretations suggest that Vāseṭṭhī had eaten her sons in her present life. Instead, if she had done so, it had happened for a long time ('*dīrghe dhvani*') in her past lives.

From this, we can see that '***putta-khādini***' might have caused some controversy in India in the seventh century, as evidenced by the textual differences between the Thīg and Abhidh-k-vy. Nevertheless, in Abhidh-k-vy, the literal meaning of 'eating sons' ('***putrās tvayā bhakṣitāḥ***') is just referred to in the conversation as a joke. There are still no records in Sanskrit depicting an actual episode where a mother is forced to eat her own child, as far as I know, although the literal meaning of 'eating sons' has emerged.

Nevertheless, examples of the storytelling element of forcing or tricking a parent into eating their sons are found in world literature. For example, we find relevant accounts in ancient Greek tales. In one, Atreus, king of Mycenae, after learning about the adulterous relationship between his brother Thyestes and his wife, killed Thyestes' sons and cooked them. Atreus tricked Thyestes into eating his own sons' flesh and then exiled him for cannibalism.

Ancient Greece was far from ancient India and ancient China in geographic terms, so we cannot know whether this tale influenced the inclusion of forcing a mother to eat her son as an element in the Chinese records. However, the Median Empire was to ancient India's northwest, and its tales were more likely to have spread to ancient India and China and influenced their literature. In fact, *The Histories – A Detailed Account of the Greco-Persian Wars*, by Herodotus (fifth century BCE), does contain a similar story. When Harpagus disobeyed the

king's order to kill baby Cyrus, Astyages, the last king of the Median Empire, killed the only son of Harpagus and fed him his son's flesh at a banquet. Astyages, similar to King Atreus, tricked Harpagus into eating his own son and only revealed the truth afterward. Harpagus initially concealed his anger and seemed to remain loyal to the king, but he later helped Cyrus take the throne from Astyages.[134] The story of Harpagus from the Median Empire might have inspired the narrative of forcing a mother to eat her son in Chinese Buddhist literature.

Moreover, there is a famous Chinese tale with a similar element. Zhouwang of the Shang dynasty 商紂王, suspected Jichang 姬昌 of being a saint and, therefore, capable of taking the throne. Accordingly, Zhouwang planned to kill Jichang. He cooked Jichang's eldest son, Boyikao 伯邑考, and fed the flesh to Jichang. Jichang, knowing he was consuming his son, pretended to be ignorant of this fact and ate the flesh anyway. In this way, Jichang dispelled Zhouwang's suspicions and survived.[135] Nevertheless, Jichang's other sons later rebelled against the king, took the throne from Zhouwang, and founded a new Chinese dynasty, the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE). The earliest version of this tale can be found in *Diwang shiji* 帝王世紀 [The Emperor's Time in China], which was composed during the Jin dynasty by Huangpu Mi 皇甫謐 (266–316). Though it was proven to be a fable, not a historical fact, the story was widespread and therefore well accepted.[136]

As noted earlier, *Xianyu jing* was compiled in 445 in China's Western Regions. Since it was produced at the crossroads of so many different cultures, the element of a mother being forced to eat her own son might have its roots in China, East Asia, or even European tales, but most likely not in India. This element was not retained in the Pāli tradition, or in other Indian literature, to my knowledge, though it was referred to in Sanskrit literature as an example of an insensitive joke.

Moreover, in ancient China, the relationship between an emperor

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134 Herodotus, *Herodotus*, 139–57.

135 Xu, *Fengshen Yanyi*, 19 *hui*–20 *hui* .

136 Liu, 'Boyikao', 25–37.

and his subjects was considered similar to that between husband and wife, as can be seen in many Chinese classic poems. Therefore, even if this narrative element did develop in China, it would have been considered acceptable and understandable for Chinese translators and Chinese readers who would have been familiar with the story of Boyikao.

4. Conclusion

From a sad but simple monologue in the *Therīgāthā* to a complicated and dramatic story in the Mahāyāna sūtras, the Paṭācārā story has been diffused throughout the world of Buddhist literature but with obvious variations concerning the protagonists and contexts. It is a perfect case to demonstrate how Indian Buddhist literature was appropriated and assimilated into Chinese and Tibetan Buddhist literature. By comparing different narratives and studying the backgrounds of these records, this paper focused on providing reasonable explanations for all these variations.

First, this paper pointed out that in the earliest record, *Therī Apadāna*, Paṭācārā is the woman left bereft of all her kin. However, in later records, there are disagreements over the protagonist. The Theravāda tradition attributed it to Paṭācārā, while the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition attributed it to Kisāgotamī. However, the designation of Utpalavarṇā in this story seems more likely to have been a misidentification made during the story's distribution.

Second, this paper suggested that during the transmission and development of Buddhism, some originally independent 'prototype' stories were combined and revised, perhaps for moral education purposes and to admonish people to refrain from evil behaviour using Buddhism's theory of karma.

Third, this paper identified the narrative elements of burying the wife alive with her dead husband, their lavish burials, and the role of grave robbers as most likely later developments, since they obviously do not accord with Indian funerary rites but instead reflect ancient Chinese burial practices. Of course, these might have been influenced by the cultures of those countries along the Silk Road, from where

the Buddhist scriptures were transmitted to China. This topic could be studied in the future to address the current study's limitations.

Finally, for the element of a mother being forced to eat her son, this paper viewed it as a possible misinterpretation of the original Pāli records. The later compilers, who were familiar with stories about sons being eaten by their fathers, have interpreted too literally the abusive Indian colloquial expression '***putta-khādinī***'. Instead, '***putta-khādinī***' in Pāli is a figurative expression used to blame mothers for being unable to properly protect their sons and thus allowing them to die.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

Abhidh-k-vy	*Sphuṭārthā abhidharmakośavyākhyā*. See Primary Sources.
AN-a	*Anguttarnikāya-aṭṭhakathā (Manorathapūraṇī).* See Primary Sources.
Dhp	*Dhammapada*. See Primary Sources.
Dhp-a	*Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. See Primary Sources.
EV II	*Elders' Verses II* (trans. of Thīg). See Secondary Sources, Norman, trans.
MVV	*Genben shuo yiqie youbu pi'naiye zashi* (Skt. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinayaksudrakavastu*). See Primary Sources.
PTS	Pāli Text Society
T	*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō*. See Secondary Sources, Takakusu and Watanabe, eds.
Thīg	*Therīgāthā*. See Primary Sources, *Thera- and Therī-gāthā*.
Thīg-a	*Therīgāthā-aṭṭhakathā*. See Primary Sources.
Thī-ap	*Therī Apadāna* (the *Apadāna* II). See Primary Sources.
SA	*Saṁyuttāgama*. See Primary Sources, *Za ahan jing* and *Bieyi za ahan jing*

SN	*Saṁyutta Nikāya*. See Primary Sources.
SN-a	*Saṃyutta Nikāya-aṭṭhakathā*. See Primary Sources.

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