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The Foolish Cat and the Clever Mouse: Another Parable from an Unknown Story Collection[1]

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Judging from Buddhist canonical literature the Buddha must have been very fond of stories, and he used them liberally for various ends, as illustrations of his ideas, as a pedagogical device and surely also as a means for entertaining his audience. His followers were no less ready to make good use of the amazing wealth of stories in ancient India. Stories carved in stone at the stupas of Bharhut and Sanchi preserve the earliest representations of Buddhist literature, well before the first written documents appear to have been made. They depict events in the life of the Buddha, as, e.g., Anāthapiṇḍada's acquisition and dedication of the Jetavana, and they illustrate tales about previous births of the Buddha. Such tales continued to be exceedingly popular throughout the ages. The written tradition confirms this point; in the nineties of the last century several unexpected finds brought to light the earliest Buddhist—and Indian—manuscripts, and on closer inspection they were found to contain, among various other genres, story collections of the Jātaka or Avadāna type. The finds indicate that around the beginning of the Common Era such collections had already become a standard part of Buddhist literature. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Richard Salomon, who initiated the study of those early manuscripts, some of the story collections have been made available to the scholarly world. Beyond the usual challenges offered by fragmentary Gāndhārī manuscripts, the stories are marked by an additional peculiarity: they are written in a rather terse prose with very brief sentences and no embellishments what-

soever. Therefore Salomon characterized these Gāndhārī Avadānas as falling "somewhere between written and oral tradition" and very fittingly described them as "notes or memory aids"[2] and as "merely skeletons or outlines, which were evidently meant to be filled in and expanded by the reader or reciter."[3]

This description also appears to fit the text of the story I will deal with in the following. It is part of a story collection preserved in two manuscript fragments found in Afghanistan. The collection is rather remarkable for various reasons: it is unknown, and at present only the second of the four stories which are at least partly preserved can be identified, but not with the help of contemporaneous Indian material. It is contained in a rather unusual manuscript. Its features have already been described in the edition and study of the second story, but for understanding the specific state of the text it is necessary to summarize that description here.[4] Remains of two folios are available, one of which is kept in the Schøyen Collection in Norway (MS 2381/57), the other one in the Hayashidera Collection in Japan (HC 024). The material is birch bark, and both leaves show the same phenomenon: the script on the recto and verso sides is not identical. One side is written in Gilgit/Bamiyan type I and contains an unknown collection of stories. The text on the other side, however, is written in Proto-Śāradā or Gilgit/Bamiyan type II; it also contains a story collection, and this collection can be identified. It is the *Jātakamālā* of Āryaśūra, and the text on the fragment from the Schøyen Collection belongs

to the *Śarabhajātaka*, the 25th chapter of this *Jātakamālā* where it corresponds to pp. 163.24–164.24 in Hendrik Kern's edition of the text.[5] The folio from the Hayashidera Collection continues without a gap: it corresponds to pp. 165.1–166.4 in Kern's edition. What has happened here? One side is written in a refined variety of an ornamental script and contains a well-known work of the highest poetical quality. The other side is written in a rather sloppy hand, and it contains a story collection with no embellishments and partly in a "bad" Sanskrit. The clue to the most probable solution is held by the material: it is birch bark, and a folio of this material usually consists of two or more layers of bark. These layers may come apart or be intentionally separated, and thus one folio can be split into two folios, each of them with a new blank side, which can then be written on again. Judging from the lenticels characteristic for birch bark, this must have happened here, since the lenticels correspond on both folios.[6] At present, the most likely explanation is that originally this was one folio of a manuscript of the *Jātakamālā* which was split and used secondarily for noting down short stories from another collection. Although the script of this secondary text would appear, at first sight, slightly older, it is quite possible that the two scripts existed side by side for some time and that the older one continued to be used for less representative purposes, since it allows a more cursive and therefore faster way of writing.[7] Regrettably, the left margins of both folios are lost, and therefore no folio numbers are preserved; if the above explanation is correct, there should have been only one folio number on the then recto side of the *Jātakamālā* text.

Remains of altogether four stories are preserved in the unknown collection. Only one of them is Buddhist in the narrower sense of the word; its protagonists are Vāsuki, a lord of the Nāgas (*nāgādhipati*), well known in Hindu mythology and mentioned also in many Buddhist sources, and Jīvaka, the famous physician of the time of the Buddha; the Buddha himself is also involved in the story. The other stories are non-Buddhist; of one story only the conclusion is preserved, which suggests a tale about a king and his ministers, another one contains a parable of a man with two wives or ladies, a young one and an old one. It was identified with the help of a parallel version in Aesop's story collection: out of jealousy the two ladies alternately pluck out the man's black

and white hairs until he becomes bald. The story presented here apparently narrates how a clever mouse outwits a foolish cat. So far, no related versions could be found either in Indian collections or in others like Aesop's.[8] Such a find would be highly welcome, since the remains of the text are not easy to understand. This is due to the somewhat sloppy script, which is often difficult to read, and to the language, which is close to Sanskrit, but full of Prakritisms and apparently not free from mistakes (as already indicated by corrections in the manuscript itself). It appears that a cat catches a mouse and that the mouse, in order to get released, lures the cat with the prospect of delivering many more mice to it. The stratagem works, and the mouse is released into its hole, apparently to bring out its fellow mice, but when summoned by the expectant cat naturally refuses to come out again.

The story concludes with *idam dṛṣṭāntaḥ*, obviously for *ayam dṛṣṭāntaḥ*, "this is the example," and then a Buddhist interpretation, or exegesis, follows. First a word or an event from the story is quoted with *yathā*, "as, like," and then an equation with a Buddhist phenomenon or issue follows, introduced with *evam*, "so," and once concluded with *draṣṭavya*, "is to be regarded as." The end of the story about the man and his two ladies is not preserved, but the same scheme is found at the end of the tale about a king and his ministers, and therefore the recurring structure of these sentences becomes quite evident. However, nothing similar is found at the end of the Buddhist story about Vāsuki and Jīvaka. It seems to be a regular addition to non-Buddhist stories in this collection, an addition that could help a reader or preacher to use such enjoyable and diverting stories for other purposes than entertainment. Several of the stories included in the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* reveal a very similar, if not identical, structure consisting of a parable, a Buddhist interpretation and a concluding verse.[9] This similarity becomes even more obvious once the Sanskrit fragments of the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā* are taken into account. The remains of folio *297 apparently preserve sentences with the *yathā . . . evam* structure (cf. lines V 1 and 2), and folio 298 preserves the end of the story proper concluding with *eṣa dṛṣṭāṃto* and then continuing with '*yam punar artho dra[ṣ](tavyaḥ) yathā . . .*, "this again has to be regarded as (its) meaning: Like . . ." (lines V3–R1), and Heinrich Lüders reconstructs the same phrase from the remains in folio *302: *(e)ṣa dṛṣṭāntaḥ ayam pu(nar artho draṣṭavyaḥ)*.[10]

In the present collection the Buddhist purpose of including a non-Buddhist story is made explicit by the specific conclusion. Apparently no need was felt to change the story itself, and it is easily conceivable that an experienced preacher would have been able to extract a Buddhist message even without the "guideline" at the end. This may also explain a fragment of a work containing fables found among the Gilgit Manuscripts. In his report of 1939[11] Kaul Shastri transliterated the text, and he also recognized the similarities to story 20 in the chapter on Mitrabheda of the *Pañcatantra*. It must once have been part of a rather large manuscript as the folio number 236 indicates, and Shastri describes it as "a collection of fables on the model of the *Pañcatantra* with the Buddhist colouring."[12] This colouring is much less pronounced than the words of Shastri suggest. In fact the fragment preserves the remains of two stories, the end of the parallel to the fable in the chapter on Mitrabheda and the beginning of another story not attested in the *Pañcatantra*. It is found, however in the *Tantrākhyāyika*, and there the two stories follow each other in the same order as in the Gilgit fragment.[13] Their wording is mostly identical, and the differences are such as usually exist between very close versions of the same text, but not at all in a manner which would even faintly indicate a Buddhist revision or adaptation of the work. In this formal regard the present collection follows the style of the *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, although "correctness" of language and stylistic embellishments apparently do not figure prominently among the aims of its author(s). For a better assessment of those aims, however, it is a great loss that neither the story itself nor its Buddhist application is preserved well enough to fully understand it.

The story is contained in lines 6 to 11 of the second fragment which belongs to the Hayashidera Collection (HC 024 A).

Transliteration[14]

6 /// d vinihsṛta[ḥ] viḍālaś cāgratam āpatitaḥ mūṣako vicārya praṇipatitaḥ viḍālaḥ .[i]mprayojaneti mūṣako jñātivirodhaṃ nivedayaty ekabile paṃca mūṣakaśatāni tad arhasi sāmagraṃ

7 /// .ī[k]. [t]i[r bhavān āha] praviśya bhavataḥ puruṭaḥ sarve ānayiṣyāmīti • yāva[t]. [p]r[av]. [ṣ]ṭa • [na] bhūyo darśanaṃ dadātīti • viḍāla

praha niṣkramyatām iti • mūṣaka bhavato nubhāvāt kṛ

8 /// + + + + mi • mūṣaka na śakyeta • viḍāla kimartheti • mūṣaka aruṣṇaṃ me bhakṣitaṃ • tato viḍālo vipratilabdho vipra<<ti>>sārī prakkrāṃta idaṃ dṛṣṭāṃtaḥ tatra yathā mūṣakaḥ svavilā

9 /// + + + + + + + + + + thā mūṣakavicāraṇam evaṃ saṃsāra[d]oṣavicāraṇaṃ • yathāśayāya pratipa<<ta>>ty evaṃ yoni[ś]. .. .. [s]i[k]ā .aṃ • [yathā svav]i[l]ā[d].. .. [ś].

10 /// + + + + + + + + + + .. .o k.a <<ka>>māsya saṃvṛtaḥ sa[rva]kleśāvipratisāriṇo [bhava] ṃ[tī]ti draṣṭavyaṃ tasmād āśu kleśaprati[p]. {{k.}} ..ṃ .. ///

11 /// + + + + + + + + + + + [bu]ddheś cāpy āśu [k]ā .itā icchatā saprayatnena dha .. śrāvyam atīk[ṣṇ]. ś. • {[||◎||]} ///

Reconstruction

Here an attempt is made to structure the text according to the assumed sense, to identify the relevant speaker and to insert words in the translation which are, according to my understanding, implicit, but not expressed in the sometimes very short, if not elliptic, sentences. The scribe uses punctuation (here represented by a high dot) preferably, but not consistently, after words ending with a vowel.

1. /// *d vinihsṛtaḥ viḍālaś cāgrata-m āpatitaḥ*
" . . . it (the mouse?) came out of . . . and the cat rushed in front (of the mouse)."
In view of nos. 15 and 18 one could think of (*svabilā*)*d*/(*svavilā*)*d*, "out of its hole." Here the *m* in *cāgrata-m* apparently is a hiatus bridger.

2. *mūṣako vicārya praṇipatitaḥ*
"After deliberating, the mouse prostrated itself (before the cat)."

3. *viḍālaḥ (k)imprayojaneti*
"The cat (said): 'What is the purpose (of your behavior)?'"
For the form *kiṃprayojaneti* cf. below, no. 11, *kimartheti*.

4. *mūṣako jñātivirodhaṃ nivedayaty ekabile paṃca mūṣakaśatāni tad arhasi sāmagraṃ* (r7) /// *.ī[k]. [t]i[r bhavān]*
"The mouse informed him about a quarrel with (its) relatives: 'In a single hole there are five hundred mice. You could (get?) the whole lot . . .'"

Or does *virodha*, "quarrel, disagreement," here mistakenly stand for *nirodha*, "destruction"? Boethlingk in his Petersburger Wörterbuch knows of this possibility. Then it would mean "the mouse offered the destruction of the relatives." The word *sāmagram* should be corrected to *samagram* or *sāmagryam*, depending on the context. The following remains unclear.

5. *āha praviśya bhavataḥ purataḥ sarve ānayiṣyāmīti* •
"(The mouse) said: 'Having entered (my hole), I will bring all of them to you.'"
Here *purataḥ* is corrected from *purutaḥ*.

6. *yāvat(ā) prav(i)ṣṭa* • *na bhūyo darśanam dadātīti* •
"As soon as (the mouse) had entered, it did not show up again.'"
The final *iti* apparently marks the end of the sentence.

7. *viḍāla prāha niṣkramyatām iti* •
"The cat said: 'Come out!'"

8. *mūṣaka bhavato 'nubhāvāt kṛ* (r8) ///
"The mouse (said): 'On your authority . . .'"

9. /// *mi* •
(The cat said:) "I . . ."

10. *mūṣaka na śakyeta* •
"The mouse (said): 'That might be impossible.'"

11. *viḍāla kimartheti* •
"The cat said: 'What does that mean?'"
For the form *kimartheti* cf. no. 3 *(k)imprayojaneti*.

12. *mūṣaka aruṣṇam me bhakṣitam* •
"The mouse (said): 'I have eaten ?'"
The reading of the word *aruṣṇam* is fairly sure, but the meaning remains obscure. Does the mouse intend to say that it has eaten too much and is therefore unable to leave the hole? Or does it rather say it does not like to be eaten?

13. *tato viḍālo vipratilabdho vipratisārī prakkrāṃta idam dṛṣṭāṃtaḥ*
"Then the cat went away empty-handed and despondent. This is the example."

15. *tatra yathā mūṣakaḥ svavilā* (r9) ///

"Now (the explanation:) like the mouse from its hole . . ."
Possibly the comparison is with the circumstance that the mouse moved out of its hole incautiously.

16. /// *(ya)thā mūṣakavicāraṇam evaṃ saṃsāradoṣavicāraṇam* •
"Like the deliberation of (the situation of) the mouse, so is the deliberation of the defects of Saṃsāra."

17. *yathāśayāyā pratipataty evaṃ yoniśo (mana)sikā(r)aṃ* •
"As it makes an effort towards retreat (read *āśayāya pratipadyaty*?), so is fundamental concentration."
Or should it be understood as *yathā śayāya*, "as it resorts to its resting place"? The word *yoniśo* suggests a reconstruction to *(mana)sikā(r)aṃ*; it is corrected from *yoniś.* in the manuscript where only the upper part of *ś* is preserved, but without any vowel sign.

18. *yathā svavilād.. .. ś.* (r10) /// *kṣakamāsya saṃvṛtaḥ sarvakleśāvipratisāriṇo bhavaṃtīti draṣṭavyam*
"'Like from its own hole . . . it has become; they are not regretful about all afflictions,' (so) it is to be regarded."
The first part could mean "how (it does not come out again) from its hole." It is unclear how to understand and how to divide ///*kṣakamāsya*; in view of no. 19 a restoration to *(pratipa)kṣakam*, "remedy," seems possible, but the following sentence does not help us to decide. With regard to *vipratisārī* in no. 13, should *sarvakleśāvipratisāriṇo* be corrected to *sarvakleśavipratisāriṇo*, "they are regretful about all afflictions"?

19. *tasmād*
   āśu kleśapratip. ..ṃ .. (+ + + + + + + + + + +
   + + + + + +
   (r11) + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + + +
   + + + + v - - x) *buddheś cāpy āśu kā(r)itā icchatā saprayatnena dha(rmaṃ) śrāvyam atīkṣṇ(a)ś(aḥ)* • ‖◎‖
"Therefore:
   Quickly a remedy (?) against afflictions ... and for an insight is quickly brought about; one who earnestly wishes must proclaim the teaching not harshly."

The final verses are too badly preserved to make real sense of them. The recto side with the text

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of the *Jātakamālā* allows an *akṣara* count and suggests that the missing left part amounts to approximately one third of the folio. Transferred to the story collection with its different script and its highly irregular handwriting this would mean that about thirty *akṣaras* are missing on the left side. Line 10 is damaged also on the right side, and the gap corresponds to about 18 *akṣaras*. Together this gap and the missing left third of line 11 would leave room for about 45 to 50 *akṣaras*. From the preserved *akṣara* remains it is difficult, however, to reconstruct a meter for filling the gap. The last verse is most likely a Śloka.

Notes

1. Several colleagues have contributed useful remarks and corrections, and I am very grateful to all of them: Oliver von Criegern (München), Paul Harrison (Stanford), Dieter Schlingloff (Olbernhau), Johannes Schneider (München) and Klaus Wille (Göttingen).

2. *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhāra: The British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments* (Seattle, 1999), p. 165.

3. Ibid., p. 36.

4. J.-U. Hartmann, "The Parable of a Man and His Two Ladies: A Fragment from an Unknown Story Collection," in *Festschrift for Prof. Xu Wenkan on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, ed. Xu Quansheng and Liu Zhen (Lanzhou, forthcoming).

5. This part of the manuscript is published; see J.-U. Hartmann, "Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā," in *Buddhist Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection*, vol. 2, Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection, vol. 3, ed. J. Braarvig et al. (Oslo, 2002), pp. 318–19.

6. Nicholas Sims-Williams kindly drew my attention to a very similar case, a Bactrian Buddhist text on a birch bark manuscript of the *Prātimokṣasūtra* of the Mahāsāṃghika-(Lokottara)vādins, where fol. 75 "separated into two layers, producing two new blank pages which were subsequently used for writing the Bactrian text." Cf. N. Sims-Williams, "Two Late Bactrian Documents," in *Coins, Art and Chronology II*, ed. M. Alram et al. (Wien, 2010), p. 203 with figs. 1 and 2 on p. 210; for a color reproduction of the corresponding halves with the *Prātimokṣasūtra*, cf. S. Karashima, "Fragments of a Manuscript of the *Prātimokṣasūtra* of the Mahāsāṃghika-(Lokottara)vādins (1)," *ARIRIAB* 11 (2008), pp. 71–90 and pl. 4. Another manuscript in the Schøyen Collection appears to present one more case: it contains the *Bhaiṣajyagurusūtra* and the *Viśeṣavatīdhāraṇī*. The folio on which the first ends and the second begins seems to be split and the resulting blank sides are used for writing another text

secunda manu in a very cursive script, undeciphered so far. The manuscript is scheduled to be published in the next volume of the series *Buddhist Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection*. Hopefully it will be possible to read and understand the secondary text, because this may throw light on whether those splits are accidental or intentional and whether there is a relation between primary and secondary text.

7. On the simultaneous use of both scripts in manuscripts of the *Saṃghāṭasūtra*, cf. O. von Hinüber, "The Gilgit Manuscripts: An Ancient Buddhist Library in Modern Research," in *From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research*, ed. P. Harrison and J.-U. Hartmann (Vienna, 2013), p. 88: "It is evident and well known, of course, that the manuscripts written in proto-Śāradā are younger. This can also be deduced from corrections: in manuscripts BCG, the text in "Gandhāran Brāhmī" is occasionally corrected in proto-Śāradā. There is no example of a correction in the opposite direction. These corrections show that manuscripts in the older variant of the script continued to be read, because these mistakes were obviously detected only by later readers, not by the scribe himself, and, consequently, they also show that the readers were still familiar with both scripts." Cf. also G. Melzer, "A Paleographic Study of a Buddhist Manuscript from the Gilgit Region: A Glimpse into the Workshop of the Scribes," note 10 (forthcoming).

8. I wish to thank my student Chen Ruixuan for searching the CBETA version of the Chinese Tripiṭaka.

9. Cf. É. Huber, *Açvaghoṣa: Sûtrâlaṃkâra traduit en français sur la version chinoise de Kumârajîva* (Paris, 1908), pp. 452, 454, etc.

10. H. Lüders, *Bruchstücke der Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā des Kumāralāta* (Leipzig, 1926; repr. in Monographien zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, vol. 1, Berlin 1979), pp. 189–90.

11. M. S. Kaul Shastri, "Report on the Gilgit Excavation in 1938," *The Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* 30 (1939), pp. 1–12 and 15 plates; the transliteration is found on pp. 10–11.

12. Ibid., p. 7; cf. also the remarks on this fragment in von Hinüber, "The Gilgit Manuscripts," p. 82.

13. Cf. J. Hertel, *The Panchatantra: A Collection of Ancient Hindu Tales in its Oldest Recension, the Kashmirian, Entitled Tantrakhyayika* (Cambridge, Mass., 1915), p. 48.

14. A first transliteration was prepared by Kazunobu Matsuda, Kyoto, in May 2002 and kindly put at my disposal. Parentheses or round brackets ( ) signify restoration in a gap, square brackets [ ] damaged akṣaras or uncertain readings, double pointed brackets << >> an addition by the scribe, double curly brackets {{ }} a deletion by the scribe, three oblique dashes /// mark the point where the fragment breaks off; a cross + denotes a destroyed *akṣara*, two dots .. denote an illegible *akṣara*, one dot denotes an illegible part of an *akṣara*.