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Challenging the Buddha's Authority: a narrative perspective of power dynamics between the Buddha and his disciples

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Chapter 2. Follow the Buddha or Śāriputra?

The Oscillation from a Superior Disciple to a Potential Challenger

“Ko nu senāpatī bhoto sāvako satthudanvayo,”⁹⁷

ko te imaṃ anuvatteti dhammacakkaṃ pavattitaṃ?”

“Mayā pavattitaṃ cakkaṃ, selā” ti Bhagavā,

“dhammacakkaṃ anuttaraṃ sāriputto anuvatteti anujāto tathāgataṃ.”⁹⁸

“But who is the venerable one’s captain, who is the disciple, the successor to the teacher?

Who keeps this doctrine wheel rolling that has been set rolling by you?”

“Sela,” said the Blessed One, “Śāriputra, taking after the Tathāgata, keeps the unsurpassed doctrine wheel rolling that has been set rolling by me.”

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Śāriputra (Pāli *Sāriputta*; Tib. *Shā ri’i bu*; Chn. *Shelifu* 舍利弗) is one of the two chief disciples of Śākyamuni Buddha, along with Maudgalyāyana. In Buddhist texts we frequently read that, as the disciple chief in wisdom—second only to the Buddha—Śāriputra is venerated as the “second teacher” (*di’er shi* 第二師, T. 26 [I] 431b26–c10), the “second king of Dharma” (*di’er fawang* 第二法王, T. 99 [II] 167c19–20), the “king of Dharma” (*dhammarāja*, Martini 1936, 297), and even the “second Buddha” (*di’er fo* 第二佛, T. 1509 [XXV] 68b19). The quoted conversation between Śākyamuni and the monk Sela from the *Suttanipāta* conveys precisely the same message: Śāriputra is acknowledged by Śākyamuni Buddha as the successor who keeps the Dharma wheel rolling. Widely known for his eminence in comprehending the Dharma, in his meticulous obedience to the Vinaya codes, and in subjugating not only heretics outside the Buddhist community but also dissidents within the community,⁹⁹ Śāriputra ranks just below Śākyamuni, in conventional portraits of the power structure of the monastic community during Śākyamuni’s lifetime.

⁹⁷ I prefer Norman’s reading of *satthudanvayo* to the DPG reading of *satthuranvayo*. The intervocalic *-d-* is a *sandhi* consonant, according to Norman 1992: 163; see also Geiger 1994: 65 §73.3.

⁹⁸ Sn. 109, No. 556–557. The English translation is based on Norman (1992: 65) with my own minor revisions.

⁹⁹ For a more detailed description of Śāriputra’s biography and his dharma career, see Li 2019b; Bareau 1963: 343–354.

The portrait of Śāriputra as the most prominent disciple of Śākyamuni has its pedagogical ends. It can serve as a paradigm for the other followers to imitate, illustrating the ideal virtues that every Buddhist follower is supposed to strive for, and demonstrating the soteriological effectiveness of the Buddhist Dharma. However, when Śāriputra as a disciple is accorded too much eminence, the teacher–disciple relation between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra may assume a different dynamic: the excellence of Śāriputra may directly confront the superiority of the Buddha, and therefore issue a challenge to the Buddha’s authority.

In this chapter, I investigate how Śāriputra’s eminence as a disciple and Śākyamuni’s superiority as a teacher interact in some stories of the *Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish* (Chn. *xianyu jing* 賢愚經, abbr. *SWF*). Through analyses of how tensions between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra are created and resolved within the stories, I demonstrate three possible models for the relationship between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra: sometimes Śāriputra’s eminence poses a threat to Śākyamuni’s authority; other times, Śāriputra appropriates the sacred stories of the Buddha to solidify his own identity as a sacred being; and yet other times, in certain past-life stories, Śāriputra behaves as a critic and even an instructor of Śākyamuni. By revealing the *SWF*’s multifaceted understandings of Śāriputra’s significance in this teacher–disciple relation, we can say that the guru–disciple relationship is not an end itself in the Buddhist stories, but remains a continual source of imagination and contemplation.

2.1 A historical discussion of the composition of the *Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish*

The text that forms the central focus of this chapter is the *Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish* (T. 202; Tib. *mDzangs blun*, or *’Dzangs blun*; abbr. *SWF*).¹⁰⁰ It contains elaborate life stories of Śākyamuni and his disciples that fall under the genres of both *jātaka* and *avadāna* (see above n. 5 & 10). As I demonstrate later, although the *SWF* as a text was not a direct translation from a preexisting Indian or Central Asian text but, instead, compiled by Chinese monks, it draws from a pool of Indian Buddhist narratives, with several portions created and reproduced in Central Asia, and thus belongs to a long Buddhist narrative tradition that can be traced back to India.

¹⁰⁰ In the following discussion, when I discuss this text in general, I use the abbreviated form *SWF*; when I refer specifically to the Chinese version of the *SWF*, I use the name *Xianyu jing*; in case of the Tibetan translation of the *SWF*, I use the *mDzangs blun*, the version of its Tibetan names adopted by the majority of the Kanjurs.

2.1.1 The *SWF*: A text from Khotan?

According to popular Chinese accounts, this collection of life stories was first heard by Chinese monks during a *pañcavārṣika* assembly (Chn. *banzheyuse* 般遮于瑟)¹⁰¹ in Khotan, on the Southern Silk Road, around the mid-fifth century.¹⁰² Based on this information, it has been commonly assumed that this *sūtra* represents Buddhism in Khotan. This traditional assumption, however, needs to be reconsidered in view of the fact that the Buddhist culture reflected in the *SWF* is not the same as the Khotanese Buddhism that we know from elsewhere.

To start with, according to Faxian's records, Khotan was dominated by Mahāyāna Buddhism in the period when he visited (ca. 400 CE).¹⁰³ The archaeological discoveries in Khotan confirm this, as most of the texts and sculptures display strong Mahāyāna elements.¹⁰⁴ A few narrative texts written in Khotanese have been found,¹⁰⁵ but these have a relatively late date and are mostly from Dunhuang. For instance, the Khotanese *Jātakastava* was composed around the 10th century,¹⁰⁶ and the *Aśokāvadāna*, *Nandāvadāna*, and *Sudanāvadāna* are similarly written in late Khotanese.¹⁰⁷ In short, the concrete evidence

¹⁰¹ Generally speaking, in Chinese texts such as the *Xianyu jing*, the *banzheyuse* 般遮于瑟 (**pañcavārṣika*) is assimilated into another concept *wuzhe dahui* 無遮大會, both of which refer to the same great Buddhist occasion in which large donations to the *saṅgha* are made. However, in an Indian context, these two assemblies were originally distinguished from each other: the *pañcavārṣika* assembly originated legendarily from Aśoka's five-year tour, while the *wuzhe dahui* seems to have developed from the Vedic sacrifice of the *viśvajit*. According to Deeg (1997: 73–75), *wuzhe* is a semantic translation of the Sanskrit word *nirargaḍa* ("without hindrance"). Also see Funayama (2002: 318), Chen 2006.

¹⁰² It is recorded in Sengyou's *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 (T. 2145) that the Chinese *Xianyu jing* was translated by several Chinese monks during their stay in Kocho (高昌) in the year 445 CE (T. 2145 [LV] 67c10). However, some scholars argue for the year 435 CE as the date of compilation based on a later record from the same text that, till the year 505 CE, this text had been disseminated in China for seventy years: "洎梁天監四年 (505 CE) ... 唯經至中國則七十年矣." Cf. T. 2145 [LV] 67c26–28. For further details on the second argument, see Liu Yongzeng 2001 and Liang Liling 2002: 24–30.

¹⁰³ *Gaoseng faxian zhuan* 高僧法顯傳, T. 2085 (LI) 857b3–5: 在道一月五日, 得到于闐。其國豐樂, 人民殷盛, 盡皆奉法, 以法樂相娛, 眾僧乃數萬人, 多大乘學 ("After one month and five days on the road, he arrived in Khotan. The country has abundant supplies of provisions and pleasures. People are quite rich, entirely obey the law, and entertain themselves with the joy of the Dharma. Monks are thousands in number, and the prevalent teaching is the Mahāyāna teaching"). See also Emmerick 1979: 5.

¹⁰⁴ Kumagai 1962: 72–96.

¹⁰⁵ Bailey 1972.

¹⁰⁶ Dresden 1955: 402; Pulleyblank 1954: 91; Emmerick 1979: 21.

¹⁰⁷ Emmerick 1979: 17.

discovered in the region of Khotan around the fifth century shows that this region was a center of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and we have quite limited evidence to connect the storytelling tradition in Khotan with the composition of the *SWF*.

In contrast to the weak connection between the *SWF* and Khotan, we find the Northern Silk Road to be a more appropriate milieu. First of all, there are numerous mural paintings from the Kizil Grottoes, near Kuča County (Chn. 庫車縣) on the Northern Silk Road, that depict stories unique to the *SWF*.¹⁰⁸ According to a rough count, among approximately 70 caves with recognizable mural paintings in Kizil, 25 caves feature a total number of 24 similar *SWF* stories. Some *SWF* stories appear in more than one cave, and some caves contain more than one *SWF* story.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, it seems quite possible that the *SWF* hails from a Buddhist environment close to that of the former Kuča region.

Moreover, the *SWF*–Kuča connection is further strengthened by the fact that Tocharian Buddhist groups had affinities with both sides (i.e., *SWF* and Kuča Buddhism). On the one hand, it is well known that Tocharian monks were active on the Northern Silk Road,¹¹⁰ and the Kizil Grottoes still preserve some Tocharian inscriptions.¹¹¹ On the other hand, as the recent publication of Wilkens (2016) demonstrates, the *Daśakarmapathāvadānamālā*, a Tocharian text that was later translated into and is preserved in Old Uyghur, contains many stories which resembles the versions in the *SWF*. Long before Wilkens' study, Lévi also noticed a Tocharian version of the *Mahāprabhāsa* story that also appears in the *SWF* (大光明王始發無上心品 *Da guangming wang shifa wushangxin pin*, chapter 16).¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Zhao 2006. As reported by Wang Fang (2015: 22n.1), most Kizil paintings related to the *SWF* should be classified into the second chronological group of cave paintings (ca. seventh century). Accordingly, these paintings are also later than the composition of the *SWF*. However, this does not immediately lead to the conclusion that the stories circulating in Kizil were later than the *SWF*. Stories are intrinsically easier to transmit orally, and it is possible that native Kizil inhabitants illustrated these stories long after they had heard them. Moreover, it is noteworthy that, for many stories, there is more than one version of the painting, which indicates that the storytelling tradition in the Kuča area was quite active and characterized by fluidity.

¹⁰⁹ These are caves 7, 8, 13, 14, 17, 34, 38, 47, 58, 63, 69, 91, 98, 100, 104, 110, 114, 157, 171, 175, 178, 184, 186, 198, and 206. Following Zhao Li's format, I adopt the numbering system used in the *Kezi'er shiku neirong zonglu* 克孜尔石窟内容总录, 2000.

¹¹⁰ Hatani 1962: 10.

¹¹¹ E.g., Schmidt 2000: 856; Pinault 1988: 163.

¹¹² Lévi 1925: 316.

However, although Tocharian monks seem to have shared a pool of stories in common with the *SWF*, the Tocharian versions differ from the *SWF* in narrative details and style. For the *Mahāprabhāsa* story, for example, from the few Tocharian fragments preserved, we can still tell that the Tocharian version contains more information about the qualities of buddhas (PK NS 34) than the *SWF* version and exhibits a more elaborate and hyperbolic style. Besides, the Tocharian fragments further include the story of the arrival of multiple buddhas from different worlds (PK NS 37), which is unseen in the *SWF* version.¹¹³

In sum, there are no solid grounds for assuming that the *SWF* was deeply rooted in the Southern Silk Route. Rather, there is more favorable evidence for connecting the *SWF* with the Buddhist milieu of the Northern Silk Road. However, this is not to say that the Chinese accounts are totally wrong: if we take account of the close communication between different parts of the Silk Road, it is still possible that Kuča monks traveled to Khotan to preach the Dharma, and that the Chinese monks heard these stories in Khotan.

2.1.2 Is the *SWF* a direct translation of an Indian/Central Asian text?

Despite the fact that the historicity of the composition of the *SWF*, largely speaking, is still a mystery, one thing is clear: the original composition of the *SWF* was in Chinese. Although most stories collected in the *SWF* have Indian or Central Asian parallels, the *SWF* as a text itself is not a direct translation of a text written in any Indian or Central Asian language. This point is already clearly indicated in the earliest Chinese accounts that we can trace, namely, that in the *Chu sanzang jiji* 出三藏記集 (T. 2145), in its section “Accounts of the *Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish*” (*Xianyu jing ji* 賢愚經記):¹¹⁴

Śramaṇas Śākya Tanxue, Weide, and others, altogether eight monks from Hexi area (today’s Gansu), jointly resolved to travel and search afar for Buddhist scriptures. At the great monastery in Khotan, they happened upon a *pañcavārṣika* assembly. In

¹¹³ The Tocharian fragments are PK NS 34, PK NS 37, and PK NS 398, and can be found at <https://www.univie.ac.at/tocharian>. A detailed study comparing the Tocharian mss. with versions in other languages will be jointly carried out in the near future by M. Peyrot, H. Fellner, Ruixuan Chen, and myself.

¹¹⁴ The English is based on the translation offered by Mair (1993: 3–4) with my revisions. T. 2145 (LV) 67c12–22: 河西沙門釋曇學威德等，凡有八僧，結志遊方，遠尋經典。於闐大寺，遇般遮于瑟之會。般遮于瑟者，漢言五年一切大眾集也。三藏諸學，各弘法寶。說經講律，依業而教。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，齋到涼州。于時沙門釋慧朗，河西宗匠，道業淵博，總持方等。以為此經所記，源在譬喻。譬喻所明，兼載善惡。善惡相翻，則賢愚之分也。前代傳經，已多譬喻，故因事改名，號曰賢愚焉。

Chinese, *pañcavāṛṣika* means “quinquennial assembly of all groups.” Those who were learned in the *Tripitaka* each preached the jewel of the Dharma extensively. They expounded on the *sūtras* and lectured on the Vinaya, teaching according to their specialties. (Tan)Xue and the other monks, altogether eight, divided up to listen, according to their dispositions. Thereupon, they vied in learning the *Hu* sounds and transformed them into Chinese meanings. With careful consideration, they did fluent translations, and each wrote down what they heard. When they returned and arrived at Gaochang, they assembled their translations into a single text. Having done so, they crossed over the shifting sands and carried it back to Liangzhou. At that time, the *śramaṇa* Śākya Huilang was the master of the Buddhist schools in Hexi. His accomplishment in the path was profound and broad, and he had a comprehensive grasp of *vaipulya*.¹¹⁵ In his opinion, what was recorded in this *sūtra* had its source in *avadānas*, and what the *avadānas* illustrate are both the good and the evil. The confrontation between good and evil is the distinction between the wise and foolish. Considering that there are already many texts transmitted from the past generations entitled *avadāna*, he changed the name in conformity with the subject matter, with the title “The Wise and Foolish.”

This early sixth-century record informs us of how the *SWF* was composed. In the course of Chinese monks’ itinerary of in search of Dharma in the western parts of present-day China, they happened to hear various Buddhist preachings in a *pañcavāṛṣika* assembly. When they returned to the town of Gaochang, the center of the Chinese community in the west in that period, they compiled their accounts of stories into one collection. After this collection was brought to Liangzhou, in present-day Gansu, it was named *Xianyu jing* 賢愚經 (“The Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish”), because the contemporary monk Huilang understood it as an *avadāna* text, the genre that relates the distinction between wise and foolish actions. According to the above account, the *SWF* is not a translation from a preexisting Indic text, but a compilation of Buddhist stories that were popular in Central Asia.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ See Karashima 2015b for a very detailed and convincing discussion of how names of “mahāyāna” *sūtras* transited from **vevulla* (i.e., *vaitulya* and *vaipulya*) to *mahāyānasūtra*.

¹¹⁶ Remarkably, still in the *Chu sanzang ji ji*’s entry on the *SWF*, a contradictory account to the above-translated paragraph is also preserved: “The Liangzhou *śramaṇas* Śākya Tanxue, Weide, and so forth, obtained the *Hu* version (*huben* 胡本, i.e. a version in a Central Asian language) of this text in the kingdom of Khotan, and translated it in Gaochang County. This information was passed on by the *śramaṇa* Hongzong in the Tian’an Temple” (T. 2145 [LV] 12c16–18: 宋文帝時，涼州沙門釋曇學威德，於闐國得此經胡本，於高

2.1.3 The Tibetan version of the *SWF*

The *SWF* was translated from Chinese into Tibetan under the title *mDzangs blun* by the great Dunhuang-based translator Chos grub.¹¹⁷ However, most versions of this Tibetan translation contain only 51 chapters (52 chapters in some versions) in 12 volumes,¹¹⁸ differently from any currently known Chinese version.¹¹⁹ It remains unclear why most of the Tibetan recensions omit dozens of chapters compared to the Chinese version.

There is, nevertheless, at least a glimmer of hope to figure out the reason(s) for the difference between the Tibetan translation and the Chinese versions of the *SWF*, if we

昌郡譯出。天安寺釋弘守傳). Strictly speaking, this record runs counter to the longer reference above as here it states that this Chinese text was translated from a Central Asian version. However, it is still possible to understand *huben* 胡本 as an indication of (multiple) loose texts disseminating in Central Asia, instead of a fixed, compiled collection in a Central Asian language.” Another Chinese account found in the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 (T. 2034) literally claims that the Chinese monks got access to a Sanskrit text (*fanben* 梵本) of the *Xianyu jing* (T. 2034 [XLIX] 85a12–16), which later influences the viewpoints of many other texts (e.g., T. 2149 [LV] 256b28–c1, T. 2151 [LV] 360a12–15). We are not sure whether *fanben* here specifically refers to a Sanskrit text in contrast with a Central Asian text. But even so, considering the fact that the *Lidai sanbao ji*’s composer Fei Changfang has a bad reputation of interpolating the records of the *Chu sanzang ji ji* (Nattier 2008: 12), we can easily dismiss the statement that there existed an original Sanskrit text for the *Xianyu jing*.

Mair (1993) in his monograph attempts to figure out the original language which the *Xianyu jing* is translated or sourced from. By means of examining the phonological data of the proper nouns and technical terms in the *Xianyu jing*—which he summaries as the singular masculine (nominative) noun ending in *-i*—Mair argues that “the Chinese monks heard was a mixture of Sanskrit and Prakrit (mostly the latter) pronounced in a Khotanese fashion” (ibid. 12). However, not merely Khotanese possesses the feature that the singular masculine nominative ending is *-i*. The same applies to many other Central Asian vernaculars such as Tocharian and Sogdian. Therefore, it is difficult to say for sure whether the language feature revealed in the *Xianyu jing* is the result of the colorization of Khotanese.

¹¹⁷ The colophons of most Kanjur versions confirm the Chinese origin of this text (*rgya nag las 'gyur bar snang ngo*). Furthermore, through an analysis of the content, Takakusu (1901a&b) confirmed that the Tibetan version must be a translation from Chinese.

¹¹⁸ The difference between the 51-chapter version and the 52-chapter version lies in whether the *Sujāta-jātaka* chapter is included. Five versions of the *mDzangs blun* are found with the *Sujāta* chapter (and therefore 52 chapters in total), namely, one canonical version from the London Kanjur manuscript at the British Museum; another canonical version from the Phug brag Kanjur; one separate manuscript kept at SOAS; and two print editions—the *Phun tshogs gling* edition and the edition in the private possession of the late Michael Hahn. For more details, see Baruch 1955 and Roesler 2007. For the textual history of the *Sujāta* chapter, see Li 2017.

The Mongolian translation of *mDzangs blun* (1702 CE) also consists of 52 chapters, including the *Sujāta* chapter. The English translation of the Mongolian version is Frye 2006 (1981).

¹¹⁹ The extant Chinese *Xianyu jing* survives in two major recensions: The Song-Yuan-Ming *Tripitaka*, with 13 volumes and 69 chapters; and the Korean *Tripitaka*, which has 13 volumes and 62 chapters. Although several Buddhist records attest to versions with 13, 15, 16 and 17 volumes (Okitsu 2006a&b), none of the surviving manuscripts or historical documents tells us of a version with 12 volumes, which is the length of the Tibetan translation.

consider the fact that the *Xianyu jing* possesses a substantially complex transmission history. Today we possess different versions of the Chinese *Xianyu jing* with incredibly disparate arrangements of volumes and chapters: the Japanese *Shōsōin* documents (正倉院文書) recount that the mainstream version of the *Xianyu jing* from the Nara period (the eighth century) contains 17 volumes;¹²⁰ the versions of the Heian and Kamakura periods (e.g., the Kongō-ji manuscript [金剛寺本] and the Nanatsudera manuscript [七寺本]) generally contain 16 or 17 volumes with 69 chapters;¹²¹ in the 13th-century Korean *Tripiṭaka*, there are only 13 volumes with 62 chapters; and the *Tripiṭakas* of the Song, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties comprise 13 volumes with 69 chapters (unfortunately, the Fangshan version is not preserved). If we count the additional records of 13, 15, 16 and 17 volumes in various Chinese *Tripiṭaka* catalogs,¹²² the image we form is that this text underwent considerable textual rearrangements. In view of the extremely complex textual history of the Chinese *Xianyu jing*, we may surmise that a Chinese version with 12 volumes once existed, whose text disagreed with the extant *Xinyu jing* versions and served as the direct source of the Tibetan *mDzangs blun*.¹²³

2.2 Different power dynamics between Śāriputra and Śākyamuni

In the stories of the *SWF*, Śāriputra is unequivocally the chief disciple of Śākyamuni Buddha. Compared to the other disciples, he makes the most frequent appearance as a main character: out of the 69 chapters of the *SWF*,¹²⁴ he is mentioned in 16 chapters and features as the

¹²⁰ Okitsu 2006a: 179.

¹²¹ Okitsu 2006b: 49-50.

¹²² The *Chusanjang jiji* 出三藏記集 and Fajing's *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 read: “賢愚經十三卷” (T. 2145 [LV] 12c15 and T. 2146 [LV] 128a3); Yancong's *Zhongjing lumu* 眾經目錄 records, “賢愚經十六卷，或十七卷” (T. 2147 [LV] 154a11); Jingtai's *Zhongjing mulu* 眾經目錄 registers, “賢愚經十三卷，二百七十五紙，或十六卷” (T. 2148 [LV] 186b19); *Datang neidian lu* 大唐內典錄 mentions, “賢愚經十五卷” (T. 2149 [LV] 256b27). The *Dazhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定眾經目錄 and *Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄 both record differing volumes, such as the numbers 13, 15, 16 and 17 (T. 2153 [LV] 413b15 and T. 2157 [LV] 837c24).

¹²³ In the textual comparison between the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the *Sujāta* chapter, I find that these two texts show multiple disagreements (Li 2017). This strengthens the viewpoint that the very version used for the Tibetan translation was not exactly the same as today's popular ones.

¹²⁴ Note that the version of the *Xianyu jing* contained in the Song/Yuan/Ming editions of the Chinese *Tripiṭaka* has a different chapter order compared to that of the Korean *Tripiṭaka* editions. When mentioning the chapter number of each story, I consistently refer to the version in the Song/Yuan/Ming editions of *Tripiṭaka*.

leading figure in at least eight stories.¹²⁵ For instance, he is mentioned as a foremost monk in the Buddhist monastic community in the chapters “A Vārāṇasī Boy Selling his Body to Make an Offering” (波羅奈人身質供養品, chapter 4) and “An Upāsikā named Mahāsenā” (摩訶斯那優婆夷緣品, chapter 17). In addition, in the Pūrṇeccha chapter (富那奇緣品, chapter 29), when a new monk named Pūrṇeccha introduces the members of the *saṅgha* to his brother, Pūrṇeccha addresses Śāriputra as the chief disciple of Śākyamuni. A more interesting story is recorded in the Upagupta chapter (優波鞠提緣品, chapter 67), in which the prominent Buddhist Upagupta,¹²⁶ who even tamed Māra, only serves as a foil to Śāriputra: in his previous life, Upagupta was told by Śākyamuni Buddha that he was not able to compete with Śāriputra in the capacity of wisdom and intelligence. This had led Upagupta to abandon the idea of joining the Buddhist community in that lifetime.

In the *SWF*, the excellence of Śāriputra is not merely underscored by the contrast with other major disciples; he is even directly compared with Śākyamuni Buddha. In the following section, I will investigate the different facets of the Buddha–disciple relation, including both competition and subordination, that exist in the *SWF*’s stories of Śāriputra. I start with the discussion of the *Śrīvṛddhi* story in which Śāriputra is promoted to a quite high position, resulting in a challenge to Śākyamuni’s authority within the monastic community. In this story, we will see how storytellers perceive the tension between the great teacher and the eminent disciple, and how the high position of Śāriputra compels storytellers to readdress the religious significance of Śākyamuni and Śāriputra. In several other stories, we see another aspect of this relation: Śāriputra becomes the protagonist of life stories that originally feature the Buddha. The imitation of Śākyamuni’s feats by Śāriputra can be read as the process in which the perfection of disciples is modeled on, derived from, and solidified by the authority of the teacher. In the next section, I will briefly discuss the third model of the teacher–disciple relation revealed in the *SWF*: Śāriputra becomes the critic and even quasi-instructor who helps Śākyamuni to initiate the bodhisattva path. This uncommon hierarchy sheds further light on the function of stories as the medium to openly discuss the

The Taishō version of the *Xianyu jing*, however, adopts a more complex and also more confusing chapter system: it generally follows the order in the Korean *Tripiṭaka*, and adds the chapters that are contained in the Song/ Yuan/ Ming editions but missing in the Korean editions at the end of each volume.

¹²⁵ Śāriputra is commonly described as the Buddha’s chief disciple. However, according to Migot (1954), Pāli literature places Śāriputra in a more significant position compared to the Chinese and Sanskrit texts (e.g., the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Karmaśataka*).

¹²⁶ For a comprehensive research of this figure, see Strong 1992.

religious significance of these figures. We will see how the imagining of the different roles played by Śāriputra in the teacher–disciple relation, which involve challenge, emulation, and submission, enhances the vitality of the narratives around Śāriputra.

2.2.1 Śāriputra as a dissident

The chapter of the *SWF* I discuss in this section is named “Merits of Going Forth (as illustrated to) Śrīvṛddhi” (*chujia gongde shilibiti yuan pin* 出家功德尸利苾提緣品, chapter 18). As an *avadāna* in genre, it narrates several episodes of the present life of an old monk named Śrīvṛddhi (Chn. *fuzeng* 福增) and relates these present-life scenes to some stories occurring in past lives. Through a close reading of one of its “present-life” episodes (Skt. *pratyutpannavastu*, Pāli *paccuppannavatthu*) and a textual comparison with other related sources, I demonstrate that the *SWF* reveals a dramatic story that contains an unusual detail in which the monastic community collectively dissents from Śākyamuni, and a unique concern about the power dynamics between Śākyamuni Buddha and his disciples.¹²⁷

The *SWF* narrates that a centenarian named Śrīvṛddhi wants to join the Buddhist community. However, Śāriputra rejects his request, considering that he is exceedingly old and incapable of fulfilling the three principle courses (i.e. service, study, and meditation). Out of respect for Śāriputra, all the other disciples of Śākyamuni endorse Śāriputra’s decision. When Śrīvṛddhi comes to Śākyamuni Buddha to complain about this, however, Śākyamuni grants him admittance. Moreover, Śākyamuni declares that only the Buddha has the authority to evaluate people’s eligibility to join the *saṅgha*. The following is how the story develops:¹²⁸

Once the Blessed One was dwelling in the city of Rājagṛha, in the Bamboo Grove of Kalaṇḍa. At that time, there was a householder named Śrīvṛddhi (which means “increase in glory” in *Qin* speech). He was already one hundred years old. Having heard that the merit of going forth was immeasurable as such, he thought to himself: “Now, why not go forth into the Buddha’s teaching (**buddha-śāsana*) and cultivate the path?” He instantly said farewell to his wife and children, servants and

¹²⁷ In fact, this is not a new topic. Mahāyāna literature has already shifted the image of Śāriputra from a wise disciple to a mediocre *śrāvaka* whose intelligence is not sufficiently sharp to grasp the profound meaning of Mahāyāna wisdom. In this sense, the three-vehicle theory can be read as a strategy to confine the disciples’ spiritual potential to avoid competition or challenge.

¹²⁸ T. 202 (IV) 376c13-377b23; D. 341, *mdo*, a, 174a5–175a2.

maidservants, as well as young and old family members: “I intend to go forth.” Because of his decrepitude, the whole family, including both old and young, were all weary of him, disrespected his words, and found no use for him. On hearing of his intention to go forth, they all spoke with delight: “You should have gone a long time ago. Why so late? Now is just the time!”¹²⁹

Śrīvṛddhi then departed from his house and headed to the Bamboo Grove, with the intention to meet the Blessed One and seek the way to go forth. Upon arrival, he asked the monks: “Where is the Buddha, the Blessed One, Great Seer, the one with great compassion to widely benefit gods and human beings?” The monks responded: “The Tathāgata, the Blessed One, is travelling elsewhere to edify people and confer benefit. He is absent.” Śrīvṛddhi further asked: “Who, then, is the wise disciple second to the Buddha, great master?” Monks indicated that it was the elder Śāriputra. Leaning on a cane, he reached the place of Śāriputra. He set aside the cane and rendered a salute, saying: “Elder! Please permit me to go forth.” At that moment, having examined this person, Śāriputra thought that he was old and lacked (the capability of) conducting the three courses—he could not study, meditate, or assist with monastic services. He spoke to him: “You should go back. You are too old and exceed the (proper) age. You are not allowed to go forth.”¹³⁰

Then, Śrīvṛddhi came to Mahākāśyapa, to Upāli, to Anuruddha, one after another, to the five hundred great arhats. They all inquired of him: “Have you approached other monks previously?” He replied: “I previously went to the Blessed One, but the Blessed One was absent. Then, I approached the elder Śāriputra.” They asked again: “What did he say?” Śrīvṛddhi answered: “He said to me: ‘You are too old and exceed the (proper) age.’” The monks spoke: “If Śāriputra, the one foremost in wisdom, refuses to give you permission, how could I grant permission?”

¹²⁹ 爾時世尊，在王舍城迦蘭陀竹園。時王舍城，有一長者，名尸利苾提，秦言福增。其年百歲。聞出家功德如是無量，便自思惟：“我今何不於佛法中出家修道？”即辭妻子奴婢大小：“我欲出家。”其人老耄，家中大小，莫不厭核，輕賤其言，無從用者，聞欲出家，咸各喜言：“汝早應去，何以遲晚？今正是時。”

¹³⁰ 尸利苾提，即出其家，往趣竹林，欲見世尊，求出家法。到竹林已，問諸比丘：“佛、世尊、大仙、大悲廣利天人者，今何所在？”比丘答言：“如來世尊，餘行教化利益，不在。”尸利苾提又問：“次佛大師智慧上足，更復是誰？”比丘指示彼尊者舍利弗是。即拄杖至舍利弗所，捨杖作禮，白言：“尊者！聽我出家。”時舍利弗，視是人已，念此人老，三事皆缺，不能學問、坐禪、佐助眾事，告言：“汝去，汝老年過，不得出家。”

For example, if a skilled physician who is proficient in examining the sick refuses to offer therapy, other less-skilled physicians could only fold their hands [to show powerlessness]. One should understand that this person must display the sign of death.” Due to the refusal of Śāriputra, the one of great wisdom, the other monks did not grant permission either.¹³¹

Śrīvṛddhi pleaded to all the monks but was not able to go forth. He exited the Bamboo Grave and sat on the threshold of the gate. Sobbing in grief and feeling chagrined, he uttered a loud cry: “I have never committed a grave transgression, ever since I was born. Why am I particularly prohibited from going forth? People such as Upāli, the barber of the inferior caste; Nidha, the humble feces-carrier; Aṅgulimāla, the murderer killing numerous people; and Tuosaiji (variant reading: Asaiji; possibly Assaji in Pāli),¹³² the great evildoer, all got permission to go forth. What is my sin that prevents me from going forth?”¹³³

After Śrīvṛddhi uttered these words, the Blessed One immediately emerged in front of him. Emitting a great radiance, (the Buddha) was adorned with primary and secondary marks, just like Śakra, king of the Trāyastriṃśa, (seated) in a high chariot (made) of seven kinds of jewels. The Buddha asked Śrīvṛddhi: “Why are you weeping?” At that moment, the householder heard the subtle voice of the Buddha, and in his mind, he became joyful, just like a son seeing his father. He

¹³¹ 次向摩訶迦葉、優波離、阿菟樓陀等，次第五百大阿羅漢，彼皆問言：“汝先向餘人未？”答言：“我先以向世尊，世尊不在，次向尊者舍利弗。”又問：“彼何所說？”答言：“彼告我言：‘汝老年過，不得出家。’”諸比丘言：“彼舍利弗智慧第一，尚不聽汝，我等亦復不聽汝也。譬如良醫，善知瞻病，捨不療治，餘諸小醫，亦悉拱手，當知是人，必有死相。”以舍利弗大智不聽，其餘比丘，亦爾不聽。

¹³² The Tibetan translations here give a variant *a si ki* (the Derge recension records it as *a sa ki* [D. 341, *mdo sde, a*, 175a2], while the *sTog pho brang bris ma* edition reads *a si ki* [No. 281, *mdo sde, ci*, 69b7]) Judging from the phonological feature of the *Xianyu jing* that the singular masculine noun usually has *-i* as the ending, the form *a si ki* is plausibly the more authentic witnesses. In regard of this form of name, there is a monk named Assaji (Chn. 阿濕貝 或 阿濕婆) who appears frequently side by side with the monk Punabbasuka (弗那婆修 或 富那婆娑) as infamous violators of monastic codes (Vin. iii. 180: “*assajipunabbasukā nāma kīṭāgirisimhā āvāsikā alajjino pāpabhikkhū*,” Sifen lü T. 1428 [XXII] 596c17ff.; MN. i. 473ff., MĀ, T. 26 [I] 749c3ff., etc).

The reason for the variation between the Tibetan and Chinese records of this name, I suppose, is that the Chinese original accessible to the Tibetans writes *asaiji* 阿塞羈 instead of *tuosaiji* 陀塞羈.

¹³³ 尸利苾提，求諸比丘，不得出家。還出竹園，住門闔上，悲泣懊惱，舉聲大哭：“我從生來，無有大過，何故特不聽我出家？如優波離，剃髮賤人，泥提，下穢除糞之人，鶡掘摩羅，殺無量人，及陀塞羈，大賊惡人，如是等人，尚得出家，我有何罪，不得出家？”

rendered a salute to the Buddha by throwing the five parts of his body to the ground and spoke to the Buddha in tears: “All beings, including murderers and thieves, scandalmongers and slanderers, as well as low-caste ones, are allowed to go forth. What sin of mine makes me alone unable to go forth? My whole family, both the old and young, no longer need me due to my decrepitude. Now, I am not allowed to go forth in the teaching of the Buddha. If now I were to return home, they would certainly disrespect me. Where should I go? Now I have to abandon my life here [in this world].”¹³⁴

Then, the Buddha spoke to Śrīvṛddhi: “Who can raise his hand into the sky and say definitively, ‘That person should go forth; this person should not?’” The old householder spoke to the Buddha: “Blessed One! It is the foremost wise son of the king who turns the Dharma-wheel, second buddha, second guide of the world, Śāriputra, who does not permit me to go forth.”¹³⁵

Then, the Blessed One, with great compassion, comforted and consoled Śrīvṛddhi, just as a loving father comforts and consoles his pious son. He spoke thus: “Do not worry! Now, I will permit you to go forth. It is not Śāriputra who arduously practiced austerity for three *asaṃkhyeya-kalpas* (i.e., incalculably long eons) and cultivated merits for one hundred *kalpas*; it is not Śāriputra who conducted ascetic practices in every past life, who cut off his head, plucked out his eyes, and made donations with his marrow, brain, blood, flesh, skin, bones, hands, feet, ears, and nose; it is not Śāriputra who threw his body to a hungry tigress, jumped into a fire pit, pierced himself with a thousand nails, and gouged out his flesh to fill in a thousand lamps; it is not Śāriputra who gave away his kingdom, cities, wives, sons, male slaves, female slaves, elephants, horses, and seven jewels; it is not even Śāriputra who made offerings to the 88 thousand buddhas in the first *asaṃkhyeya-kalpa*, to the 99 thousand buddhas in the middle *asaṃkhyeya-kalpa*, and to a hundred thousand buddhas in the last *asaṃkhyeya-kalpa*, and went forth to

¹³⁴ 作是語時，世尊即於其前踊出，放大光明，相好莊嚴，譬如忉利天王帝釋七寶高車。佛問福增：“汝何故哭？”爾時長者，聞佛梵音，心懷喜踊，如子見父，五體投地，為佛作禮，泣白佛言：“一切眾生，殺人作賊，妄語誹謗，下賤等人，皆得出家。我獨何罪，特不聽我佛法出家？我家大小，以我老耄，不復用我。今於佛法，不得出家；今設還家，必不前我，當何所趣？我今定當於此捨命。”

¹³⁵ 爾時佛告尸利苾提：“誰能舉手於虛空中，而作定說：‘是應出家。此人不應’？”是老長者白佛言：“世尊！法轉輪王第一智子，次佛，第二世間導師，舍利弗者，此不聽我佛法出家。”

observe precepts and fulfill the perfection of morality (*śīla*); it is not Śāriputra who has attained mastery of Dharma. How could he rule that ‘this person should go forth, while that one should not’? I am the sole one who has attained mastery of Dharma; I am the unique one who has ridden on the jeweled chariot of six perfections and put on the armor of patience. Under the Bodhi Tree, I sat on the *Vajra* seat, subjugated the enmity of Māra, and attained the buddha path. Nobody is equal to me. Come and follow me! I will grant you the going-forth.” In this way, the Blessed One comforted and instructed him. Thereafter, [Śrīvṛddhi’s] distress was eliminated and great joy was generated in his mind. He followed the Buddha and entered the Buddha’s monastery.¹³⁶

The Buddha ordered Mahā-Maudgalyāyana: “You should grant him the Going-forth. Why? All sentient beings get ordination following their own karmic circumstances. If a person has some karmic relation with the Buddha, no other people can ordain him. If a person has some karmic relation with other persons, the Buddha cannot ordain him. If one has some karmic relation with Śāriputra, then Maudgalyāyana, Kāśyapa, Anurudha, Kimpila,¹³⁷ and all the other disciples cannot ordain him. In this logic, according to the one with whom he has a karmic bond, other (monks) cannot ordain him.” At that moment, Maudgalyāyana thought to himself too: “This man is extremely old and decrepit. He lacks the capability to conduct the three courses of chanting *sūtras*, sitting in meditation, and assisting with monastic services. Nevertheless, it is the Buddha, king of the Dharma who gives the order to ordain him. I certainly cannot disobey.” Then, he granted him the going-forth and full ordination.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ 時世尊以大慈悲，慰喻福增，譬如慈父慰喻孝子，而告之言：“汝莫憂惱！我今當令汝得出家。非舍利弗三阿僧祇劫精勤苦行，百劫修福；非舍利弗世世難行，破頭挑眼，髓腦血肉皮骨手足耳鼻布施。非舍利弗投身餓虎，入於火坑，身琢千釘，剝身千燈。非舍利弗國城妻子、奴婢象馬、七寶施與。非舍利弗初阿僧祇劫，供養八萬八千諸佛，中阿僧祇劫，供養九萬九千諸佛，後阿僧祇劫，供養十萬諸佛世尊，出家持戒，具足尸波羅蜜。非舍利弗於法自在。何得制言：‘此應出家，此人不應。’唯我一人，於法自在。唯我獨乘六度寶車，被忍辱鎧，於菩提樹下，坐金剛座，降魔王怨，獨得佛道，無與我等。汝來隨我，我當與汝出家。”如是世尊種種慰喻，福增憂惱即除，心大歡喜，便隨佛後，入佛精舍。

¹³⁷ *Kimpila*, the Sanskrit form of the name *jinpiluo* 金毘羅 is attested in Sanskrit manuscripts (e.g. Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 60).

¹³⁸ [佛]告大目犍連：“令與出家。何以故？眾生隨緣得度，或有於佛有緣，餘人則不能度；於餘人有緣，佛則不能度。於舍利弗有緣，目連、迦葉、阿那律、金毘羅等一切弟子，則所不度。如是展

In the story, Śāriputra rejects a decrepit man who comes up with the notion of joining the Buddhist *saṅgha* out of practical considerations. According to Śāriputra, an old person as such is not able to fulfill the responsibilities of being a monk in the study, meditation, and monastic service.¹³⁹ Not being dissuaded, Śrīvṛddhi continues to plead with all the other monastic members, but all the other monastic members unanimously reject his request. As the text states, the other *saṅgha* members trust the judgment of Śāriputra and respect his perspicacity (“彼舍利弗智慧第一，尚不聽汝，我等亦復不聽汝也”). In their eyes, Śāriputra is like an advanced physician (良醫), while they themselves are just as mediocre as inferior physicians (小醫); if the advanced physician diagnoses one’s disease as incurable, other inferior physicians could do no anything to help him (譬如，善知瞻病，捨不療治，餘諸小醫，亦悉拱手). Therefore, Śrīvṛddhi, in the depths of despair, feels devastatingly upset.

Noteworthy here is how the text presents the reason for other *saṅgha* members’ unanimous disapproving of Śrīvṛddhi’s ordination. Although the consensus reached by the monastic community is founded on solid grounds that the Vinayas include exceedingly old persons in the list of people who should be barred from receiving ordination,¹⁴⁰ the text does

轉，隨其有緣，餘人不度。”爾時目連亦思：“此人年高老耄，誦經、坐禪、佐助眾事，三事悉缺。然佛法王勅使出家，理不可違。”即與出家，受具足戒。

¹³⁹ Silk (2008: 17–18) briefly discusses the three “principal courses,” namely, “devotion to service, devotion to study and preaching, and devotion to meditation and personal cultivation, to the physical, the intellectual, and the contemplative, so to speak” (ibid. 17). Possessing the ability to accomplish the three obligatory courses (study, meditation, and monastic service; Chn. *sanye* 三業) is the essential requirement for being a Buddhist monastic monk, which is widely seen in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, the Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, and some Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

¹⁴⁰ E.g., Vin. i. 91 (*jarādubbalaṃ*); T. 1421 (XXII) 119a29–b9; T. 1425 (XXII) 416b26–c2; T. 1428 (XXII) 814a18–b20; T. 1435 (XXIII) 155b1–18; T. 1444 (XXIII) 1041a8–12.

For instance, the Mahāsaṅghika Vinaya (T. 1425 [XXII] 418b9–14) offers a detailed explanation of this rule: 太老者，過七十。若減七十，不堪造事，臥起須人，是人不聽出家。若過七十，能有所作，是亦不聽。年滿七十，康健能修習諸業，聽與出家。若太老，不應與出家。若已出家者，不應驅出，若度出家受具足者，越比尼罪。是名太老。

The “exceedingly old ones” means people who exceed the age of 70. For one who is less than 70 years old, if he is not able to handle a task, if he relies on other people to lie down and rise, this person should not be permitted to go forth. For those who exceed 70 years old, even if they are capable of fulfilling some tasks, they should not be permitted either. For those who are exactly 70 years old, they may be permitted under the condition that they are healthy and are able to practice all the monastic activities. If one is exceedingly old, he should not be allowed to go forth. However, those who have already been ordained should not be excommunicated. A monk, who grants the going forth to such a person and fully ordains him, incurs a **vinayātikrama*. The above is [the rule concerning] the exceedingly old.

not turn to these established monastic rules for support. The story purely puts it as the influence of Śāriputra's prestige in the eyes of the other *saṅgha* members. The high reputation of Śāriputra is underscored in this way.

The prohibition against admitting exceedingly old people, of course, has its social and economic reasons. Imagine that a monastic member is too old. He creates an extra burden on the whole monastic community for obvious reasons, such as that he needs to be taken extra care of. There are numerous cases in the Vinayas in which monastic codes are compromised and loosened because the aged monks could not finish daily duties.¹⁴¹ Therefore, we can easily imagine the social and economic pressure that too many elderly community members would exert on the monastic society. This age limitation can be readily interpreted as a reaction to this pressure. It is no wonder that Śāriputra's decision wins the support of the whole *saṅgha*.

However, despite the above legal regulation, Śrīvṛddhi has a change of fortune when Śākyamuni Buddha steps in. Subsequently, the dramatic conflict is also transformed into the power confrontation between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra. When the Buddha asks who makes the decision that Śrīvṛddhi is not fit to become a monk, Śrīvṛddhi indicates it is Śāriputra. Furthermore, Śrīvṛddhi stresses the prestige of Śāriputra—"the foremost wise son of the king who turns the Dharma-wheel, second Buddha, second guide of the world." This response, somewhat inflammatory, creates a subtle power opposition as it places Śākyamuni and Śāriputra in two confronting positions. Śākyamuni's reaction is just like that of an offended leader who eloquently discourses on his superiority to his top disciple. In order to justify his unparalleled excellence and unique position as the only one who can judge people's eligibility to become a monk, Śākyamuni Buddha narrates his glorious past deeds, which include his past feats of self-sacrifice, his indefatigable efforts to fulfill the bodhisattva path, his unbounded offerings to past buddhas, and his meticulous adherence to precepts. These common *jātaka* elements all become the source of his unchallengeable authority in this life. In this way, a power struggle emerges: Śāriputra, supported by the monastic community,

¹⁴¹ For instance, for the rule prohibiting monks from riding on vehicles, the Buddha had to make an exception that old people are exempt from this rule because they are too feeble to travel on foot (T. 1421 [XXII] 144c23-28; T. 1428 [XXII] 848c1-3; T. 1435 [XXIII] 182c2-10; T. 1447 [XXIII] 1054b21-c8; T. 1451 [XXIV] 246c2-22, D. 6, 'dul ba, tha, 106a4-107a2; T. 1458 [XXIV] 571b25). In addition, Durt's study of the term *Mahallaka* ("old, decrepit") shows that it is a common phenomenon among Buddhist monks to go forth at a quite late age (Durt 1980: 85ff.), which would undoubtedly result in serious economical pressure.

rejects Śrīṣṛddhi's ordination based on well-grounded Vinaya considerations, while the Buddha strongly argues for his personal authority in judging this matter.¹⁴²

However, this lengthy self-defense does not entirely succeed in consolidating Śākyamuni's authority. If the superiority of Śākyamuni were always a self-evident matter free from controversy, Buddhist composers would feel no impulse to compose such a confrontation, and there would exist no need to readdress the issue of the Buddha's authority. The lengthy defense articulated by Śākyamuni precisely reveals the pressure Śākyamuni faces in this imagined relationship. In this sense, this story can be read as a literary device in which the narrators intentionally create tension between the teacher and the disciples, specifically with the aim of readdressing the power structure within the Buddhist community and resolving the issue by reinforcing the Buddha's authority.¹⁴³ A situation is imagined in the story that a top disciple such as Śāriputra possesses enough prestige to win over the support of the monastic community, constituting a source of authority independent of the Buddha.

This sort of imagined power confrontation can also be located in another text but in a less powerful and less polemical manner. This text is the *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論

¹⁴² Moreover, the ordination of Śrīṣṛddhi also reflects the confrontation between the authority of written sacred texts and that of the living leader. Śāriputra, together with other *saṅgha* members, stands on the side of obeying the existing Vinaya rules, while the Buddha, as a dissident, attempts to make an exception in this case. That is to say, whether Śrīṣṛddhi could receive ordination relies merely on the personal authority of the Buddha. Even though this confrontation cannot be historically factual, it can reveal clues as to why the story creates such an opposition. From a pragmatic perspective, in the daily functions of the monastic community, monks must encounter many practical demands that go against the fixed Vinaya texts. The creation of a humane, sympathetic, and mighty Buddha can be read as a clever strategy for compromising the sacredness of the text by directly resorting to the authority of the Buddha himself.

¹⁴³ We also find the same story in other texts, for instance, in the *Pusa bensheng Manlun* 菩薩本生鬘論 (T. 160), a Chinese work purported to a translation from the *Jātakamālā* in the 11th century. However, in this text, the story is narrated in a rather plain way, and nowhere can we sense the tension and competition between Śākyamuni and the *saṅgha* led by Śāriputra as shown in the *SWF*.

Although the *Pusa bensheng Manlun* is alleged to be a translation of Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, Brough (1965) has convincingly demonstrated that this Chinese text is not a real translation, although the "translators" (or more precisely, they should be called "editors") of the Chinese text must have known of a Sanskrit version of the *Jātakamālā*. For the first fourteen stories of the *Pusa bensheng Manlun*, the editors mostly do not take the trouble to make a fresh translation but borrow from the preexisting translations with different degrees of revision. The rest part of this text is a commentary on another text with the title *Huguo zunzhe wenjing* 護國尊者問經 (*Rāṣṭrapālāpariprecchā*; Finot 1957 [1901]).

(**Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa*), a commentary on the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā*.¹⁴⁴ Despite its nature as a Mahāyāna commentary, its content is somehow connected to the Vinayas of the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda school(s).¹⁴⁵ Therefore, the *Da zhidu lun* possesses a textual milieu that was possibly not isolated from that of the *SWF*. In the *Da zhidu lu*, we find Jātakas about Śākyamuni's past self-sacrificial deeds being used as decisive proof of his superiority to Śāriputra:¹⁴⁶

For instance, Śāriputra practiced the bodhisattva path for 60 *kalpas*, aiming to traverse the stream of generosity. At that moment, a mendicant came to him and asked for his eyes. Śāriputra said: "My eyes are useless to you. Why demand them? If you need my body and my belongings, I will definitely give them to you." The mendicant responded: "I don't need your body nor your belongings. I only ask for your eyes. If you truly practice the perfection of generosity (*dāna-pāramitā*), you should give me your eyes." Then, Śāriputra pulled out one eye and gave it to him. The mendicant took the eye and, in front of Śāriputra, he smelled it and was disgusted by the odor. He spat on it and threw it onto the ground, stamping on it with his feet. Śāriputra thought to himself: "People as vicious as this are quite difficult to liberate! My eyes are useless to him, but he importunately demands them. Yet when he gets one, he throws it away and stamps on it with his feet. How

¹⁴⁴ For the textual family under the rubric the "*Larger Prajñāpāramitā*," see Zacchetti 2015: 178, 180, 184ff. According to Zacchetti (forthcoming), the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-upadeśa* was produced in a period when the *Larger Prajñāpāramitā* was still alive and open to textual changes.

¹⁴⁵ The *Da zhidu lun*, allegedly authored by the famous Nāgārjuna, is completely preserved only in its Chinese translation by Kumārajīva (ca. 344–413). For a more detailed study and translation of this work, Lamotte's masterpiece (1944–1980) is always an indispensable source of knowledge and inspiration. According to Lamotte, the author, possibly not Nāgārjuna, must have been a Mahāyāna Buddhist who was quite familiar with Sarvāstivāda works. As Lamotte (1944–1980: I. 88n.1, 106n.1, etc.) points out repeatedly in his translation of the *Da zhidu lun*, when the *Da zhidu lun* cites a Vinaya without further specification of its school affiliation, it generally refers to the *Shisong lü*. Furthermore, some stories from the *Da zhidu lun* resemble the versions in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, for instance, Yaśodharā's pregnancy (cf. Lamotte 1944–1980: II. 1001ff., Strong 1997; cp. T. 1509 [XXV] 182b15–c20; T. 1450 [XXIV] 158c16–159b11, 162b1–c22). However, in his more updated research, Zacchetti (forthcoming) argues that the proposition of a clear-cut school affiliation may not be meaningful to texts such as the *Da zhidu lun* considering its textual nature as a collective compendium.

¹⁴⁶ T. 1509 (XXV) 145a18–b1 = Fr. Lamotte 1944–1980: II. 701: 如，舍利弗於六十劫中行菩薩道，欲渡布施河。時有乞人，來乞其眼。舍利弗言：“眼無所任，何以索之？若須我身及財物者，當以相與！”答言：“不須汝身及以財物，唯欲得眼。若汝實行檀者，以眼見與！”爾時，舍利弗出一眼與之。乞者得眼，於舍利弗前，嗅之嫌臭，唾而棄地，又以腳蹋。舍利弗思惟言：“如此弊人等，難可度也！眼實無用，而強索之。既得而棄，又以腳蹋，何弊之甚！如此人輩，不可度也。不如自調，早脫生死。”思惟是已，於菩薩道退，迴向小乘，是名不到彼岸。 A related discussion is also seen in Ohnuma 2007: 170.

terribly vicious he is! People like him cannot be saved. Better to discipline myself and become liberated from *samsāra* earlier!” Having generated this thought, he withdrew from the bodhisattva path and returned to the Small Vehicle. This is called “the inability to reach the shore.”

This is a typical Mahāyāna story. Śāriputra resolves to practice *dāna-pāramitā* and fulfill the bodhisattva path. However, unlike Śākyamuni Buddha, he could not contain his reluctant mind: he first observes that such a demand is importunate and useless; after witnessing the beggar stamping on his donated eye, Śāriputra becomes angry and takes a step backward with respect to his progress on the bodhisattva path. Śāriputra as the representative of *śrāvakas* is derided and belittled as one who is reluctant to liberate other beings. If we consider the “gift-of-the-body” stories of Śākyamuni Buddha,¹⁴⁷ Śāriputra’s reaction starkly contrasts with the deeds of Śākyamuni. For instance, in the famous *Sibi-jātaka*,¹⁴⁸ the Bodhisattva never questioned whether the demand for his eyes was useful or not, nor did he change his attitude toward the donation after being mistreated by the beneficiary. The message in this story is evident: Śāriputra, as the representative of the practitioners of the so-called “Small Vehicle” (*Hīnayāna* or *Śrāvakayāna*), is indisputably inferior to Śākyamuni Buddha, who practices the “Great” bodhisattva path. In this sense, whether one can voluntarily donate his body without harboring a single thought of reluctance proves to be a distinguishing difference between the “Great” and “Small” paths. In the same vein, we are told in the *Maitreyapariṣecchā* that radical donations of his body speed up Śākyamuni’s attainment, helping him even outpace Maitreya Buddha in reaching buddhahood, although Śākyamuni’s bodhisattva vow was made much later than Maitreya’s.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ For a comprehensive interpretation of the “gift-of-the-body” stories as a genre, Ohnuma’s work (2007) is well worth reading.

¹⁴⁸ J. 499. In the *SWF*, we read a similar story in which Śākyamuni, in one of his past lives, willingly offered his eyes to an evil brahmin (chapter 27, *Kuaiyanwang yanshi yuan pin* 快目王眼施緣品).

¹⁴⁹ T. 310 (XI) 629c20–630a1 = Pelliot tibétain 89, 5r5–v6. Parallels also see T. 349 (XII) 188b5–13; D. 85, *dkon brtsegs, cha*, 111a6–b5.

In this text, Śākyamuni compares himself not to his disciples but to a buddha-to-be, Maitreya Buddha. The key to Śākyamuni’s expedient attainment in contrast to Maitreya’s prolonged striving lies in the path Śākyamuni adopted—Maitreya restricts his efforts to buddha fields, while Śākyamuni chooses to protect, gather, and assist all sentient beings in his buddha path. That is to say, in comparison to Maitreya, Śākyamuni endeavors to pursue liberation for all sentient beings on his way to liberation, while Maitreya chooses to first attain his own awakening before leading sentient beings to liberation. This point becomes more evident in another story involving them in the *Da zhidu lun* (T. 1509 [XXV] 87b27–c14 = Fr. Lamotte 1944–1980: I. 253–254). It is narrated that in the remote past, when Śākyamuni and Maitreya were both still bodhisattvas,

Occasionally, there is also subtle opposition between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra recorded in other texts outside the *SWF*. In the *Channovādasuttana* of the *Majjimanikāya*, while Śāriputra attempts to dissuade Channa from suicide, Śākyamuni declares that the suicide of Channa would not incur any transgression since Channa had already extinguished his future existence.¹⁵⁰ In the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, Śāriputra refused to allow a Māṇavaka from a heretical school to join the Buddhist community. Nevertheless, the Buddha granted the Māṇavaka permission based on the fact that the Māṇavaka had once accumulated merit by speaking in favor of Buddhist monks.¹⁵¹ In these two stories, Śāriputra similarly acts as a “straw man” with a rigid and superficial opinion that is easily refuted, while Śākyamuni is the one who grasps the profound meaning of the Dharma and applies the Dharma flexibly and humanely.¹⁵² Although these stories do not have plots as elaborate and controversial as

there lived a buddha named Tiṣya. Once, Tiṣya Buddha examined actions of both Śākyamuni and Maitreya to see whether their minds had ripened or not. He found that Śākyamuni’s mind had not yet ripened, but he helped those of his disciples to ripen, while Maitreya had cultivated solely his own mind but not those of his disciples. On the grounds that cultivating many people’s minds was much more difficult than cultivating solely one’s own mind, Tiṣya deemed that Śākyamuni was superior. Consequently, Tiṣya chose to accelerate Śākyamuni’s career by offering him a chance to witness a buddha’s meditation. Śākyamuni was astonished when beholding the fantastic scene of Tiṣya Buddha’s meditation, and praised the buddha with a verse, reaping the merit that amounted to that of nine-*kalpa* cultivation. In the above stories involving Śākyamuni and Maitreya, a hierarchy is proposed: compared to Maitreya’s single goal of achieving his own buddhahood first, Śākyamuni chose to pursue liberation for all beings, and thus, took less time to perfect his bodhisattva career. Cf. La Vallée Poussin 1928 for parallel stories in the *Avadānaśātaka* (Avs. ii. 173), the *Foḍi jing lun* (**Buddhabhūmi-sūtra-śāstra*, T. 1530 [XXVI] 327a6–b18), and the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T. 1545 [XXVII] 890b5–c9).

The two paths chosen by Śākyamuni and Maitreya provide a complement to the two-track system of attaining *nirvāṇa* (i.e., “fast track” and “slow track”) theorized by Strong (1992: 90–92). According to what he has observed, in the “fast track” to buddhahood, practitioners such as Gavāṃpati (ibid. 64) seek to catch up with Śākyamuni who has already attained *parinirvāṇa* in the past, and therefore enter the arhat path in this very lifetime; in contrast, those in the “slow track” wait until the appearance of Maitreya or other future times to attain *nirvāṇa*, and therefore their religious quests are oriented to the future (mostly through the paths of *anāgāmin*, *sakṛdāgāmin*, and *srotāpanna*). If we take Śākyamuni and Maitreya’s paths into consideration, Śākyamuni’s rapidity of achieving buddhahood is, at least, partially owing to his extremely altruistic actions such as gifting his body in the past lives; in comparison, Maitreya adopts the slow track which does not involve too radical deeds.

¹⁵⁰ MN. iii. 263–267.

¹⁵¹ T. 1421 (XXII) 112b11–19.

¹⁵² There are also records of Śākyamuni’s criticism of Śāriputra, such as in the *Cātumasutta*, in which the Buddha was irritated at Śāriputra and his entourage of monks for making too much noise (MN. iii. 456ff., T. 125 [II] 770c13–771b23; 舍利弗摩訶目連遊四衢經 T. 137 [II] 860a21–861a3) and some Vinaya texts in which Śāriputra was charged with taking too much food during the offering and letting his novice Rāhula starve (T. 1421 [XXII] 179b27–c12; T. 1435 [XXIII] 463c22–464b7, etc.). Moreover, there is a well-developed narrative tradition around Śāriputra’s previous existence as a snake. See Li 2019b for more details concerning his negative image.

the Śrīvṛddhi story of the *SWF*, they highlight the pattern in which Śākyamuni and Śāriputra are treated as a pair of contrasting characters.

In conclusion, we see a direct confrontation between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra in the version of the Śrīvṛddhi story in the *SWF*. There, Śākyamuni, behaving like a provoked leader, articulates lengthy self-defense against the challenge issued by his prestigious student Śāriputra. I interpret this story as a literary device by which the narrators, having perceived the possible challenge a prestigious student could pose, brought this topic into open discussion. The story finally resolves the tension by reinforcing the Buddha's superiority, mainly by citing the Buddha's self-sacrificial *jātakas*, which sheds further light on one function of these "gift-of-the-body" stories: the self-sacrificial elements in *jātaka* stories are used as the scriptural support of Śākyamuni's superiority in the power dynamic between him and the *saṅgha*, and sometimes in a universe in which multiple buddhas exist (such as in the Maitreya's case).

2.2.2 Śāriputra as an emulator

The value of the *SWF* in the study of the power relation between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra extends not only to the story in which Śāriputra is a prestigious dissident, but also to the stories in which the familiar role of Śākyamuni is substituted by Śāriputra. In this section, through a philological survey comparing parallels in the *SWF*, the *Divyāvadāna*, and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, I illustrate how the stories of Śāriputra's taming of six heretics and his *parinirvāṇa* are developed and elaborated into versions that are modeled on the Buddha's life stories. The *SWF* solidifies the excellence of Śāriputra by modeling his biography on that of the Buddha, fusing the sacrality of both figures.

2.2.2.1 The taming of the six heretics

In the 43rd chapter of the *SWF*, we find a long story about the building of the Jeta Grove in Śrāvastī.¹⁵³ The Buddha dispatched Śāriputra as the vanguard of the Buddhist community to

¹⁵³ Buddhists have developed different narrative traditions surrounding the building of the Jeta Grove. In the *Za ahan jing* (T. 99 [II] 158b14–23), the *Bieyi za ahan jing* (T. 100 [II] 441a20–26), the Pāli Vinaya (Vin. ii. 157–158), and the Dharmaguptaka *Sifen lü* (T. 1428 [XXII] 938b20–939c15), the narrative plot of the construction is simple, as it only relates that Sudāna built a grove out of veneration for the Buddha. Śāriputra does not appear, nor do the six heretics. The *Bieyi za ahan jing* is a Chinese translation of the *Samyuktāgama*, possibly affiliated with the Mūlasarvāstivāda school (cf. Bingenheimer 2006: 21).

assist with the construction. Upon hearing news of the construction, non-Buddhist forces showed up to create obstacles and initiated magical combat. As to be expected, Śāriputra triumphed over the heretics in combat and established the faith of Buddhism in Śrāvastī:¹⁵⁴

(Sudāna) therefore spoke to the Buddha: “When I return to my own country, I shall build a temple. But I have no idea of the standard dimensions. May the Blessed One send one disciple to come with me and instruct me in what I should do.”

The Blessed One thought: “In Śrāvastī, the multitudes of brahmins have distorted faith and hold perverted views. The other disciples are certainly not able to manage (to build the monastery), except Śāriputra, who was born as a brahmin. He is sharp-witted, intelligent since childhood, and fully possessed of magical power. It will be beneficial if he comes.” Therefore, he commanded Śāriputra to go along with Sudāna ...¹⁵⁵

The six masters heard of it and came to report to the king: “The householder Sudāna has purchased Jeta’s grove and intends to build a temple on behalf of the *śramaṇa* Gautama. May you permit my group of followers to engage in magical combat with them. If they achieve victory, then allow them to establish (the temple). However, if they are inferior to us, please do not allow them to construct (it). (On that condition), the followers of Gautama must stay only in the city of Rājagṛha, while our followers may dwell here.”

The king summoned Sudāna and asked him: “Today, the six masters told me that you purchased the grove of Jeta in order to establish a temple for the *śramaṇa* Gautama. They request a battle of magical skills with the *śramaṇa*’s disciples. If

MĀ (T. 26 [I] 460c8–461b14), the Sarvāstivāda *Shisong lü* (T.1435 [XXIII] 243c20–245b3), and the Mahīśāsaka *Wufen lü* (T. 1421 [XXII] 166c10–167c19) feature more elaborate accounts in which Śāriputra was dispatched by the Buddha to help Sudāna to build the grove.

Only in the MSV are both elements, namely Śāriputra and the combat with the heretical side, mentioned (e.g. T. 1450 [XXIV] 138b18–142b12; *SWF* version; T. 191 [III] 967c2–969b22).

¹⁵⁴ T. 202 (IV) 419b20–420c25. The English translation is my own with occasional reference to Mair (1993: 38–50). A Dunhuang *bianwen* 變文 (“transformation text”) also narrates about the defeat of the six heretics by Śāriputra in a quite similar way (cf. Mair 1995; Vandier-Nicolas 1954).

¹⁵⁵ (須達) 因白佛言: “還到本國, 當立精舍, 不知摸法。唯願世尊, 使一弟子, 共往勅示。”

世尊思惟: “舍衛城內, 婆羅門眾, 信邪倒見, 餘人往者, 必不能辦, 唯舍利弗, 是婆羅門種, 少小聰明, 神足兼備, 去必有益。”即便命之, 共須達往 ... (The story in which Sudāna managed to purchase of the grove of Prince Jeta is omitted in my translation.)

(śramaṇas) achieve victory, let them erect (the temple). However, if they are inferior (to the six masters), the construction is prohibited.”¹⁵⁶

Sudāna returned home, wearing dirty and greasy clothes, and became depressed and unhappy. Śāriputra arrived the next day. He dressed himself in robes, took his bowl, and arrived at Sudāna’s house. Having perceived that Sudāna was not happy, Śāriputra asked him: “What makes you unhappy?”

Sudāna answered: “I’m afraid that the construction of the temple will not be successful. Therefore, I am depressed.”

Śāriputra asked: “What makes you afraid that it will not be successful?”

He replied: “Now, the six masters approached the king to propose a battle. Only on the condition that the venerable one (you) gain victory, will the construction of the temple be permitted. If you could not defeat them, (the king) would reject (our request to construct the monastery) and not permit the construction. These six masters have renounced the family life for quite a long time and are always sincerely dedicated. No one could compete with them in the skills they have mastered. Now, I have no idea, venerable one, whether you have sufficient skills for combat.”¹⁵⁷

Śāriputra answered: “Even if the six masters and their companies covered the whole of Jambudvīpa and were as many as bamboo groves, they still could not move a single hair on my foot. What kind of competition do they want to have? I shall simply do as they wish.”

¹⁵⁶ 六師聞之，往白國王：“長者須達，買祇陀園，欲為瞿曇沙門興立精舍。聽我徒眾與共掬術，沙門得勝，便聽起立，若其不如，不得起也。瞿曇徒眾，住王舍城，我等徒眾，當住於此。”

王召須達，而問之言：“今此六師云，卿買祇陀園，欲為瞿曇沙門起立精舍，求共沙門弟子掬其伎術，若得勝者，得立精舍，苟其不如，便不得起。”

¹⁵⁷ 須達歸家，著垢膩衣，愁惱不樂。時舍利弗，明日到時，著衣持鉢，至須達家。見其不樂，即問之曰：“何故不樂？”

須達答言：“所立精舍，但恐不成，是故愁耳。”

舍利弗言：“有何事故，畏不成就？”

答言：“今諸六師，詣王求授，尊人得勝，聽立精舍，若其不如，遮不聽起。此六師輩，出家來久，精誠有素，所學技術，無能及者。我今不知，尊人伎藝，能與掬不？”

Sudāna became joyful. He changed into new clothes and bathed himself with a fragrant bath. Then, he set out to report to the king: “I have already asked him. If the six masters intend to make combat, let them do as they wish.” At that moment, the king spoke to the six masters: “Now I permit you to compete with the *śramaṇas*.”¹⁵⁸

Then the six masters announced to people in the kingdom: “In seven days, outside of the city, we will make combat with the *śramaṇas* in a broad and wide place.” There are 18 billion people in the city of Śrāvastī. At that time, it was a custom in the land to assemble people by beating a drum. If a copper drum was beaten, eight billion people must assemble. If a silver drum was beaten, 14 billion people must assemble. If a golden drum was beaten, all the inhabitants must assemble. After seven days, on a level and broad ground, a golden drum was beaten and all the people assembled. The followers of the six masters numbered three billion. At that moment, the citizens all set up raised seats for the king and their six masters. Only Sudāna set up a raised seat on behalf of Śāriputra.¹⁵⁹

Just at that moment, Śāriputra entered into meditative tranquility under a tree. With all his faculties quiescent, he moved fluently between different levels of meditation and penetrated each level without hindrance. Thereupon, he had the following thought: “Those gathered here have practiced heterodoxy for quite a long time. They are arrogant and self-conceited. For these beings who are insignificant as mustard grass, what kind of virtue should I rely on to discipline them?” Upon this thought, he thought of two virtues and immediately vowed: “If, in my numerous *kalpas* of past lives, I am the one who sincerely respects parents and

¹⁵⁸ 舍利弗言：“正使此輩六師之眾，滿閻浮提，數如竹林，不能動吾足上一毛。欲擒何等，自恣聽之。”

須達歡喜，更著新衣，沐浴香湯，即往白王：“我已問之，六師欲擒，恣隨其意。”國王是時，告諸六師：“今聽汝等共沙門擒。”

¹⁵⁹ 是時六師，宣語國人：“却後七日，當於城外，寬博之處，與沙門校。”舍衛國中，十八億人。時彼國法，擊鼓會眾，若擊銅鼓，八億人集，若打銀鼓，十四億集，若打金鼓，一切皆集。七日期滿，至平博處，打擊金鼓，一切都集。六師徒眾，有三億人。是時人民，悉為國王及其六師，敷施高座。爾時須達，為舍利弗而施高座。

reverently honors *śramaṇas* and brahmins, may the great crowd all show reverence to me when I enter the assembly.”¹⁶⁰

Meanwhile, the six masters noticed that all the people were assembled, but Śāriputra alone did not show up. They then reported to the king: “The disciple of Gautama knows that he is ignorant of magical skills yet pretends to (agree to) combat. Now, when all people are assembled, he is fearful of coming.”

The king spoke to Sudāna: “The time for combat has arrived. The disciple of your master should come to the debate.”

Then, Sudāna went to Śāriputra’s place, knelt respectfully, and said: “Venerable One! All the people have been assembled. May you come to the assembly.”¹⁶¹

Thereupon, Śāriputra arose from meditation, tidied up his clothes, and placed his *niṣadana* on his left shoulder. He walked to the crowd slowly and gently, like a lion king. Having beheld his uncommon appearance and religious robe, the people, together with the six masters, suddenly stood up, just as grass is blown by the wind, and unwittingly honored him. After that, Śāriputra ascended to the seat that Sudāna had set up for him.¹⁶²

Among the group of six masters, one disciple named Raktākṣa¹⁶³ was adept at magical skills. In front of the crowd, he created a tree with an incantation. The tree naturally grew big and shaded the crowd of assembly. Its foliage was exuberant,

¹⁶⁰ 時舍利弗，在一樹下，寂然入定，諸根寂默，遊諸禪定，通達無礙，而作是念：“此會大眾，習邪來久，憍慢自高，草芥群生，當以何德而降伏之？”思惟是已，當以二德，即立誓言：“若我無數劫中，慈孝父母、敬尚沙門婆羅門者，我初入會，一切大眾，當為我禮。”

¹⁶¹ 爾時六師，見眾已集，而舍利弗獨未來到，便白王言：“瞿曇弟子，自知無術，偽求技能，眾會既集，怖畏不來。”

王告須達：“汝師弟子，按時已至，宜來談論。”

是時須達，至舍利弗所，長跪白言：“大德！大眾已集，願來詣會。”

¹⁶² 時舍利弗，從禪定起，更整衣服，以尼師壇，著左肩上，徐庠而步，如師子王，往詣大眾。是時眾人，見其形容、法服有異，及諸六師，忽然起立，如風靡草，不覺為禮。時舍利弗便昇須達所敷之座。

¹⁶³ Mair (1993: 85) proposes that the name *Laoducha* 勞度差 (MC. law-dak-tsrae) is the phonetic transcription of the Indic name *Raudrākṣa*. The parallel in the *Divyāvadāna* reads the name of the illusionist as Raktākṣa (“red-eye,” Div. 152) and also *Raudrākṣa* (Div. 320).

and its flowers and fruits were of various kinds. The crowd unanimously exclaimed: “This transformation is made by Raktākṣa.” Then, Śāriputra, employing his magical power, created a wind that could make a mountain whirl. The wind uprooted the tree, blew it to the ground, and smashed it into dust. The crowd unanimously declared: “Śāriputra wins! Now Raktākṣa cannot compete.”¹⁶⁴

Then, Raktākṣa uttered another incantation and created a pond. The four sides of the pond were each decorated with seven jewels. In the water of the pond, various kinds of flowers grew. The crowd unanimously exclaimed: “This transformation was made by Raktākṣa.” Thereupon, Śāriputra transformed himself into a giant white elephant with six tusks. On each of its tusks, there were seven lotus flowers. On each flower, there were seven virgin girls. This elephant strolled elegantly to the side of the pond and sucked up the water. Immediately the pond disappeared. The crowd unanimously said: “Śāriputra wins! Now Raktākṣa cannot compete.”¹⁶⁵

Next, Raktākṣa created a mountain adorned with seven jewels. There were springs, streams, trees, vibrant blossoms, and fruits. The crowd unanimously exclaimed: “This transformation was made by Raktākṣa.” Then, Śāriputra transformed himself into a mighty man with a *vajra*. From a distance, he pointed the *vajra* mallet at the mountain, whereupon the mountain was completely demolished, without a trace remaining. The crowd unanimously said: “Śāriputra wins! Now Raktākṣa cannot compete.”¹⁶⁶

Then, Raktākṣa transformed himself into a dragon with ten heads. It rained various kinds of treasures from the sky. Thunder and lightning shook the ground and startled the crowd. The crowd unanimously exclaimed: “This transformation was made by Raktākṣa.” Then, Śāriputra transformed himself into a bird king with

¹⁶⁴ 六師眾中，有一弟子，名勞度差，善知幻術。於大眾前，呪作一樹，自然長大，蔭覆眾會，枝葉鬱茂，花果各異。眾人咸言：“此變乃是勞度差作。”時舍利弗，便以神力，作旋風，吹拔樹根，倒著於地，碎為微塵。眾人皆言：“舍利弗勝！今勞度差，便為不如。”

¹⁶⁵ 又復呪作一池，其池四面，皆以七寶，池水之中，生種種華。眾人咸言：“是勞度差之所作也。”時舍利弗，化作一大六牙白象，其一牙上，有七蓮花，一一花上，有七玉女，其象徐摩，往詣池邊，并含其水，池即時滅。眾人悉言：“舍利弗勝！勞度差不如。”

¹⁶⁶ 復作一山，七寶莊嚴，泉池樹木，花果茂盛。眾人咸言：“此是勞度差作。”時舍利弗，即便化作金剛力士，以金剛杵，遙用指之，山即破壞，無有遺餘。眾會皆言：“舍利弗勝！勞度差不如。”

golden wings (*suparṇa*). It split the dragon and chewed it up. The crowd unanimously said: “Śāriputra wins! Now Raktākṣa cannot compete.”¹⁶⁷

Subsequently, Raktākṣa transformed himself into a bull with a tall and broad body. It was fat and strong, full of energy. With coarse hoofs and sharp horns, it scraped the earth, snarled loudly, and dashed forward. Śāriputra then transformed himself into a lion king, tore apart (the bull), and devoured it. The crowd unanimously said: “Śāriputra wins! Now Raktākṣa cannot compete.”¹⁶⁸

Then, Raktākṣa transformed himself into a *yakṣa* demon with a big and tall body. A fire was burning on the top of his head. His eyes were as red as blood. He had four long and sharp teeth. With the fire issuing from his mouth, he was running and leaping forward. Thereupon, Śāriputra changed himself into King Vaiśravaṇa. The *yakṣa* was terrified and immediately felt the desire to run away. However, fire was burning in all the four directions, leaving him no way to escape. Only beside Śāriputra was it cool with no fire. He immediately prostrated, threw the five parts of his body to the ground, and begged Śāriputra to spare his life. As soon as shame overcame Raktākṣa’s mind, the fire was extinguished. The crowd unanimously exclaimed: “Śāriputra wins! Now Raktākṣa cannot compete.”¹⁶⁹

At that moment, Śāriputra lifted his body up to the sky and manifested the four deportments, namely, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. He generated water from his upper body and fire from his lower body. He disappeared from the east but reappeared in the west. He disappeared from the west but [then] showed up in the east. He vanished from the north but reappeared in the south. He vanished from the south but [then] showed up in the north. At times he manifested a giant body covering the whole sky, while other times he manifested a miniature of his body. At times he divided his one body into hundreds of thousands of bodies, while other times he reunified them into the single body. (He was in) the sky, but then

¹⁶⁷ 復作一龍，身有十頭，於虛空中，雨種種寶，雷電振地，驚動大眾。眾人咸言：“此亦勞度差作。”時舍利弗，便化作一金翅鳥王，擘裂噉之。眾人皆言：“舍利弗勝！勞度差不如。”

¹⁶⁸ 復作一牛，身體高大，肥壯多力，羸脚利角，爬地大吼，奔突來前。時舍利弗，化作師子王，分裂食之。眾人言曰：“舍利弗勝！勞度差不如。”

¹⁶⁹ 復變其身，作夜叉鬼，形體長大，頭上火燃，目赤如血，四牙長利，口自出火，騰躍奔赴。時舍利弗，自化其身，作毘沙門王，夜叉恐怖，即欲退走，四面火起，無有去處。唯舍利弗邊，涼冷無火，即時屈伏，五體投地，求哀脫命。辱心已生，火即還滅。眾咸唱言：“舍利弗勝！勞度差不如。”

suddenly reappeared on the ground. He trod on the ground as if it was water, and he trod on the water as if on the ground. Having made such magical transformations, he returned, withdrew the magical power, and sat on his original seat. The crowd who attended the assembly beheld his magical power and became joyful. Thereupon, Śāriputra preached to them. In accordance with their past deeds, past merits, and causal conditions, they each attained their own path. There were also people who attained (the fruit of) *śrotāpanna*, or *sakṛdāgāmin*, or *anāgāmin*, or arhat. Three billion disciples of the six masters came to Śāriputra's and went forth. After the battle of magical skills, the fourfold assembly left, and each returned to their own residence.¹⁷⁰

The above is a narrative complex with several independent stories embedded. The frame story is the construction of the Jetavana, within which Śāriputra's feat of taming the six heretics is narrated. Faced with the reality that heretical teachings were prevailing in Śrāvastī, Śākyamuni Buddha sent his foremost disciple, Śāriputra, to assist Sudāna (elsewhere better known as Anāthapiṇḍada) in building the grove. The six heretical masters who took residence there for a long time, perceived Śāriputra's activities to expand Buddhist territory. Just like vested-interest holders who were wracked with a sense of crisis, they were provoked and made trouble for Śāriputra, the vanguard.

The Buddhist side and the non-Buddhist side soon decided to have magical combat. Raktākṣa, as the representative of the six masters, made the marvelous transformations of a giant tree, a fabulous pond, a well-adorned mountain, a terrifying dragon, a large bull, and a *yakṣa*. However, Śāriputra gloriously triumphed over him in every round, sometimes by generating a huge storm, and sometimes by incarnating himself as an elephant, a *garuḍa*, a warrior with a *vajra* weapon, a lion king, and Vaiśravaṇa. Later on, with other magical performance such as emanating fire/water and manifesting his body in different sizes and numbers, Śāriputra tamed the followers of the heretical masters and converted all the residents of Śrāvastī to Buddhism.

¹⁷⁰ 時舍利弗，身昇虛空，現四威儀，行住坐臥，身上出水，身下出火，東沒西踊，西沒東踊，北沒南踊，南沒北踊，或現大身，滿虛空中，而復現小，或分一身，作百千萬億身，還合為一身，於虛空中，忽然在地，履地如水，履水如地。作是變已，還攝神足，坐其本座。時會大眾，見其神力，咸懷歡喜。時舍利弗，即為說法，隨其本行宿福因緣，各得道迹，或得須陀洹、斯陀含、阿那含、阿羅漢者，六師徒眾，三億弟子，於舍利弗所，出家學道。技技訖已，四眾罷罷，各還所止。

For those who are familiar with the biographical stories of the Buddha, the above story will sound quite familiar: its setting, the basic design of the plot, the antagonists, and the overall dramatic development all resemble the story of the “Great Miracle” (*Mahāprātihārya*) in Śrāvastī,¹⁷¹ especially as told in the narrative tradition of the Mūlasarvāstivādins. In brief, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Mahāprātihārya* story narrates that six heretical masters are enraged by the popularity of Buddhism in Rājagṛha. Beguiled by Māra, they become overconfident of themselves and come to provoke a competition with the Buddha. At first, the Buddha ignores their request for a competition but continues to travel around to amass followers in different countries.¹⁷² Later, when the Buddha reaches the city of Śrāvastī, he finally agrees to the competition, by means of which the Buddha successfully makes Śrāvastī his habitual residence for the next twenty years.¹⁷³ During the competition, the Buddha enacts numerous supernatural transformations, which culminates in such well-known miracles as the “double appearance” miracle¹⁷⁴ and the manifestation of an array of buddhas (*buddhapiṇḍī*).¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Strong (2001: 106ff.) has already discussed the narrative traditions of the Buddha’s “Great Miracle” (*Mahāprātihārya*) in Pāli and Sanskrit (i.e. Mūlasarvāstivāda) texts. The available Pāli version is found not in the Vinaya but in the *Dhammapadatthakathā* (English summary in Strong 2001: 107–108). In this version, the *Mahāprātihārya* story is a consequence of the Buddha’s criticism of Piṇḍola, for Piṇḍola exerts magical power in front of lay persons. The Buddha makes a monastic rule to ban monks from arbitrarily wielding magical power. However, heretics want to take advantage of this rule and assume that even if they ask for a competition, the Buddha will still refuse to compete with them. However, the Buddha exempts himself from this rule and accepts the challenge. In the end, the Buddha easily overpowers the heretics by manifesting a supernatural mango tree. The ashamed heretics drown themselves in the water. After that, the Buddha manifests the “Great Miracle” as reported later.

The Mahīśāsaka *Wufo lū* does not mention the story of the Great Miracle in Śrāvastī, but only records the Piṇḍola story (T. 1421 [XXII] 170a17–c24).

The Dharmaguptaka *Sifen lū* (T. 1428 [XXII] 946b13–950b6) also records that the Buddha forbids monks from revealing magical power in public, which is taken by heretics as a chance to seek more offerings. With regard to the combat itself, the plots closely resemble those of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition. About the story in the version(s) of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition(s), see my discussion below.

¹⁷² As Strong reminds us, the Buddha travels around different kingdoms in Northern India not to avoid the competition, but to gather more followers and extend the Buddhist territory: “Throughout the next forty years and more of his career, the Buddha continues to live in Northern India, visiting and revisiting different communities, preaching the Dharma, converting beings of all sorts, and settling doctrinal and disciplinary questions that arise (2001: 100).”

¹⁷³ Strong’s study of the places where the Buddha spent the 45 rains-retreats of his career (ibid. 102) clearly shows that the Buddha stays most frequently in Śrāvastī, from his 21st yearly rains-retreat till the 44th. We can even say that in the second half of the Buddha’s religious career, he almost permanently resides in Śrāvastī (ibid. 104).

¹⁷⁴ Defined by Strong (2001: 108) as “from the upper part of the body, flames shoot up, while from the lower part a stream of water pours forth; then, he reverses things and flames emerge from the lower part of this body and water from the upper part.”

Because the six heretics could not display comparable magical transformations, they become greatly ashamed and drown themselves in a river. Their followers are all converted to Buddhism.

Since the Buddha's subjugation of the heretical groups is also related in the *SWF* (chapter 14, T. 202 [IV] 360c29–361b1), we have good reason to argue that the similarity between the two “taming” narratives is not just coincidence. To demonstrate their correlation, I present the table 2.3.1 comparing their main plots. For the *Mahāprātihārya* story, I use the versions in the *SWF*, *Divyāvadāna*, and the MSV.¹⁷⁶ One might notice that the *Mahāprātihārya* narrative had already developed into two rather distinct traditions among the three Mūlasarvāstivāda texts: the *Divyāvadāna* and MSV contain roughly the same story and can be classified into the same group (Group I); the version in the *SWF*, however, contains obvious deviations and should be regarded as a separate group (Group II).¹⁷⁷ Through an analysis of the narrative elements in these versions, we can see how the composers of the *SWF* adopted *Mahāprātihārya*'s story in the narration of Śāriputra's taming story.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ In studies of Buddhist art, the key to recognize the scene of the Great Miracle is whether there exists the manifestation of multiple buddhas; sometimes the fire-and-water miracle is also depicted in the scene but not always (Schlingloff 1999; 2013: 505). Rhi (1991: 159ff.) argues that the image of the multiplication of buddhas reflects Mahāyāna influences.

¹⁷⁶ MSV: Gnoli 1978: 11–24, D. 1, 'dul ba, da, 40a2, T. 1451 (XXIV) 330c13–331b27; Div 89–103 = Eng. Rotman 2008: 253–288. Cf. also Strong 2001: 109–110 and Burnouf 2010: 188ff. For the artistic representation of this story, see Schlingloff 2013: 488–515.

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, this *SWF* version is also found in the *Pusa bensheng manlun* 菩薩本生鬘論 (T. 160 [III] 334c28–336c11) and the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya (T. 1428 [XXII] 946c26–950b6).

¹⁷⁸ In the following table, I adjust the sequence of some details in the *Mahāprātihārya* to better demonstrate the similarity between the two narratives.

Table 2.2.2.1 Comparison of Śāriputra's Taming Story and the *Mahāprātihārya* Story

Source	<i>SWF</i> Chapter 43	Group I: <i>Div/MSV</i>		Group II: <i>SWF</i> Chapter 14	
Venue	Śrāvastī	Śrāvastī			
Antagonists	Six heretics represented by *Raktākṣa.	Six heretics headed by Pūraṇa, aided by Raktākṣa.		Six heretics headed by Pūraṇa.	
Reason for Contest	The building of the Jetavana irritated the six heretics.	Heretics were irritated by the fact that Buddhists won more offerings. Māra beguiled the six masters and made them overconfident of their ability.		Six heretics lost royal patronage, in addition to the beguilement of Māra.	
Time Until Contest	Seven days after.	In the Jetavana , having thought that each buddha displayed a great miracle in Śrāvastī, he promised to compete after seven days .		After the Buddha had wandered in several other countries, he stayed in Śrāvastī (T. 1428 indicates the Jetavana more precisely), and promised to have a magical competition in 15 days .	
Pre-Miracle	Six heretics had already arrived, but Śāriputra was absent due to his meditation . Sudāna was sent to invite him. When Śāriputra showed up, everybody including the six heretics unwittingly rose to worship him.	Six heretics had already arrived, but the Buddha was absent due to his meditation . Mānava Uttara was sent to invite him.		Six heretics arrived early, but the Buddha was late when they were both invited to a meal by the royals. However, the Buddha magically made the six heretics unable to take a superior seat, or wash their hands, or chant, or eat before the Buddha did these things.	
Miracles	1. A tree created by Raktākṣa naturally grew big, with thick foliage and marvelous flowers and fruits . However, Śāriputra caused a strong wind and uprooted the tree. 2. Raktākṣa created a marvelous pond with jewels and flowers . However, Śāriputra transformed into a six-tusked white elephant and sucked up the water.	1. The Buddha magically sent Uttara flying back. 2. He entered into meditation, generating a flame that burned his own pavilion. Later, he extinguished the fire.		1. The willow twigs chewed by the Buddha naturally grew into a giant tree with thick foliage and marvelous flowers/fruits . 2. The water rinsing the Buddha's mouth was transformed into a marvelous pond full of lotuses . 3. The water in the pond flowed naturally and articulated the sound of preaching the Dharma.	

	<p>3. Raktākṣa created a jeweled mountain with marvelous flowers and fruits. Śāriputra appeared as a mighty Vajrapāṇi and destroyed the mountain.</p> <p>4. Śāriputra became a Garuḍa who chewed up the ten-headed dragon into which Raktākṣa had transformed himself.</p> <p>5. Śāriputra became a lion king who tore apart and ate the strong bull into which Raktākṣa had transformed himself.</p> <p>6. Raktākṣa transformed himself into a yakṣa whose head emitted fire. Śāriputra became the god Vaiśravaṇa and terrified the yakṣa using fire.</p>	<p>3. He sent forth a golden light that suffused the world.</p> <p>4. Different magical trees were transplanted from other places to the pavilion of the Buddha by the disciples of the Buddha.</p> <p>5. The great earthquake occurred, astonishing seers.</p> <p>6. Seers came to worship the Buddha and were ordained.</p>	<p>4. Two jeweled mountains were created with marvelous flowers and fruits. Rice naturally grew there.</p> <p>5. The Buddha emitted a golden light from his mouth.</p> <p>6. He made everyone perceive each other's minds.</p> <p>7. He made everyone see themselves as <i>cakravartin</i> kings.</p> <p>8. Devas and demons appeared to destroy the seats of the six heretics. Vajrapāṇi hit them with vajra that emitted fire.</p> <p>9. The Buddha made his height the same as the Brahmā Heaven and generated radiance.</p> <p>10. He made everyone behold his physical body.</p> <p>11. Invisible, from his seat he created lights and soft sound.</p> <p>12. He entered into meditation and generated golden lights.</p> <p>13. From the navel, he generated two lights, the top of which had buddhas seated on lotuses.</p> <p>14. He transformed flowers into magical chariots with buddhas seated inside.</p> <p>15. He made hell visible.</p>
Concluding Miracle	<p>Śāriputra manifested the four deportments and the miracle of “double appearance”; appeared and disappeared magically; changed the size of his body; multiplied his own body; and shifted the location of his body.</p>	<p>The Buddha appeared and disappeared magically; manifested the four deportments; the miracle of “double appearance”; With two arrays of devas and two nāgas venerating him, the Buddha multiplied his body to create an array of buddhas.</p>	
The Defeat of the Heretics	Raktākṣa felt ashamed.	<p>Terrified by Vajrapāṇi, who unleashed a torrent of wind and rain, the heretics fled. Pūrāṇa drowned himself by tying a pot of sand around his neck.</p>	<p>The heretics were ashamed and drowned themselves.</p>



Figure 3. Pelliot chinois 4524 (Mair 1981: 39, No. 207). The combat between the dragon and the Garuda. Illustrated scroll of a famous Dunhuang transformation text titled *Xiangmo bian* (降魔變; cf. Mair 1983: 31-86). Adapted from Vandier-Nicolas 1954: XV-XVIII.



Figure 4. Pelliot chinois 4524. The six-tusked elephant drinks the water of the pond. Adapted from Vandier-Nicolas 1954: IX-XII.

It is hard to overlook the extensive similarities between the above Śāriputra narrative and the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Mahāprātihārya* narrative. Śāriputra and Śākyamuni both enter into magical combat with the same group of antagonists, namely, the six heretical masters. Both narratives occur in the same city of Śrāvastī and are also closely associated with the Jeta Grove. In a similar way, Śāriputra and Śākyamuni both arrive late due to meditation, which is taken as a sign of cowardice by the six heretical masters.

With respect to the contest, there is also a striking resemblance between the two narratives, despite some clear deviations. In the Śāriputra story, the heretic Raktākṣa magically creates a marvelous tree, a jeweled pond, and a splendid mountain, which all appear in the first three magical manifestations made by the Buddha in the *Mahāprātihārya* (Group II). In both narratives, the tree is full of exuberant foliage and naturally grows immense. In both cases, the pond is decorated with seven kinds of jewels, and marvelous flowers grow in the water. In both stories, the mountains are also bejeweled and abundant with flowers and fruits.

Furthermore, Vajrapāṇi appears in both narratives: in the *Mahāprātihārya* (Groups I & II), Vajrapāṇi is also said to destroy the seat of the six heretics or strike the heretics. In the *SWF*'s Śāriputra story, Śāriputra transforms himself into Vajrapāṇi, who uses his *vajra* to strike and destroy the mountain created by the heretic Raktākṣa. Interestingly, when we look at Śāriputra's taming of the six heretics in other sources (e.g., the MSV and **Mahāsammatarājasūtra*),¹⁷⁹ Vajrapāṇi is entirely absent from the narration. It seems that only the *SWF*'s Śāriputra story includes the Vajrapāṇi element in the narration under the influence of the *Mahāprātihārya* narrative.

¹⁷⁹ In the MSV *Sanḥabhedavastu* (T. 1450 [XXIV] 140c2–15; Gnoli 1977–1978: I. 175; D. 1, 'dul ba, nya, 85a1–6) and the *Mahāsammatarājasūtra* (T.191 [III] 968a10–27), the contest between Śāriputra and Raktākṣa is described as follows:

1. Raktākṣa creates a huge mango tree and Śāriputra conjures powerful wind to uproot the tree.
 2. Raktākṣa creates a pond of lotuses, while Śāriputra transforms himself into an elephant to trample the pond.
 3. Raktākṣa transforms himself into a dragon with seven heads, while Śāriputra transforms himself into a *suparṇa* and devours the dragon.
 4. Raktākṣa transforms himself into a *yakṣa*, while Śāriputra casts a spell on the *yakṣa*.
- Then, Raktākṣa is converted to Buddhism. Vajrapāṇi is absent from this version.

Moreover, in the concluding scene of the battle, Śāriputra enacts the miracles of generating water and fire and multiplying his bodies, both of which seem to imitate the “double appearance” (*yamaka-prātihārya*) and the “great miracle” in the corresponding scene of the *Mahāprātihārya*.¹⁸⁰ Both miracles possess a profound, edifying effect, which accelerates the listeners’ pace to awakening.

Given the similarity of the episodes in the two taming narratives, can we ascertain which one serves as the source from which the other one borrowed? This is not a difficult task. We know that the Buddha’s *Mahāprātihārya* story—at least its core descriptions of miracles—is quite ancient since artistic representations of this story can be found in many early Indian iconographies.¹⁸¹ Despite observable discrepancies among different schools in narrating the *Mahāprātihārya* story (see above n. 171), its basic content seems not to have altered much. In comparison, Śāriputra’s taming story seems to have been added into the frame narrative of the construction of the Jetavana in a relatively later date: in the two Chinese *Saṃyuktāgamas*, the Pāli Vinaya, and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya, Śāriputra plays no role in the construction;¹⁸² in some other versions, although Śāriputra is mentioned as the monk dispatched by the Buddha to assist Sudāna in the construction, no competition occurs between him and the six heretics (e.g. MĀ, *Wufen lü*, and *Shisong lü*);¹⁸³ the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions are the only records in which the combat between Śāriputra and six heretics is associated with the building of Jetavana. Therefore, we can be fairly sure that

¹⁸⁰ According to Foucher (1917: 155–156), in the beginning, the *yamaka-prātihārya* was probably only applied to the Buddha himself, but was then “hackneyed in consequence of being classic” and applied to persons other than the Buddha. However, Skilling (1997: 303–315) demonstrates that different answers to the question of whether *yamaka-prātihārya* can be shared by beings other than buddhas reflect more a sectarian polemic. Skilling shows that in the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda and Lokottaravāda traditions both the Buddha (ibid. 303–306, 308) and people other than the Buddha (ibid. 306–308) can enact the double manifestation. However, in the Pāli texts of a relatively late date, the *yamaka-prātihārya* is understood as one containing both the miracle of fire and water and that of the emanation of buddhas, and only the Buddha could perform the *yamaka-prātihārya* (ibid. 309).

In the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda traditions, the miracle of multiplying bodies is not commonly performed by the Buddha’s disciples (ibid. 309), which highlights the rarity and excellence of Śāriputra’s miracles here.

¹⁸¹ Schlingloff 2013: 488ff., esp. 489: “Representations in Bharhut, Sanchi, and Bodhgaya show that the reality of such miracles is intrinsic to even the oldest versions of the legends.”

¹⁸² T. 99 (II) 158b14–23; T. 100 (II) 441a20–26; Vin. ii. 157–158 = Eng. Horner 1938–1952: V. 222–223; T. 1428 (XXII) 938b20–939c15.

¹⁸³ T. 26 (I) 460c8–461b14; T. 1421 (XXII) 166c10–167b19; T. 1435 (XXIII) 243c20–245b3.

the Buddha's taming story was already well-developed before the creation of Śāriputra's taming story. The latter is probably modeled on and borrows multiple elements from the Buddha's *Mahāprātihārya* story.

2.2.2.2 Śāriputra's Nirvāṇa

In addition to similarities in the feats of taming heretics, the path of Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* as narrated in the *SWF* (chapter 26) also resembles, in many ways, that of Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*, although there are also many significant differences. There, Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* is embedded within the larger context of Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*: because Ānanda fails to implore Śākyamuni Buddha to live on for an eon, the Buddha promises Māra that he will enter *parinirvāṇa* within three months. Being the Buddha's most faithful student, Śāriputra cannot endure the pain of witnessing the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and consequently decides to pass into *nirvāṇa* before the Buddha does. His *nirvāṇa* is depicted with well-wrought details, some of which remind us of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. It is on this occasion that the Buddha speaks of the *Candraprabha-jātaka*, in which Śāriputra likewise decided to die before the Buddha: in the remote past, the Buddha, being King Candraprabha, made a vow to donate whatever he had without reservation. An evil king from a neighboring country, out of jealousy, hired an evil brahmin to demand Candraprabha's head; Śāriputra, being the king's primary general at the time, knew that he could not dissuade the king from his plan of self-sacrifice, and thus committed suicide before the king's death.¹⁸⁴

At that moment, Śāriputra heard that the Blessed One was going to enter *parinirvāṇa*. He harbored a feeling of deep lamentation and spoke thus: "How soon will the Tathāgata enter *parinirvāṇa*! The eye of the world is going to disappear. Beings will eternally lose their refuge!" Again, he spoke to the Buddha: "I cannot bear now to watch the Blessed One enter the final cessation. Today, I intend to enter *nirvāṇa*, before [you]. May the Blessed One grant me permission." In this way, when he repeated [his words] for the third time, the Blessed One answered: "(You need to) know this is the right time. All virtuous and noble ones will end up in eternal cessation." Having gotten permission from the Buddha, Śāriputra tidied his clothes, knelt down, and crawled on his knees, circumambulating the Buddha one hundred times. He then came before the Buddha and praised him with many

¹⁸⁴ T. 202 (IV) 387b5–388b12. An English translation of the *Candraprabhā* story in the *Divyāvadāna* is offered by Ohnuma (2004: 144–158).

verses. Then, he touched the two feet of the Buddha and placed them on his head. After he fully repeated [these actions] in this way three times, he joined his palms and worshiped the Buddha. He spoke dejectedly: “It is my last chance to see the Blessed One now.” He made a salute with folded hands, then stepped back and left.¹⁸⁵

He took his *śrāmaṇera* Cunda to the city of Rājagṛha, his birthplace. Upon arrival, he ordered the *śrāmaṇera* Cunda: “Enter the city and go to the residential area. Inform the king, great ministers, old friends, and all patrons to come for a farewell.” Then, Cunda, having worshiped the feet of the master, walked around (the city) and proclaimed: “My master Śāriputra is staying here and plans to enter *nirvāṇa*. For those who intend to see him, it is the right time to go.” At that moment, having heard Cunda’s words, King Ajātaśatru, the rich and virtuous people in the kingdom, patrons, and four monastic groups all became deeply disconsolate and grieved. They spoke in unison: “Venerable Śāriputra is the great general of the Dharma. He is beloved and admired by all sentient beings. How soon is his *nirvāṇa* now!” They all proceeded to his place at full gallop. They came forward to worship him. After their greetings, they spoke in unison: “We heard that [you,] Venerable One, plan to abandon your life and reach *nirvāṇa*. People like us will eternally lose our refuge.” Then, Śāriputra spoke to them: “Everything is impermanent. Every birth has its end. All three realms are subject to suffering. Is there anybody who can be safe? You people have merits accumulated from previous lives and were born at the time when there is still a buddha in the world. It is difficult to hear the teaching of *sūtras*. It is also hard to obtain a human body. You should be mindful of and diligent in cultivating merits and pursue liberation from birth and death.” In this way, through skillful means as such, he universally prescribed medicines for those people in accordance with their symptoms. At that time, after the assembly heard his preaching, some attained the initial fruit; some attained (up to) the third fruit;

¹⁸⁵ 時舍利弗聞于世尊當般涅槃，深懷歎感，因而說曰：“如來涅槃，一何疾耶！世間眼滅，永失侍怙。”又白佛言：“我今不忍見於世尊而取滅度，今欲在前而入涅槃。唯願世尊，當見聽許。”如是至三。世尊告曰：“宜知是時（**ayaṃ kālaḥ*），一切賢聖，皆當寂滅。”時舍利弗，得佛可已，即整衣服，長跪膝行，繞佛百匝，來至佛前，以若干偈，讚歎佛已，捉佛兩足，敬戴頂上，如是滿三，合掌侍佛，困而言曰：“我今最後，見於世尊。”叉手肅敬，却行而去。

some went forth; and some attained arhatship. Furthermore, some who vowed to pursue the buddha path, after hearing the preaching, made a salute and departed.¹⁸⁶

Then, Śāriputra, in the later part of the night, fortified his body and mind, focused his awareness in front of himself, and entered the initial meditation. From the initial meditation, he then entered the second meditation. From the second, he entered the third meditation. From the third meditation, he entered the fourth meditation. From the fourth meditation, he entered the equipoise of infinite space. From the realm of infinite space, he entered the realm of infinite awareness. From the realm of (infinite) cognition, he entered the realm of nothingness. From the realm of nothingness, he entered the realm of neither ideation nor non-ideation. From the realm of neither ideation nor non-ideation, he entered the equipoise of cessation. From the equipoise of cessation, he entered *parinirvāṇa*.¹⁸⁷

At that moment, having known that Śāriputra had already entered *nirvāṇa*, the god Śakra and numerous [other] gods, with an entourage consisting of hundreds of thousands of members, came to his place, each with flowers, incense, and offering utensils. Packed next to each other in the sky, they all cried with grief, and their tears flowed like drenching rain. They spread flowers everywhere, which accumulated to the height of one's knees. They all exclaimed: "The wisdom of the venerable one is as deep as the giant ocean. His shrewd eloquence can fit the capacity of the audience. His sound is like a springing fountain. He is endowed with morality, equanimity, and wisdom. He is the great general of the Dharma. He

¹⁸⁶ 將沙彌均提，詣羅閱祇，至本生地。到已，即勅沙彌均提：“汝往入城，及至聚落，告國王、大臣、舊故知識、諸檀越輩，來共取別。”爾時均提，禮師足已，遍行宣告：“我和上舍利弗，今來在此，欲般涅槃，諸欲見者，宜可時往。”爾時阿闍世王，及國豪賢、檀越、四輩，聞均提語，皆懷慘悼，異口同音，而說是言：“尊者舍利弗，法之大將，眾生之類，之所親仰。今般涅槃，一何疾哉！”各自馳奔，來至其所，前為作禮，問訊已竟，各共白言：“承聞尊者，欲捨身命，至于涅槃，我曹等類，失於侍怙。”時舍利弗，告眾人言：“一切無常，生者皆終，三界皆苦，誰得安者？汝等宿慶，生值佛世，經法難聞，人身難得，念懃福業，求度生死。”如是種種，若干方便，廣為諸人，隨病投藥。爾時眾會，聞其所說，有得初果，乃至三果，或有出家、成阿羅漢者，復有誓心求佛道者，聞說法已，作禮而去。

¹⁸⁷ 時舍利弗，於其後夜，正身正意，繫心在前，入於初禪。從初禪起，入第二禪。從第二禪起，入第三禪。從第三禪起，入第四禪。從第四禪起，入空處定。從空處起，入於識處。從識處起，入不用處。從不用處起，入非有想、非無想處。從非有想、非無想處起，入滅盡定。從滅盡定起，而般涅槃。

should follow the Tathāgata and universally turn the wheel of the Dharma. Why does he enter *nirvāṇa* so quickly?”¹⁸⁸

People living inside or outside the city, having heard that Śāriputra had already entered *nirvāṇa*, all brought butter, fragrant flowers, and offering utensils, and came at full speed to gather together. They were too mournful and miserable to control themselves. They each took fragrant flowers to make offerings. Later, the god Śakra ordered Viśvakarman to collect various kinds of jewelry to adorn the chariot, and to place the body in this chariot. Attended and accompanied by gods, *nāgas*, spirits, the king, ministers, and civilians who were yelling and howling, the chariot reached a broad and flat area. Then, the god Śakra commanded the *yakṣas*: “Go to the seaside and fetch ox-head sandalwood.” Receiving the order, the *yakṣas* immediately brought it back and piled it up into a great pyre. They placed the body of Śāriputra onto the pyre, poured butter on it, set the fire, and conducted the cremation. Having made salutes and offerings, they all went back.¹⁸⁹

After the fire was extinguished, the *śrāmaṇera* Cunda gathered the relics of his master Śāriputra, placed them into (Śāriputra’s) begging-bowl, collected the three robes of Śāriputra, and carried them to the place of the Buddha. He worshiped the Buddha, knelt, and spoke to the Buddha: “My master Śāriputra has already attained *nirvāṇa*. These are his robes and begging bowl.” On hearing these words, the venerable Ānanda felt grieved and faint, the feeling becoming stronger and stronger. He spoke to the Buddha: “Now, this venerable one, general of the Dharma, has attained *nirvāṇa*. Who can I rely on (now)?” The Buddha spoke to him: “Although this Śāriputra has attained *nirvāṇa*, his morality, equanimity, wisdom, liberation, knowledge, and vision of liberation, which were all his Dharma body as such, will never be extinguished.” He added further: “Today’s case is not unique in that that Śāriputra preceded me in entering *nirvāṇa* because he could not bear to witness my

¹⁸⁸ 時天帝釋，知舍利弗已取滅度，與多天眾，百千眷屬，各齋花香供養之具，來至其所，側塞虛空，咸各悲叫，淚如盛雨，普散諸花，積至于膝，復各言曰：「尊者智慧，深若巨海，捷辯應機，音若涌泉，戒定慧具，法大將軍，當逐如來，廣轉法輪，其取涅槃，何其速哉？」

¹⁸⁹ 城聚內外，聞舍利弗已取滅度，悉齋酥油、香花、供具，馳走悉集，悲哀痛戀，不能自勝，各持香花，而用供養。時天帝釋，勅毘首羯磨，合集眾寶，莊嚴高車，安舍利弗在高車上，諸天、龍、鬼，國王、臣民，侍送號咷，至平博地。時天帝釋，勅諸夜叉：「往大海邊，取牛頭栴檀。」夜叉受教，尋取來還，積為大積，安身在上，酥油以灌，放火耶旬，作禮供養，各自還去。

parinirvāṇa. In the past, he also could not bear to witness my death and died before me.”¹⁹⁰

Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* in the *SWF* version is a story with full details of the events occurring before, during, and after his death. The background of the story is the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* as the aftermath of Ānanda's failure to ask the Buddha to continue to live. However, the story immediately shifts the focus from the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* to Śāriputra's death. Śāriputra voluntarily chooses *nirvāṇa* as he is emotionally unwilling to witness the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. But before his *nirvāṇa*, for the reason that is not indicated, Śāriputra conducts a “last journey” to his hometown, which appears to be a necessary ritual before his death. Accompanied by the novice Cunda, Śāriputra arrives in his hometown and summons the inhabitants to say farewell. After hearing the news from Cunda that Śāriputra plans to take *nirvāṇa*, the people, led by the king Ajātaśatru, take pains to urge him to stay. After counseling the people, Śāriputra gives his last preaching on the impermanent nature of the world. The process of how he enters *nirvāṇa* through four levels of meditation is also described in detail. Equally interesting is the elaborate narration of Śāriputra's funeral: after his death, *devas* and *yakṣas* come to worship his body with flowers and oils; although not explicitly stated in the *SWF*, the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Kṣudrakavastu* (*‘Dul ba phran tshegs kyi gzhi*) claims that Cunda performs the ritual of *śarīra-pūjā* (“ritual preparation of a dead body”) for Śāriputra;¹⁹¹ then, Śakra even orders *yakṣas* to fetch ox-head sandalwood (牛頭栴檀) from the sea for his funeral pyre. After the cremation, the relics of Śāriputra are then collected by Cunda and brought to the Buddha. Ānanda becomes extremely depressed, worrying that they would lose their refuge. The Buddha has to ensure Ānanda that the

¹⁹⁰ 火滅之後，沙彌均提，收師舍利，盛著鉢中，攝其三衣，擔至佛所，為佛作禮，長跪白佛：“我和上舍利弗，已般涅槃，此是舍利，此是衣鉢。”時賢者阿難，聞說是語，悲悼憤悶，益增感切，而白佛言：“今此尊者，法大將軍，已取涅槃，我何憑怙？”佛告之曰：“此舍利弗，雖復滅度，其戒、定、慧、解脫、解脫知見，如是法身，亦不滅也。”又，“舍利弗！不但今日，不忍見我取般涅槃，而先滅度，過去世時，亦不堪忍見於我死，而先我前死。”

¹⁹¹ D. 6, *‘dul ba, tha*, 240b 4–5: *de nas dge sbyong gi ched skul byed kyis tshe dang ldan pa shA ri'i bu'i ring bsrel la lus kyis mchod pa byas te*.

The *śarīra-pūjā* (Tib. *ring bsrel la lus kyis mchod pa bya*) is the ritual preparation of a dead body usually prior to cremation. Cf. Schopen 1994: 37ff. As Schopen further points out, the one who should be in charge of a deceased monk's funeral is usually the monk “with the closest formally acknowledged ecclesiastical bond” to the deceased monk. In general cases, the closest ecclesiastical relationship is that between the *ācārya/slob dpon* (“teacher”) and the *antevāsin/slob ma* (“disciple”). Therefore, in the funeral of Śāriputra, it is Cunda who organizes all rituals, and in the Buddha's funeral, it is Ānanda who is generally in charge. Cf. *ibid.* 42–43.

Dharma body of Śāriputra, permeated with morality, equanimity, and wisdom, is never going to be extinguished.¹⁹²

This elaborate description of Śāriputra's death reminds us of many details of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*: the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* also begins with his "last journey," a trip from Rājagṛha to Kuśinagara.¹⁹³ Also noteworthy is the coincidence that the name Cunda indeed appears in the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* story—although this Cunda seems to be another figure, a blacksmith (*karmāraputra* [Waldschmidt 1950-1951: II. 254, line 26.8]; Pāli *kammāraputta* [DN. ii 126]) who offers a last meal to the Buddha.¹⁹⁴ Having arrived in Kuśinagarī, the Buddha sends his attendant Ānanda to inform the inhabitants of the news of the impending *parinirvāṇa*, as we again find similarly in Śāriputra's pre-*nirvāṇa* narrative. When the people hear the news, they come forward to express their grief and are ordained by the Buddha. Having conducted his final preaching, the Buddha enters four levels of meditation, the same process that we find in the story of Śāriputra. After the Buddha's

¹⁹² Schopen (ibid. 47) reminds us of another significant point here: "We have, then, to this point in the account two statements—both indirect—about what is left behind or remains after Śāriputra's death: the narrative says, in effect, that first of all what remains are 'relics' (*ring bsrel*), but the homily says that the 'accumulation, heap, substratum, or material form' (*phung po* = *rāśi*, *skandha*, *upadhī*) of morality, concentration, wisdom, release, and knowledge and vision of release is what remains ... These various sources (i.e., Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita* and the *Milindapañha*) seem, in fact, to dissolve the distinction between the two, and to suggest that one—the 'relic'—is permeated, saturated, infused and enlivened by the other ... The inscriptions, in fact, use what is almost exactly the same vocabulary and refer—as has been noted elsewhere—to relics as 'infused with morality, infused with concentration, wisdom, release and knowledge and vision' (*ima dhadu śila(pari) bhavita samasiprañavimutiñāṇadra(sā)paribhavita*), or simply as 'infused with morality, infused with concentration, infused with wisdom' (*śilaparibhaviḍa sama(s)iparibhavemtu prañaparibhaviḍa*),"

¹⁹³ Very interestingly, the version in the Chinese *Dīrghāgama* uniquely states that the Buddha intends to enter *parinirvāṇa* between the two *śāla* trees in Kuśinagara, which was his birthplace: "Three months from now, I will pass into cessation between the two trees in the *Śāla* Grove in Kuśinagara, where I was born (是後三月，於本生處拘尸那竭娑羅園雙樹間，當取滅度. T. 1 [I] 15c16–18)." In this sense, "visiting the birthplace before cessation" becomes another similar motif in both Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* and the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. However, the parallel accounts in other versions of the *parinirvāṇa* do not support the above hypothesis. They describe the city Kuśinagara as "the resident of Mallas (力士生處; *malleṣu janapadeṣu*)" instead of "the birthplace of the Buddha" (e.g. T. 99 [II] 253c24–25; T. 375 [XII] 605a7–8; T. 1451 [XXIV] 388c27–28; Waldschmidt 1950–1951: II. 294, line 32.4). Is the statement in the *Dīrghāgama* merely the result of a corrupted text, or does it indeed reflect a tradition of the Buddha's birthplace beside the well-known birthplace Lumbinī? I cannot give a definitive answer, but it seems that the first possibility is more plausible.

Although Aśoka's Rummindei Pillar Inscription attributes the Buddha's birthplace to Lumbinī (Falk 2006: 177–180), some modern scholars still have questions about the Buddha's birthplace. For instance, Bareau (1987) points out that Lumbinī was not mentioned as the Buddha's birthplace in the earliest canonical accounts, and he supposes that the Buddha's birthplace was near Kapilavastu instead (cf. Strong 2001: 39).

¹⁹⁴ Strong 2001: 134–136; T. 5 (I) 167c16ff.; T. 1 (I) 18a25ff.; T. 6 (I) 183a19ff.; T. 7 (I) 196c29ff.

parinirvāṇa, gods appear; they scatter flowers and chant verses on impermanence. The next day, the people living in Kuśinagara are informed that the Buddha has passed into *parinirvāṇa*, and all gather together, bringing butter, incense, flowers, and instruments. Being extremely mournful, they prepare the funeral of the Buddha in the same way as that of a *cakravartin* king, which includes the procedures of wrapping the body with several layers of cotton cloth, filling the coffin with oil, covering the coffin with a golden lid (compare the much simpler treatment of Śāriputra's body and the omission of descriptions of his coffin in the above *SWF* scene), cremating the body on a pyre of sandalwood and incense, extinguishing the fire with milk, collecting relics, and building stūpas.¹⁹⁵ In the end, Ānanda reacts disconsolately to the Buddha's death, which we also see in the story of Śāriputra's death above. It is not an exaggeration to say that in almost every step of Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* we can find traces of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*.

In fact, such a quasi-*parinirvāṇa* account of Śāriputra's death can be found only in the *SWF*. Compared to different narrative traditions of Śāriputra's death,¹⁹⁶ the *SWF* connects the cause of Śāriputra's death with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*¹⁹⁷ and furthermore largely models Śāriputra's death on the details of the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. For instance, in the *Yueguang pusa jing* 月光菩薩經 (T. 166), although Śāriputra chooses to enter *nirvāṇa* for the same reason (namely, because he cannot bear to witness the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*), the text shows no further interest in describing Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* and quickly moves on to the *Candraprabha-jātaka*. In addition, in the *Divyāvadāna*, the present story (*pratyutpanna-vastu*) of the *Candraprabha-jātaka* treats Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa* as a *fait accompli*, and the Buddha speaks of the Candraprabha story to assuage the monks' doubt as to why Śāriputra

¹⁹⁵ Strong 2001: 126–146.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Li 2019b for different traditions of Śāriputra's *nirvāṇa*.

¹⁹⁷ Some other texts also accept this connection between Śāriputra's death and the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. In the Pāli commentaries, having ascertained that the noble pair of disciples were supposed to enter *nirvāṇa* earlier than the Buddha, Śāriputra realizes that only seven days remained of his life. He therefore determines to make his final journey to his hometown Nālada/Nālaka to visit and convert his mother, who is still a nonbeliever in Buddhism, even though all her children have become Buddhist arhats. After successfully converting his mother, on the full-moon day during the month of Kattika (October to November), Śāriputra enters *nirvāṇa*. Maudgalyāyana dies on the day that the moon is on the wane in the same month (Sv. ii. 549–554, iii. 66; Spk. iii. 212–221, 225; Iwai 2005: 420, 421; cf. Bigandet 1880: 9–24). In the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts, however, the motivation for Śāriputra's death is presented somewhat differently. Śāriputra obtains *nirvāṇa* voluntarily because he is emotionally unwilling to witness the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* (e.g. T. 202 [IV] 387c10–388b13 = D 341, *mdo*, a, 198b2–200a4). In some texts, Śāriputra's death is said to have also been spurred by Maudgalyāyana's intention to enter *nirvāṇa* after the latter was badly beaten by heretics (T. 1451 [XXIV] 287a24–290b4, D 1, '*dul ba, tha*, 237b7–241a4; T. 125 [II] 639a12–641a26).

and Maudgalyāyana achieve “*nirvāṇa* without remainder” (*nirupadhiśeṣa-nirvāṇa*) before their natural deaths.¹⁹⁸

Apart from modeling the narrative of Śāriputra’s *nirvāṇa* on that of the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, the *SWF* also accentuates Śāriputra’s importance through a significant feature of the Candraprabha story: it elevates Śāriputra to the foremost position, far overshadowing Maudgalyāyana, another prominent disciple of Śākyamuni. A summary of the *SWF* version runs as follows:¹⁹⁹

In that past life, the Buddha was born as the king Candraprabha (“Moonlight”), who was the epitome of a rightful, respectful, and meritorious king. He was extremely generous and announced to the whole kingdom that he could give away all his possessions. A neighboring king was jealous of Candraprabha’s great fame and hired an evil brahmin named Raudrākṣa²⁰⁰ to murder Candraprabha. Raudrākṣa came to the Candraprabha’s palace to ask for the king’s head, but a guiding spirit stopped him from entering the city. In order to help the Bodhisattva fulfill the *dāna-pāramitā*, a god from the Śuddhāvāsa appeared in the king’s dream and informed him of the brahmin’s arrival. On hearing this news, Candraprabha immediately commanded his prime minister Mahācandra, a former incarnation of Śāriputra, to bring the brahmin in. With the aim of saving the king, Mahācandra offered to Raudrākṣa a head made of seven jewels, but it was refused. Knowing that he could not stop King Candraprabha from committing self-sacrifice, Mahācandra chose to die prior to Candraprabha. Later, when Raudrākṣa attempted to cut off Candraprabha’s head, a tree spirit, who was later identified with Maudgalyāyana, showed up to restrain Raudrākṣa’s hands and feet. Candraprabha commanded the tree spirit to retreat and completed the offering of his head.

The casting of Śāriputra as a prime minister, whereas Maudgalyāyana was merely a tree spirit, is noteworthy because it goes against the typical arrangement that Śāriputra and

¹⁹⁸ In the Pāli commentaries, the stories concerning Śāriputra’s death are indeed well-developed and some details also resemble that of the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*, especially the position of Śāriputra’s body during his *nirvāṇa* (lying on his right side). Nevertheless, in this tradition of Śāriputra’s *nirvāṇa*, the whole story is closely connected with the conversion of his mother, who is the key figure in the whole funeral. Therefore, Śāriputra’s *nirvāṇa* is easily distinguished from the Buddha’s *parinirvāṇa*.

¹⁹⁹ T. 202 (IV) 388b13–390b8.

²⁰⁰ The *Divyāvadāna* uses the term Raudrākṣa in this story for the Chinese name *Laodu chai* 牢度差 in the *SWF* (Div. 320; cp. Raktākṣa in Div. 151).

Maudgalyāyana conventionally act as a pair with near-equal status.²⁰¹ In this story, Śāriputra, as the loyal, self-sacrificing minister, overshadows the character of Maudgalyāyana, who appears merely as a tree spirit. Such a distinct hierarchy between the two disciples exists only in the *SWF* version. When we look at the roles of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana in the versions of the *Yueguang pusa jing* 月光菩薩經 and the *Divyāvadāna*, the positions they occupy are equal: Candrababha has two prominent ministers, namely Mahācandra (i.e., Śāriputra) and Mahīdhara (i.e., Maudgalyāyana), both of whom die voluntarily, being unable to bear witnessing Candrababha's death.²⁰² Through the different arrangement of the roles they play in the past-life story, in the *SWF*, Śāriputra is cast as the most important figure in the Buddha's ambit and occupies a higher rank than Maudgalyāyana.

In summary, the *SWF* portrays Śāriputra as a prestigious monk whose death is described as almost equally as solemn and dignified as that of his teacher, and whose religious significance far overshadows that of his peer Mahāmaudgalyāyana. In these particular features of the narrative, we read a cult of Śāriputra in which his excellence is reinforced and highlighted.

What implications for the teacher–disciple relationship are highlighted by this practice of borrowing biographical stories? In order to understand the mindset that produced these similar, sacred stories, we need to understand the significance of so-called “sacred biographies” to the religious landscape of Buddhism as a whole. As proposed by scholars of cultural studies of religion, sacred biographies have a paradigmatic function to provide a “model” of exemplary religious practice. Geertz (1973: 90) in his studies of sacred biographies argues that:

²⁰¹ There are indeed several accounts that portray an unequal hierarchy between Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, for instance, the story of Śāriputra's girdle. For a detailed discussion, see Li 2019b.

²⁰² Although the main body of this Jātaka is almost identical in the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Yueguang pusa jing*, their respective present-life stories (*pratyutpanna-vastu*) are different. In the *Divyāvadāna* (Div. 314ff. = Ohnuma 2004), the present scene has nothing to do with the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, and the Buddha narrates this Jātaka in order to explain that in their past lives, Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana chose to die out of their faith in the Buddha. However, in the *Yueguang pusa jing*, the text indeed states that the *nirvāṇas* of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana were due to their unwillingness to witness the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* (T. 166 [III] 406c2–9).

The tree spirit in the *SWF* also appears here, but as a divine being (specified as a *devatā* [“goddess”] in the Div.) in the garden, and is not identified with any present-life figure.

We can also trace the *Candrababha-jātaka* in other sources, such as the *Pusa benyuan jing* 菩薩本緣經 (T. 153), *Da fangbian fo bao'en jing* 大方便佛報恩經 (T. 156) and *Liuduji jing* 六度集經 (T. 152), which however contain no information about Śāriputra and are therefore passed over in the following discussion.

Sacred symbols function to synthesize a people's ethos—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order. In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectually reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world view describes, while the world view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs peculiarly well-arranged to accommodate such a way of life. This confrontation and mutual confirmation has two fundamental effects. On the one hand, it objectivizes moral and aesthetic preferences by depicting them as the imposed conditions of life implicit in a world with a particular structure, as mere common sense given the unalterable shape of reality. On the other, it supports these received beliefs about the world's body by invoking deeply felt moral and aesthetic sentiments as experiential evidence for their truth. Religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific (if, most often, implicit) metaphysic, and in so doing sustain each with the borrowed authority of the other.

In other words, functioning as a symbolic system, sacred biographies tune the followers' actions to an envisaged cosmic order and simultaneously reproject the cosmic order onto the plane of human experience. In Buddhist biographical studies, Schober (1997: 2) accepts this understanding and specifies it as follows:

Highly evocative and polysemous, sacred biographies depict and contextualize the lives of those who emulate these ideals in religious texts and practices. In their totality, the biographies of the Buddha encompass a variety of models of and for religious practice. The tradition views these potentially limitless models of path practice as applicable to all sentient beings and particularly to those who—as arhats and future buddhas—have realized in exemplary fashion a version of path in their own life.

That is to say, modeling or borrowing the Buddha's biographical stories is not taboo among Buddhists, but innate to the cultural practice of creating sacred biographies. When readers read of Śāriputra's taming of heretics or his *nirvāṇa*, the Buddha's biography naturally resonates in their mind and creates significance in more than one way: The Buddha's

biography adds to the sacred character of Śāriputra's life, doubly strengthening the holiness of Śāriputra's image, and it can also inspire the readers to venerate and even imitate these religious ideals in their own practices. Through the process of projecting archetypal images of perfection upon the teacher and fusing one's own sacredness with that of the teacher, a disciple can solidify his own identity. This process of modeling, innate to discipleship, is termed "idealization transference" in psychology:²⁰³ "discipleship or apprenticeship is potentially a process of initiation into a new state of individuated existence through the process of submission, fusion, and reemergence."

2.2.3 Further stories: Śāriputra acts as the critic or instructor of Śākyamuni

Section 2.2 above presents Śāriputra as a great emulator, who not only substituted the Buddha's role as the great tamer of the heretics but also died in a way resembling the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. In the present section, we will briefly investigate a more dramatic relationship between Śāriputra and Śākyamuni in the *SWF*: the *SWF* contains many Jātakas in which the normal teacher-disciple relation between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra is almost reversed. In these episodes, Śāriputra either severely admonishes Śākyamuni or earnestly counsels him, behaviors that challenge the well-established relationship between the two primary figures.

To start with, in the 36th chapter *Qiping jin shi pin* 七瓶金施品 ("Donating Seven Bottles of Gold"),²⁰⁴ the story begins with Ānanda's question of what makes Śākyamuni Buddha behave so humbly and modestly. In his answer, Śākyamuni ascribes his humble mind to Śāriputra who, as a snake in his former existence, severely admonished Śākyamuni Buddha's former incarnation for not being humble and polite to other people: in one past life, Śāriputra was a householder who was extremely avaricious and hoarded seven bottles of gold in his lifetime. When he died, he was reborn as a snake, but kept guarding his gold for

²⁰³ Bogart (1992: 12–13) further adds, "in idealization transferences, ... one person projects archetypal images of perfection, omnipotence, and omniscience upon the other, whose perfection is equated with one's own perfection through a process of fusion. This idealization is seen as a necessary precursor to the eventual development of one's own goals and ambitions. Thus, the disciple's deep devotion to the guru and tendency to view him or her as perfect and all-knowing may in part be founded upon such an idealization ... The student submits to the teacher's authority and fuses internally with the mentor in order to derive strength, clarity, and an internal image of perfection around which his or her own ego-ideals can begin to solidify. The completion of the relationship, in his view, should witness the reemergence of the disciple or initiate as an independent man or woman."

²⁰⁴ T. 202 (IV) 369a26–370a3.

thousands of years. One day, the snake was suddenly overtaken with a weary mind, and wanted to donate all of the gold to the *saṅgha*. It stopped a passerby and asked him to carry the gold to the monastery as offerings. The person brought one bottle of gold to the monastery and made an offering on behalf of the snake. Thereafter, he returned to the snake's place, put the snake in a basket, and carried it to the monastery. However, on their way to the monastery, another person showed up and greeted the snake-carrier several times. Nevertheless, the snake-carrier did not answer a single word. The snake was enraged by the arrogance of the snake-carrier and admonished him severely.²⁰⁵ This person, having been criticized, was overcome with shame and vowed to treat every being in an equally humble way. In the end, it is related that the snake was Śāriputra, while Śākyamuni was the one who carried the snake.

In another story, the *Mahāprabhāsa-jātaka* (which appears twice, in chapter 16 and chapter 44),²⁰⁶ Śāriputra similarly played the role of instructor to Śākyamuni. In this story,

²⁰⁵ T. 202 (IV) 369c8–19: 道逢一人，問擔蛇人：“汝從何來？體履佳不？”其人默然不答彼問，再三問之，不出一言。所持毒蛇，即便嗔恚，含毒熾盛，欲殺其人，還自遏折。復自思念：“云何此人，不知時宜，他以好意，問訊進止，鄭重三問，無一言答，何可疾耶？”作是念已，毒心復興，隆猛內發，復欲害之。臨當吐毒，復自思惟：“此人為我福，未有恩報。”如是再三，還自奄伏。“此人於我，已有大恩，雖復作罪，事宜忍之。”前到空處，蛇語其人：“下我著地。”窮責極切，囑戒以法。其人於是，便自悔責，生謙下心，垂矜一切。蛇重囑及：“莫更爾耶！”

Translation: On their way, they encountered another person. He greeted the snake-carrier, asking: ‘Where do you come from? Are you in a good health?’ The snake-carrier kept silent and did not answer these questions. The person asked him a second and third time, but the snake-carrier did not say a word. Therefore, the snake carried by him became enraged, holding burning venom in its mouth, and was about to kill the snake-carrier. However, it stopped itself and withdrew. It further thought to itself: ‘How come this person does not know propriety? Another person, out of good will, asked about his recent situation. He earnestly greeted him three times, but [the snake-carrier] did not say a single word. How condemnable!’ Having thought in this way, its malevolent mood was further aroused. An intense ferocity burst inside its body, and it was again about to kill [the snake-carrier]. However, when it was about to flick its venom, it considered again: ‘This person has done meritorious things for me, and I have not yet repaid him.’ It repeated itself in this way over and over again, and finally, it went back to lie down. ‘I owe a great debt of gratitude to this person. Even though he is doing improper things, the appropriate course is to tolerate it.’ When they reached open ground, the snake spoke to him: ‘Let me come down to the ground.’ It severely admonished him in an extremely stern way and exhorted him [to adopt] the correct way. [The snake-carrier] thereafter became regretful and ashamed. He assumed a humble mind and showed compassion for every being. The snake again exhorted him: ‘Do not do it anymore!’

²⁰⁶ Of the two versions, that of chapter 16 is longer (T. 202 [IV] 372a17-373a14), while the 44th chapter contains a shorter version (T. 202 [IV] 421b18–c21). The short version does not identify the mahout as Śāriputra, and therefore I omit it in the following discussion. On the nature of the two versions, Demoto (2009) argues that chapter 16 is a translation from an Indic version, while chapter 44 is a unique composition.

We also find Tocharian manuscripts of the same story (PK NS 34, 37, 38, 144, and 398; cf. Lévi 1925 and Pinault 1988). However, since the Tocharian version is fragmentary, we have no idea whether the mahout was also identified as Śāriputra.

Śākyaṃuni was a king called Mahāprabhasa who was gifted with one marvelous elephant. He commanded the elephant tamer Sanshe 散闍²⁰⁷ to discipline the elephants. However, during a test ride through a forest, the elephant ran wild after seeing some female elephants and chased after them. The king, sitting on the back of the elephant, was greatly frightened, but finally managed to get off by grabbing some tree branches. Later, when the elephant returned to the palace, the king refused to ride it anymore. Sanshe attempted to change the king's mind by proposing a public taming: preparing seven red-hot iron balls, Sanshe told the king that if the king was determined to abandon the elephant, he would order the elephant to swallow these balls. Sanshe did this for the sake of arousing the compassion of the king, hoping that the king would change his mind. However, the king was apathetic, even when the elephant knelt in front of him with tears in its eyes. The elephant finally swallowed the iron balls and then died. The king was shocked and asked Sanshe why the tamer was able to command the elephant to commit suicide, but could not control the elephant's behavior in the forest. Sanshe, his body possessed by the gods, answered that he could merely discipline the body of the elephant, but the buddhas had the capability to tame its mind. Sanshe further told the king about the quality of being a buddha, which impelled the king to make a bodhisattva vow.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* calls him Saṃyāta (Hahn 2005: 18), which is also found in the much later text *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* by Kṣemendra (*hastimahāmātraṃ saṃyātaṃ nāma*. Straube 2009: 31, verse 1. 18). The name in Chinese, Sanshe (MC. *sanX-dzyae*), seems not a direct transcription from the Sanskrit word but possibly a Middle-Indic form of the Sanskrit word (Norman 2006: 63 points out that -y->-j- is a common Middle Indic phonological feature; cf. Also Bloomfield & Edgerton 1932: 100–101, § 192–193; Karashima 1994: 14 §2.2.1).

²⁰⁸ T. 202 (IV) 372b29–373a6 = Eng. Demoto 2009: 2–9. 象師散闍，將象至會，尋使工師，作七鐵丸，燒令極赤，作已念言：“象吞此丸，決定當死。王後或悔。”白言大王：“此白象寶，唯轉輪王，乃得之耳，今有小過，不應喪失。”王告之言：“象若不調，不應令吾乘之；若其調適，事覺如斯。今不須汝，亦不須象。”象師又言：“雖不須我，象甚可惜！”王怒隆盛，告言：“遠去！”散闍起已，泣淚而言：“王無親疎，其心如毒，詐出甜言。”時會大小，聞已墮淚，諦視於象。象師即便作相告象：“吞此鐵丸，若不吞者，當以鐵鉤斷裂汝腦。”象知其心，即自思惟：“我寧吞此熱丸而死，實不堪忍被鐵鉤死，如人俱死，寧受絞死不樂燒殺。”屈膝向王，垂淚望救。王意怒盛，覩已餘視。散闍告象：“汝今何以不吞此丸？”時象四顧，念是眾中，乃無有能救我命者，以手取丸，置口吞之，入腹焦爛，直過而死，如金剛杵打破瓊山，鐵丸墮地，猶故熱赤。時會見已，莫不悲泣。王見此事，驚怖愕然，乃生悔心，即召散闍，告言：“汝象調順乃爾，何故在林，不能制之？”時淨居天，知光明王應發無上菩提之心，即作神力，令象師跪答王言：“大王！我唯能調象身，不能調心。”王即問言：“頗復有人，亦能調身，兼調心不？”白言大王：“有佛世尊！既能調身，亦能調心。”時光明王，聞佛名已，心驚毛豎，告言散闍：“所言佛者，何種性生？”散闍答言：“佛世尊者，二種性生，一者智慧，二者大悲。勤行六事，所謂六波羅蜜，功德智慧，悉具足已，號之為佛，既自能調，亦調眾生。”王聞是已，悚然踊躍，即起入宮，洗浴香湯，更著新衣，上高閣上，四向作禮，於一切眾生起大悲心，燒香誓願：“願我所有

In the above two stories, the image of Śākyamuni is particularly human, even immature and blemished. In the first episode, he is a person who does not react politely to other people's greetings and therefore enrages the snake. In the second story, he is a hard-hearted king who is indifferent to the life of an elephant, even though he is aware of the tamer's plan to kill the elephant. Here, we can see Śākyamuni does not have an entirely positive image. In contrast, Śāriputra acts as a critic or even an instructor who attempts to urge him in the correct direction. He criticizes the past incarnation of Śākyamuni for not being humble and modest, which impels the Bodhisattva to make a vow to treat every being humbly. In the second Jātaka, Śāriputra acts as a faithful mahout who endeavors to urge the Bodhisattva to assume a compassionate mind, which, although it ends in failure, still stimulates the Bodhisattva's further curiosity about buddhahood. Moreover, as the mahout, Śāriputra is possessed by a god and explains the quality of buddhas to the Bodhisattva, which inspires the Bodhisattva to initiate his bodhisattva path. This plot is the reverse of the stereotypical image of Śākyamuni as the mentor who sets Śāriputra on the correct religious path. We can say that in these two stories, Śāriputra can somehow be regarded as a critic or even instructor of Śākyamuni.

However, there is one thing we should not dismiss: even though Śāriputra is the one who offers help in Śākyamuni's path to perfection in these cases, the image of Śāriputra is still ambiguous. In the first story, he is no more than a snake, a creature whose existence is mostly associated with the quality of aversion (*dveṣa*), one of the three poisons in Buddhist ethics. In the second story, Śāriputra's image as the mahout is also not strictly positive. On the one hand, he is faithful and loyal to the king, hoping that the king will take back the elephant, which was a prized possession of *cakravartin* kings. On the other hand, with the aim of changing the king's mind, Śāriputra decides to perform a cruel taming. He is not compassionate at all in forcing the elephant to swallow seven burning iron balls. What we can see from his equivocal image is the attempt to limit and debase Śāriputra's position and significance. We might guess that the representation of Śāriputra as a critic of Śākyamuni would have made composers feel uncomfortable. These kinds of polysemic plots reveal a complicated mindset on the part of composers.

功德，迴向佛道，我成佛已，自調其心，亦當調伏一切眾生。若以一眾生故，在於阿鼻地獄，住經一劫，有所益者，當入是獄，終不捨於菩提之心。”

This story narrates how Śākyamuni's bodhisattva mind was initially aroused. The theological significance has already been observed by Hahn and Demoto, who name their series of three papers "How It All Began." See Hahn 2006, 2009 and Demoto 2009.

Nevertheless, a new model of the relationship between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra is depicted in these stories, which challenges the closed, rigid teacher–disciple relationship between Śākyamuni and Śāriputra. These stories seem to be a novel negotiation of different power dynamics between Śākyamuni and his disciples as represented by Śāriputra.

Can we further contextualize these stories within a specific milieu or a particular community and figure out who created stories with such an open-minded understanding of the Buddha’s authority? Although I can not give a definitive answer at this moment,²⁰⁹ a hint may exist. We should note that the *SWF* reflects a tendency to accentuate the significance of Śāriputra, for cultic or literary reasons. Apart from the aforementioned chapters (16, 18, 26, 36, and 43), Śāriputra also plays an essential role in chapters 17, 43, 61, 67, and 68.²¹⁰ What makes the situation more intriguing is that the three consecutive chapters, 16, 17, and 18—all of which reflect a strong cult of Śāriputra—seem to form an organic cluster with the same Indian origin. As already noticed by Demoto (2009: 16), in addition to the fact that they are three consecutive chapters,²¹¹ these stories share the same narrative scheme, which can distinguish them from the other chapters of the *SWF*: they all start with a motto condensing the moral of the story, the style of which resembles the *Jātakamālās* of Haribhaṭṭa and Gopadatta. Hahn further argues that the *SWF* version of the *Mahāprabhāsa* story was based on the version composed by Haribhaṭṭa,²¹² the Sanskrit poet who is known to modern

²⁰⁹ My first guess is that they may be connected to the community that was active around the Kuča area, possibly Tocharian monks. Indeed, in the Tocharian narrative work *Daśakarmaphāṭṭhāvadānamālā* that is fragmentarily preserved in its Old Uyghur translation, Śāriputra appears multiple times as a main character. However, due to their fragmentary nature, I cannot offer a more meaningful reading beyond the recognition of Śāriputra’s name. Cf. Wilkens 2016: I. 348–349; II. 464–6; III. 730–731.

²¹⁰ Chapter 17 also narrates a story about an *upāsikā* named Mahāsenā who donated her flesh to a sick monk. In this story, a *deva* informs Mahāsenā of the news that Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are going to dwell in a nearby grove. These two chief disciples become the first recipients of her offerings, and they also help Mahāsenā to invite the Buddha. In chapter 61, Śāriputra plays the role of a sage, the only being who can understand the meaning of the verses chanted by the Bodhisattva as a lion. Chapter 67 directly compares Śāriputra with another great monk, Upagupta: when Upagupta was still a householder in his former existence, he once wanted to join the Buddhist community, but Śākyamuni told him that he was not able to compete with Śāriputra in wisdom. Chapter 69 narrates the story of how Cunda became the *śrāmaṇera* of Śāriputra and venerated Śāriputra.

²¹¹ In the Song-yuan-ming edition of the Chinese *Xianyu jing*, chapters 16 to 18 appear as three sequential chapters. In addition, the older editions preserved in many Japanese monasteries also support the antiquity of the three chapters as a cluster. See Okitsu 2006b: 66–72.

In fact, the chapter 19 also fits in here, but I skip to discuss it in detail as it does not feature Śāriputra.

²¹² Hahn has published a series of papers on this poet and his *Jātakamālā* (Hahn 1981, 1992, 1993, 2007ab, 2009). Hahn guesses Haribhaṭṭa lived around the fifth century A.D., and praises him as “one of the most brilliant stars in the galaxy of early classical Sanskrit literature.” Haribhaṭṭa’s *Jātakamālā*, consisting of 34

academia mostly due to Hahn's masterly work.²¹³ Following their hypotheses, the whole cluster (chapters from 16 to 18) in the *SWF* seems to be derived from a single source with connections to Haribhaṭṭa's works. However, when we read Haribhaṭṭa's *Mahāprabhāsa* and other stories, there is not much description of Śāriputra. This means that the recognition of Śāriputra's role was most likely a creation novel to the *SWF* (or in the direct source from which the *SWF* developed), rather than based on an Indian source. This observation seems to support the hypothesis that the Śāriputra element was an addition made in the course of the *SWF*'s composition, a process occurring in Central Asia.

2.3 Summary

Following the argument of the ambiguity in the *buddha–arhat* distinction (chapter 1), chapter 2 reveals how the authority of Śākyamuni, in terms of his relation to Śāriputra, is negotiated and readdressed by presenting different models of interaction between Śākyamuni and his foremost disciple in the *Sūtra of the Wise and Foolish*.

In the historical discussion of the *SWF*, I argue that there are no solid grounds for assuming the *SWF* to have been deeply rooted in Khotanese soil. Instead, this text seems to hail from a Buddhist milieu closer to that of the Kuča region on the Northern Silk Road. As for the discrepancy between the Chinese version and the Tibetan translation from Chinese, regarding the extremely complex transmission history of the *SWF*, I hypothesize that the

genuine legends (with the 35th possibly a later addition into the text), is modeled on Āryaśura's famous work of the same title (Hahn 1993: 41). Although the complete Sanskrit version of Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā* is not extant, it is still completely preserved in its 12th-century Tibetan translation. The successor of Haribhaṭṭa, Gopadatta, further composed a third *Jātakamālā*.

²¹³ Hahn (1993) and Demoto (2009) both believe that the *SWF* version of the Mahāprabhāsa story was borrowed from the version composed by Haribhaṭṭa that is preserved in its Tibetan translation. The basis for their argument is the similarity of certain episodes in the two versions, especially the dialogue between King Mahāprabhāsa and the mahout concerning the ability and nature of buddhas. "Taking into consideration the specific character of Haribhaṭṭa's work as an original literary composition" (Hahn 1993: 44), they conclude that the only possibility is that the *SWF* borrowed passages from Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā*.

Although I agree that the version known to the composers of the *SWF* may have been ultimately traced back to Haribhaṭṭa's version, I am not fully sure whether there is a direct "borrowing" between the two texts. We could not exclude the possibility that the *SWF* borrowed the story from an intermediate text which is also influenced by Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā*. After all, we know the dialogue between King Mahāprabhāsa and the mahout, which is shared between the *SWF* and Haribhaṭṭa's *Jātakamālā*, is further contained in each new composition of this story, such as in Gopadatta's *Suprabhāṣajātaka* and in Kṣemendra's *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* (Straube 2009: 229).

Tibetan text was translated from a lost version of *Xianyu jing* which was not totally the same as presently available ones.

In the main discussion of the colorful narratives surrounding Śāriputra in the *SWF*, I argue that the *SWF* displays a diversified understanding of Śāriputra's significance with respect to his power dynamic with the Buddha: on the one hand, we observe that the *SWF* versions promote Śāriputra to a very high position, which constitutes a threat to the Buddha's authority within the *saṅgha*; on the other hand, he is also portrayed as a faithful disciple of the Buddha, and his eminence, in fact, augments the Buddha's leadership. I chiefly focus on those stories in which Śāriputra assumes the role of a challenger, an imitator, or a criticizer.

In the Śrīvṛddhi story, Śāriputra and Śākyamuni stand on two opposing sides in deciding whether the centenarian Śrīvṛddhi should be permitted to join the community. Śāriputra maintains that Śrīvṛddhi should not be ordained on Vinaya-related grounds, a position that wins the support of other members of the monastic community. Śākyamuni, however, helps Śrīvṛddhi to receive ordination by wielding his personal charisma and authority. To justify himself, Śākyamuni articulates an eloquent discourse on his superiority to Śāriputra in order to intervene in this issue. Implicit in this story is the fact that disciples could pose a challenge to the Buddha. By means of creating tension between the Buddha and his disciples, the narrators not only express their viewpoint on the "proper" hierarchy (namely, that Śākyamuni should occupy a higher rank of authority) but also initiate a discussion of the situation when the *saṅgha* were not willing to be "unsubmissive." To the narrators, the high prestige of Śāriputra in the *saṅgha* could pose a theological problem, a possible challenge to Śākyamuni's authority and position, and therefore needs to be addressed within the narrative.

Śāriputra as an emulator of Śākyamuni is another visible device by which Śākyamuni's absolute power is copied, and his sacredness is therefore transferable. The elaborate descriptions of Śāriputra's taming of the six heretics and his *nirvāṇa* in the *SWF* are both modeled on life stories of the Buddha. This kind of modeling is a way to arouse "empathic resonance" in the readers, a process of fusion of the disciple's perfection with the sacred one's perfection, and contributes to reinforcing the excellence of the disciple.

The fluctuation of Śāriputra's image between that of a renowned disciple and a potential challenger is also evident in some other stories of the *SWF*. As seen from surveys comparing the *SWF* with parallels in the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* Vinaya, and other sources,

the stories in the *SWF* reveal a narrative tradition that reflects a cult of Śāriputra and tolerates his role as a challenger or critic of Śākyamuni. We can see the motif of his competition with the Buddha as a powerful discursive tool to express different stances. Especially for stories in the *SWF*, the vitality of the narratives surrounding these early figures derives precisely from these challenges and acts of emulation.