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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 4. Challenging the Buddha: Devadatta as an Evildoer

idha tappati pecca tappati, pāpakārī ubhayattha tappati,

"pāpam me katan" ti tappati, bhiyyo tappati duggatiṃ gato.

Now he suffers, after death he suffers; the evildoer suffers in both cases.

He suffers, (thinking) "I have done evil"; he suffers all the more, having gone to a bad rebirth.³⁸²

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In the third chapter, my investigation focused mainly on Devadatta's image as a schismatic monk, and I shed light on the polemical ends the Devadatta stories initially served. As I have demonstrated, the discussions of Devadatta's stories probably first arose in a legal context, in order to illustrate schismatic issues and to propose corresponding solutions in the Vinayas. However, Devadatta's role quickly expands to that of the embodiment of evil itself, perhaps under the sway of the anti-schism polemics that regard schisms as not merely administrative or institutional problems but as morally reprehensible acts.³⁸³ Amid this process, the image of Devadatta as a separatist becomes only one facet of his overall image as a culprit. In this chapter, shifting my focus to Devadatta's image as an evildoer, I attempt to investigate how Buddhist traditions extend Devadatta's image from that of a schismatic to an innately evil person. I will demonstrate the different understandings of Devadatta's evilness in Buddhist texts, which have in actuality gone through significant shifts in historical development.

Moreover, since Devadatta's various other evil deeds were most likely created in contexts different from that of his schismatic sin, his other crimes are probably not completely compatible with his schismatic image. I therefore further examine how, due to its gradual development, Devadatta's multifaceted notoriety raised retroactive questions, creating tensions within Devadatta's image and, moreover, resulting in clashes between the different Buddhist ideologies underlying the composition of his stories. In addition,

³⁸² Dh. 5, No. 17. Eng. Norman 1997: 2, with my own revisions. In the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, the commentary of *Dhammapada*, this verse is meant to explain the evil nature of Devadatta, which causes his evil religious career and hellish suffering.

³⁸³ From a historical perspective, the accusations of Devadatta's evil doings can be dated back to a considerably early time, considering that the extant Buddhist texts, including both mainstream and Mahāyāna ones, consistently report that Devadatta commits formidable transgressions that lead him to hell.

Devadatta's image as a grave troublemaker simultaneously implies a crisis of authority on the part of Śākyamuni: when Devadatta is recounted to have briefly split Śākyamuni Buddha's monastic community, and even to have physically injured Śākyamuni Buddha and drawn his blood, Devadatta indeed becomes a powerful enemy and even achieves temporary success when confronted with omnipotent and omniscient Śākyamuni Buddha. Therefore, in the last section of this chapter, I investigate how different Buddhist schools, including both mainstream and Mahāyāna ones, realize and propose to resolve the conflicts and paradoxes surrounding Devadatta's extreme notoriety, including the challenges that Devadatta's evil doings mount to Śākyamuni's authority.

4.1 Devadatta as an evildoer: Understanding his evilness³⁸⁴

4.1.1 A sympathetic explanation for Devadatta's sins

Surprisingly, the most widespread—and possibly the earliest—understanding of Devadatta's sins in the Vinayas does not condemn Devadatta's own evil nature. Instead, it probes further into the corruption of Devadatta and ascribes his evil to the danger of excessive material gains. In the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, the Buddha analyzes Devadatta's degradation as follows:³⁸⁵

The Buddha spoke to the monks: “If I saw a single hair of good qualities in Devadatta, I would not prophesy that Devadatta is doomed to fall into the great hell and suffer for a whole *kalpa*. For example, [say] a person is sinking into a dung pit. Although people want to rescue him, they don't see a single clean place (on his body) that one could grasp. I perceive Devadatta in exactly the same way.” He further preached to the monks: “I do not see any other qualities so harmful to one's aspiration to the unexcelled path as fame and profit. The motive for Devadatta's schism is precisely [fame and] profit. Devadatta attained eight immoral qualities

³⁸⁴ A more detailed discussion of Devadatta's transgressions can be found in Li 2019a. Considering the full structure of my dissertation, I will not extend the discussion to every detail of his crimes, but focus only on the shifts in the stories of his successful early religious career.

³⁸⁵ T.1421 (XXII) 166a8–14: (佛)告諸比丘：“我若見調達有一毫善法者，終不記墮大地獄，受一劫苦。譬人沒大糞坑，若人欲救，不見一毫淨處可捉。我觀調達，亦復如是。”又告諸比丘：“我不見餘法，壞人無上道意，如名聞利養。調達所以破僧，由利養故。調達成就八非法故破僧：利、不利、稱、無稱、敬、不敬、樂惡、隨惡知識。”

that lead him to schism, namely: benefit, lack of benefit, fame, lack of fame, respect, lack of respect, evil desire, and association with evil companions.”

Devadatta, the incorrigible criminal, has gone too far on his evil path, placing himself beyond repair even by the Buddha. This statement is Śākyamuni Buddha’s final judgment of Devadatta. However, to reiterate Devadatta’s sins is not the whole point in this paragraph. Immediately after confirming Devadatta’s destiny in hell, Śākyamuni Buddha adds another insight, revealing the deeper reason for Devadatta’s depravity and attributing it to worldly fame and profits. In this sense, Devadatta’s failure has a more substantial didactic function, as it serves to illustrate the perils of worldly gains—even people like Devadatta, who used to be steadfast in their religious pursuits and who once possessed a sincere aspiration for awakening, can be corrupted by worldly gains. Instead of condemning Devadatta as the one with an innately evil nature, the text places greater emphasis on the possible corruption that worldly cravings may bring about. We can say that in Śākyamuni Buddha’s analysis, Devadatta becomes something of a victim of the greed for worldly profit.

The same allegation of Devadatta’s sinful life is also found in the Dharmaguptaka and Theravaṃsa Vinayas. A similar discussion is found in the *Sifen lü*, which attributes the depravity of Devadatta to the same eight unwholesome qualities (八非正法; T. 1428 [XXII] 909b29–c13). The Pāli Vinaya further adds three unwholesome qualities (*tīhi asaddhammehi*) to the list, which comprise evil desire (*pāpicchatā*), evil friendship (*pāpamittatā*) and pausing on the way [to the awakening] because one realizes insignificant excellence (*oramattakena visesādhigamena antarā vosānaṃ āpādi*).³⁸⁶

In the Sarvāstivāda *Shisong lü*, Devadatta’s crimes are similarly attributed to the *ba xiefa* 八邪法 (“eight evil dharmas”), which, however, feature ten items in their list.³⁸⁷

(The Buddha said:) “Because his mind is cloaked by the eight evil dharmas, Devadatta unwittingly causes a schism. What are these eight? Gains and loss,

³⁸⁶ Vin. ii. 201–203 = Eng. Horner 1938–1952: V. 283–285.

³⁸⁷ T. 1435 (XXIII) 265a29–b3: 調達以八邪法覆心，不覺破僧。何等八？利衰、毀譽、稱譏、苦樂、惡知識、惡伴黨。We can infer that when the editors of the Vinaya compiled or edited the text, the term “eight unwholesome dharmas”—possibly quite an ancient concept—had already lost its concrete reference, having become more of a formulaic expression.

reputation and disrepute, praise and contempt, pain and pleasure, evil companions and evil companions.”

The status of Devadatta as a victim of worldly cravings is more evident here since the text claims that Devadatta unintentionally ignites the first Buddhist schism when his mind is cloaked and corrupted by worldly cravings. Just as the famous verse, which recurs in nearly every version of Devadatta’s biography, illustrates — “As the plantain decays upon bearing fruit, so does the reed. As the mule dies upon conceiving offspring, likewise is the foolish man who would be destroyed by profit.”³⁸⁸ Adapted from the *Udānavarga*,³⁸⁹ this verse originally serves to teach people how easily worldly desires deprave people, and its extensive presence in the Devadatta’s stories reveals that the figure of Devadatta has long become a popular depiction of the detriment of worldly desires in Buddhist literature.

In summary, the above discussions do not treat Devadatta as the real object of criticism. Instead, they attempt to warn people of the danger of craving worldly benefits. Moreover, this connection between Devadatta’s evilness and the threat of worldly profit was possibly established quite early, as it has been widely spread in the Buddhist texts and therein Devadatta’s evilness had not yet been increased to an incredible degree. It is also worthwhile to note that in the above discussions, the concept of *ānantarya* crimes, which could be a more convenient and powerful tool for explaining Devadatta’s descent into hell, are dismissed entirely. This observation strengthens my hypothesis that the concept of *ānantarya* was shaped at a period later than the formation of the core image of Devadatta, and therefore could not appear in this possibly quite ancient understanding of Devadatta’s sins.

³⁸⁸ T. 1435 (XXIII) 258a2–3: 芭蕉以實死，竹蘆實亦然，驪懷妊故死，小人得養壞。Parallels are also found in other Devadatta’s biographies such as in the *Za ahan jing* (T. 99 [II] 276c2–15), the *Bieyi za ahan jing* (T. 100 [II] 374b26–c10), the *Wufen lü* (T. 1421 [XXII] 18b8–11), the *Sifen lü* (T. 1428 [XXII] 910c13–14), the Pāli Vinaya (Vin. ii. 187), the MSV *Saṅghabhedavastu* (Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 72, D. 1, ‘*dul ba, nya*, 161a2–3, T. 1450 [XXIV] 169a5–7), the *Za baozang jing* 雜寶藏經 (T. 203 [IV] 465b20–29), etc.

³⁸⁹ This verse is a famous passage found also in *Satkāra* (“Honors”), the thirteenth chapter of the *Udānavarga*: *phalaṃ vai kadaliṃ hanti, phalaṃ veṇuṃ phalaṃ naḍam. Satkāraḥ kāpuruṣaṃ hanti, svagarbho ’śvatarīṇ yathā* (Bernhard 1965: 200; D. 326, *mdo sde, sa*, 220b2 = Champa Thupten Zongtse 1990: 136). Also see *Faju jing* 法句經 T. 210 (IV) 571b28, *Chuyao jing* T. 212 (IV) 687b5–6, *Faji yaosong jing* 法集要頌經 T. 213 (IV) 783c4–6. The correspondence between the Pāli *Udāna* and the Sanskrit *Udānavarga* is shown in Mitzuno (1981: 8–11) and Bernhard 1968: 259–261.

4.1.2 Expansion of Devadatta's sins: Case studies of his early success

The above understanding of Devadatta's crimes depicts him as a victimized monk bewildered by worldly desires. However, this is not the mainstream approach in Buddhist traditions. More frequently, we see stories imputing Devadatta's downfall to his innate evilness. After all, a covetous, untrustworthy aggressor speaks for himself. Discarding the possibly earlier, sympathetic reading of Devadatta's transgressions as a demonstration of dangerous worldly cravings, Buddhist narrators attributed his depravity to his evil nature and assigned more unfavorable qualities to his personality. As a result, his quintessential wickedness alone can account for every crime he commits. In this section, I demonstrate how Buddhist narrators enthusiastically expanded the polemical propaganda against Devadatta, focusing particularly on how the narratives of Devadatta's early achievements are transformed into stories illuminating his utterly evil nature.

4.1.2.1 *A master of magical power or a duplicitous snob: Undermining Devadatta's early achievements*

We find a tendency toward belittling Devadatta in the narratives of his early religious career, the only glorious period in Devadatta's stereotypically evil career. Many texts, while acknowledging that Devadatta was once a successful monk, degrade the level of his attainment to that of magical power—a mundane form of achievement—and associate this achievement with Devadatta's moral degeneration.

As we have noticed in chapter 3, in the Dharmaguptaka *Sifen lü* (T. 1428 [XXII] 591b22–24), while other princes have gained superior achievements, Devadatta only obtains magical power. Similarly, in the Pāli Vinaya, Devadatta's achievement is qualified as mastery of mundane-level magic (*pothujjanikaṃ iddhiṃ*, Vin. ii. 183). This magical achievement later facilitates his success in winning the patronage of Ajātaśatru but meanwhile induces Devadatta's depravity: a sudden thought occurs to Devadatta that he could use his magical power to obtain more material benefits. Obsessed with this thought, Devadatta then makes various magical transformations to impress Ajātaśatru, which leads to an unnoticed decline in his magical power.³⁹⁰

³⁹⁰ Vin. ii. 184 = Eng. Horner 1938–1952: V. 259–260.

The Mahīśāsaka *Wufen li* moves further in this direction, as it relates that only six of the eight Śākya princes realize arhatship after ordination, the exceptions being Ānanda and Devadatta. While Ānanda does not immediately achieve arhatship because he needs to serve as the Buddha’s attendant, Devadatta achieves nothing for no reason. Devadatta has to rely on the private instruction of the Buddha to attain magical power, by means of which he later gains the social reputation as a great monk.³⁹¹

When the Buddha preached the Dharma, the six [princes] exhausted their *āsravas* and realized arhatship. Ānanda needed to attend to the Buddha and did not extinguish his *āsravas*. Only Devadatta one person achieved nothing ...

At that moment, the Blessed One and many venerable *śrāvakas* received the invitation from the dragon king of the Anavatapta lake. Devadatta was not able to go because he did not acquire magical power. He felt more and more ashamed, whereupon he had the following thought: “Now, I should inquire about the path to practicing magical power.” After that, he approached the Buddha and spoke: “May the Buddha instruct me on the path to [obtaining] magical power.” The Buddha thus instructed him. Having received the teaching, Devadatta acquired the magical power within the summer retreat. After attaining the magical power, he had the ensuing thought: “Whom should I convert first?” He then thought: “King Bimbisāra has a prince named Zhongle 眾樂 (**Vāraruci*; the alias of Ajātaśatru).³⁹² If I convert him first, then other people will come to follow my instruction.”

In this Mahīśāsaka story, Devadatta’s motivation to acquire magical power, from the very beginning, is closely associated with his desire for more worldly profits: He feels humiliated when he cannot join other members of the monastic community in the dragon king’s feast because he does not possess the magical power needed to reach the destination. It is no wonder that his first thought after attaining magical power is to find influential people to

³⁹¹ T. 1421 (XXII) 17b14–c21: 說是法時，六人漏盡，得阿羅漢。阿難侍佛，不盡諸漏。調達一人，空無所獲 ... 於是，世尊與諸大德聲聞，受阿耨達龍王請。調達未得神通，不能得去，羞恥益深，便作是念：“我今當問修神通道。”便往白佛：“願佛為我說修通法。”佛即為說，調達受學，安居之中，便獲神通。獲神通已，作是思惟：“誰應先化？”復作是念：“瓶沙王太子名曰眾樂，先化導之，然後餘人乃從我教。”

³⁹² For a detailed analysis of the name *Zhongle* (“a multitude of delights”) and its possible Sanskrit form *vāraruci*, see Radich 2011: 154.

convert. Evidently, the text here does not regard Devadatta as a respectable saint but treats his magical achievement as a manifestation of his impure intentions.

The Mūlasarvāstivāda version of Devadatta's accomplishment is similar to that of the Mahīśāsaka tradition. Devadatta achieved nothing at first, but then managed to persuade Daśabalakāśyapa to teach him magical power:³⁹³

The Buddha dwelled in Rājagrha, in the Bamboo Grove, at Squirrel Feeding Place. The five hundred monks who surrounded the Blessed One were all arhats. Only Devadatta had not yet attained any fruition of sacredness. At that moment, there was a famine in the country. The people had no food, and it was difficult to beg for alms. In the monastic community, the monks with magical power then rose into the air. Some of them landed in the forests of Jambudvīpa. They picked up delicious fruits from Jambudvīpa, filled up their begging bowls, and returned to the original place to make offerings to the four communities and also to satiate themselves. Some monks employed their magical power to go to the Four Heavenly Kings' places, or to the Thirty-three Heavens. They took delicate drinks and food prepared in the heavenly kitchens and filled up their begging bowls, [repeating the full description in the preceding part.]³⁹⁴

Having seen that those monks possess such magical power to pick up various fruits and food, Devadatta generated the following thought: "There is a famine in this country. The people have no food, [repeating the full description in the preceding part, up to the sentence that] even to the Thirty-three Heavens. They take delicate drinks and food that is prepared in the heavenly kitchens. The four communities have sufficient [supplies], and they themselves also get satiated. If I possessed magical power, I could also rise into the air, land in the forests in Jambudvīpa, and pick up delicious fruits from Jambudvīpa and fill up my begging

³⁹³ T. 1450 (XXIV) 167c26–168b28. Cf. also Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 68–70 and D. 1, 'dul ba, nga, 170b4–171a4.

³⁹⁴ 佛在王舍城竹林迦蘭鐸迦園 (*veṇuvane kalandakanivāpe*) 中，有五百苾芻圍遶世尊，皆是阿羅漢，唯提婆達多未得聖果。爾時國土飢荒，人民無食，乞求難得。眾中有神通苾芻，即騰虛空。或下贍部林中，取香美贍部之菓 (*jambupeśinām*)，滿鉢充足 (*pātrapūram*)，還至本處*，供養四眾，自亦飽足。或有苾芻以神通力，往四天王所 (*cāturmahārājakan*)，或往三十三天中，取天厨精妙飲食，滿鉢充足，乃至廣說如前。

*還至本處: the Sanskrit version does not contain its parallel sentence.

bowl. I could also make offerings to the four communities and satiate myself, [repeating the full description in the preceding part, up to the part sentence] even to the Thirty-three Heavens. I could also take drinks and meals prepared in heavenly kitchens. The four communities would have sufficient [supplies] and I myself would also get satiated. Who could grant me the power, making me able to see the sacred path, by means of whose instructive power I can attain magical power?”³⁹⁵

Having generated such a thought, he rose up from his seat and approached the Buddha. Having adored the Buddha’s feet with his head, Devadatta stood to one side and spoke to the Blessed One: “May (the Buddha) take pity on me, instruct me in the sacred path, and let me attain magical power.” At that moment, the Buddha knew that Devadatta had already generated a mind liable to commit *ānantarya* crimes, and spoke to him thus: “Fix your mind diligently on advanced morality (*adhiṣṭā*). Then, you will attain magical power. Furthermore, fix your mind on advanced mentality (*adhicitta*) and advanced wisdom (*adhiprajñā*) and practice them diligently. You will then attain magical power and acquire other teachings.”

At the time Devadatta heard these words, he thought: “The Blessed One refuses to instruct me in the path to magical power.”³⁹⁶ Upon this thought, he rose from the seat and approached the venerable Ājñātakaṇḍinya. Having arrived, he asked Ājñātakaṇḍinya: “Elder! May you take pity on me, instruct me in the sacred path, and let me obtain magical power.” At that moment, Ājñātakaṇḍinya perceived the Buddha’s intention and realized that Devadatta had already generated a mind liable to commit *ānantarya* crimes. Having perceived thus, he spoke to Devadatta: “Fix your mind diligently on the advanced form (*rūpa*). Then, you will

³⁹⁵ 爾時提婆達多，見諸苾芻有如此神通取諸菓食，作如是念：“此國土飢荒，人民無食等，廣說如前，乃至三十三天，取天厨飲食，四眾充足，自亦飽足。我若有神通，即騰虛空，下贍部林中，取香美贍部果，滿鉢充足，我亦供養四眾，自亦飽足，廣說如前，乃至三十三天，取天厨飲食，四眾充足，自亦飽足。誰有與我力，得見聖道，依彼教力，我得神通？”

³⁹⁶ 作是念已，從坐而起，往詣佛所，頂禮佛足，而立一面。提婆達多白世尊曰：“唯願慈悲，教我聖道，令得神通。”爾時世尊知提婆達多起罪逆心已，告提婆達多：“*汝應受增戒中勤心修習，即得神通。乃至增心增智，應受心中，當勤修習，即得神通，及得餘法。”

*汝應受增戒中 ... 即得神通，及得餘法：Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 69: *adhiṣṭe tvam gautama yoniṣo manasi kuru, rddhiṣca te bhaviṣyati, anyac ca; adhicitte adhiprajñe tvam gautama yoniṣo manasi kuru; rddhiṣca te bhaviṣyati, anyac ca.*

Adhicitte: SWTF. s.v. *adhicitta*, 2 “höheres Denken/Geisteszustand/ Konzentration.”

obtain magical power and acquire other teachings.” Upon hearing these words, Devadatta thought thus: “This elder refuses to instruct me in the path to magical power.”³⁹⁷

Then, he went to Aśvajit, to Bhadrīka, to Vāṣpa, to Mahānāma, to Pūrṇa, to Vimāla, to Gavāmpati, to Subāhu, to each one of the five hundred elders. Upon his arrival, he spoke: “Elder! May you take pity on me, instruct me in the sacred path, and let me acquire magical power.” At that moment, Subāhu and the other monks all perceived the Buddha’s intention and realized that Devadatta had already generated a mind liable to commit *ānantarya* crimes. Having perceived thus, they spoke to Devadatta: “Fix your mind diligently on *rūpa*. Then, you can acquire magical power and obtain other teachings. Furthermore, enhance your cognition of sensation, ideation, volition, and awareness, and fix your mind diligently on them. Then you can obtain magical power and other teachings.” When Devadatta heard this, he had the following thought: “The five hundred elders also refuse to instruct me in the sacred path to magical power. The five hundred elders seem to have already conferred with the Blessed One and are not allowed to instruct me in the sacred path. Why do I see myself being refused by the Buddha and the five hundred elders the instruction of the sacred path to magical power?”³⁹⁸

Again, he thought: “In this case, is there anyone who can instruct me in the sacred path to magical power? Daśabalakāśyapa is now dwelling in the Śeṇika/Śreṇika Cave in Rājagrha. I should go to his place. Elder Daśabalakāśyapa, who is straightforward without trickery and the preceptor of my brother Ānanda,

³⁹⁷ 時提婆達多聞此語已，作如是念：“世尊不肯教我神通法道。”作是念已，從座而起，往詣具壽阿若憍陳如所。到已，問阿若憍陳如曰：“上座！唯願慈悲，教我聖道，令得神通。”爾時阿若憍陳如觀佛，知提婆達多起罪逆心。觀已，告提婆達多曰：“汝應*增色，心中勤習，即得神通，及得餘法。”提婆達多聞此語已，作如是念：“此上座亦不肯教我神通法道。”*增色：The Sanskrit parallel only reads *rūpa* without *adhi* (Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 69).

³⁹⁸ 即往詣馬勝、賢子、禪氣、大名、圓滿、無垢、牛王眼、妙臂乃至五百上座邊去，到已問曰：“上座慈悲，教我聖道，令得神通。”爾時妙臂等五百苾芻，咸觀佛意，知提婆達多起罪逆心。觀已，告提婆達多曰：“汝應增色，心中勤習，即得神通，及得餘法，*乃至受想行識。汝應增意，心中勤習，即得神通，及諸餘法。”時提婆達多，聞此語已，作如是念：“此五百上座等，亦不肯教我聖道神通，欲似此五百上座，先共世尊平章，不許教我聖道。何以故今*見佛等五百上座不肯教聖道神通？”

*乃至受想行識，汝應增意，心中勤習，即得神通，及諸餘法：Gnoli 1977–1978: ii. 69: *vedanāsamjñāsamskāraṇ vijñānaṃ tvam devadatta yoniśo manasi kuru, rddhi rddhiśca te bhaviṣyati, anyac ca.*

can teach me the sacred path to magical power.” Having generated this thought, Devadatta immediately approached Daśabalakāśyapa. He worshiped the feet of Daśabalakāśyapa with his head and stood to one side. He spoke thus: “Elder Daśabalakāśyapa! May you instruct me in the sacred path to magical power out of compassion.” At that moment, Daśabalakāśyapa did not perceive the intention of the Buddha and the five hundred elders. Nor did he realize that Devadatta had generated the very mind liable to commit *ānantarya* crimes. Because he did not perceive, he instructed Devadatta in the sacred path to magical power.³⁹⁹

At that moment, from dusk till dawn, Devadatta kept cultivating his wholesome *karmas*. Relying on [the practice of] the first stage of meditation (*prathamam dhyānaṃ nīṣṛitya*), he acquired magical power. By means of magical power, he transformed his one body into several bodies and later united these several bodies into one. He sometimes appeared and sometimes disappeared. By the power of his comprehension and vision (*jñāna-darśana*), he made such manifestations. Again, he passed through rocks and walls without obstruction, as if passing through the air. He sank into the earth just as into the water. He crossed his legs and sat in the air as if on the ground. He sometimes rose up into the air just like a flying bird. He sometimes stood on the ground and touched the sun and the moon with his hands.⁴⁰⁰

An interesting story about Devadatta’s mastery of magical power is presented here. Just as we read in the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, the yearning for material profit motivates Devadatta to pursue magical power: after beholding how monks collect alms through magical power, Devadatta views magical power as a convenient way to indulge his craving for alms. However, his real intention has already been perceived by the Buddha, who, together with

³⁹⁹ 復念：“如是何有能教我聖道神通？當時十力迦攝波，在王舍城先尼迦窟中，我詣彼處。彼上座直心無諂，及我弟阿難陀親教，彼十力上座能教我聖道神通。”提婆達多念已，即往詣十力迦攝所，頂禮雙足，於一邊立，作如是語：“上座十力迦攝慈悲，教我聖道神通。”爾時十力迦葉，不觀佛意及五百上座聖眾意，亦不知提婆達多發生如是逆心。以不觀故，即教提婆達多聖道神通。

⁴⁰⁰ 是時提婆達多，於初夜後夜，*修習善業而住，依止初禪，得獲神通。即以神力，一身變作多身，多身合為一身，或現或隱。以智見力故，能如是現。復於山石牆壁，通過無礙，如於虛空；於大地出沒，猶如水中；在於虛空中，結跏趺坐，猶如在地；或騰虛空，猶如飛鳥；或在地，手捫日月。

*修習善業而住：The Sanskrit version reads rather (*Devadattena*) *jāgarikāyogam amuyuktena viharatā* (“staying devoted to the practice of wakefulness”). The practice of staying awake during night is a cultivation frequently mentioned on the stage of *śrāvabhūmi* in the *Yogācārabhūmi* (cf. Abe 2004).

his five hundred major disciples, refuses to impart the knowledge of magical power to Devadatta. Nevertheless, Devadatta finally manages to receive instruction from Ānanda's preceptor, Daśabalakāśyapa, who is a naive monk and therefore fails to perceive Devadatta's depravity. Later, through industrious practices, Devadatta masters magical power and becomes an influential monk with a high social reputation, fulfilling the condition for instigating a legal schism. In this Mūlasarvāstivāda story, Devadatta's intention to acquire magical power manifests precisely his greedy nature.

The connection between Devadatta's magical power and his evil nature is also highlighted in other (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda texts.⁴⁰¹ All of these Sarvāstivāda stories

⁴⁰¹ For instance, T. 100 (II) 374b9–c10; T. 212 (IV) 687b11–687c23; T. 1435 (XXIII) 257a12–c16; T. 1464 (XXIV) 859a16–c19.

I only provide the story in the *Chuyao jing* and translate it into English: 後意轉轉退，漸生惡念，意望供養，深著世利。*往至世尊所，頭面禮足，在一面立，須臾退坐，前白佛言：“唯然世尊，願說神足之道，我聞此已當善修行。使我得神足已，遊至他方，處處教化。”爾時世尊告調達比丘曰：“汝今且置神足，何不學四非常：非常義、苦義、空義、無我之義？”是時，調達比丘便生此念：“如來所以不與我說神足義者，恐有勝已，耻在不如。”調達即捨如來，往至舍利弗所... 即便捨去，至大目犍連所..... 調達比丘內自思惟：“吾今在處處學神足道，人皆不肯教我。吾自有弟，名曰阿難，多聞博學，眾德具足，大慈四等，無所不覆，明古知今，三世通達，吾今當往，問神足道，設授我者，當善修行。”是時，調達便至尊者阿難所，語阿難曰：“吾聞卿善解神足之道，可與吾說，吾得神足已，遊至他方，處處教化。”是時，阿難便與說神足之道。調達聞已，在閑靜處，專心一意，以蠱入微，復從微起，還至於蠱，以心舉身，以身舉心，身心俱合，漸漸離地，初如胡麻，轉如胡桃，漸離於地，從地至床，從床至屋，從屋至空，在虛空中作十八變，涌沒自由，身上出火，身下出水，身下出火，身上出水，東出西沒，西出東沒，四方皆爾，或分身無數，還合為一。

*往至世尊所，頭面禮足，在一面立，須臾退坐，前白佛言：In Sanskrit, this phrase is commonly written as [...] *upasaṃkramya, bhagavataḥ pādaḥ śirasā vanditvā, ekānte niṣaṇṇāḥ | ekānte niṣaṇṇāḥ [...]* *bhagavantam idam avocan.*” (Gnoli 1977–1987: i. 5)

Later, Devadatta's resolution declined, and he gradually generated evil intentions. He became desirous of offerings and deeply attached to worldly benefits. He came to the Blessed One, venerated the Buddha's feet with his head, and stood to one side. Shortly after that, he retreated to sit. He started a speech with the Buddha, saying: “Please, Blessed One, may you impart the path of magical power to me! I will definitely practice diligently upon hearing it so that after I possess magical power, I can travel to other directions and edify people in various places.” At that moment, the Blessed One spoke to the *bhikṣu* Devadatta: “For this moment, you should put [the thought of obtaining] magical power aside. Why not learn the meaning of the four impermanences, namely, impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and non-self?” At that moment, the *bhikṣu* Devadatta thought thus: “The Tathāgata refuses me the teaching of supernatural powers, perhaps because he is afraid of being surpassed by me and feeling ashamed of not being as good [as me].” Devadatta then left the Tathāgata and approached Śāriputra ... He then left Śāriputra and went to the place of Maudgalyāyana ... the *bhikṣu* Devadatta thought to himself: “Today, I have gone to different places to learn the path of magical power. However, nobody is willing to teach me. I have a younger brother whose name is Ānanda. He is well-learned and has broad knowledge. He is fully endowed with various virtues. The four immeasurable states such as the great compassion have entirely occupied his [mind]. He has the knowledge of the past and the present and penetrates the world of the three times. I should go to ask for the path to magical power. If he teaches me, I will

consistently agree that Devadatta's mastery of magical power did not represent a glorious achievement; instead, magical attainment became the means by which Devadatta satiated his unjustified craving for worldly fame and benefits.

In sum, we see a cross-school tendency to limit Devadatta's early achievement to the mastery of magical power and associate his early accomplishment with his corrupt intention of winning more profit. These stories are less concerned with whether or not the legal requirements for being a schismatic are fulfilled. Instead, they attempt to provoke a polemic against Devadatta, depicting him as an evil person throughout his religious career. The schismatic rulings in the Vinayas, although probably serving as the initial context for the composition of the Devadatta stories, gradually fade away in the newly developed Devadatta stories.

4.1.2.2 Winning Ajātaśatru's patronage through magical transformations and choking down Ajātaśatru's saliva

The connection between Devadatta's mastery of magical power and his evil nature is further reinforced in the story about his intimacy with Ajātaśatru. As we have read in the above stories, after Devadatta masters magical skills, his next step is to win the patronage of Ajātaśatru by magical transformations. In the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, the process of how Devadatta tries to awe the prince is narrated in detail:⁴⁰²

diligently practice it.” At that time, Devadatta went to the place of the venerable Ānanda and spoke to Ānanda: “I hear that you understand quite well the path to magical power. Please instruct me in it. After I master supernatural powers, I can travel to other regions to edify people in various places.” At that moment, Ānanda imparted the path to magical power to Devadatta. Having heard it, Devadatta, [selecting] a secluded place, concentrated his mind with only one resolve. His (contemplation) started from coarse matters and then proceeded to subtle matters. Later, from subtle matters, he returned to the coarse matters. He lifted his body with his mind, and lifted his mind with his body. Unifying his body and his mind, he gradually left the ground. At first, the distance (to the ground) was only about the size of a sesame seed, and then the size of a walnut. Slowly, he lifted himself above the ground and traveled from the ground to the bed, then from the bed to the roof, even from the roof to the sky. He made eighteen kinds of transformation in the sky. He became visible and invisible by will. He generated fire from his upper body and water from his lower body. He also generated fire from his lower body and water from his upper body. He appeared in the east and disappeared in the west. He appeared in the west and disappeared in the east. In the same way, he (appeared and disappeared) in the four directions. He was able to split his body into multiple bodies and then unify them into one body.

⁴⁰² T. 1421 (XXII) 17c21–18a2: 作是念已，即於網林下沒，在太子床上現，作小兒嚙指仰臥。太子見之，即大惶怖，問言：“汝為是天？為是鬼神？”答言：“我是調達，勿恐，勿怖！”太子語言：“若是調達，復汝本形。”即自變復威儀如本。太子歡喜，而師事之，日出問訊，乘五百乘車。調達復化作五百小兒，在於車上仰臥嚙指。復以五百乘車，載上美食，種種餽饈，而供養之。時諸國人*生希有心，

Upon this thought, he disappeared from the Banyan Grove (*Wanglin* 網林)⁴⁰³ and appeared on the prince's bed in the form of a young boy who lay down on his back and sucked his fingers. The prince became terribly frightened after seeing him, and asked: "Are you a god? A demon?" Devadatta answered: "I'm Devadatta. No scare! No fright!" The prince spoke: "If you are Devadatta, please restore yourself to your original form." Thereupon, Devadatta transformed back to his usual dignified deportment. The prince became joyful and venerated him as a master. He sent regards to Devadatta at sunrise and rode with five hundred chariots. Devadatta then transformed himself into five hundred young boys who lay down on their backs, sucking their fingers in the chariots. The prince then ordered that [people] load delicious food and various refined meals into five hundred chariots, as offerings to him. At that moment, all the citizens were overcome with a rare state of [respectful] mind and spoke thus: "Devadatta indeed possesses great magical power. He can produce such transformations, making the prince send regards at sunrise and offer him various delicious food." Therefore, Devadatta overestimated his capability and wanted to attract [his own] followers and nurture them.

In this story, an unscrupulous, manipulative, and arrogant Devadatta is vividly presented. In order to win the patronage of Ajātaśatru, Devadatta assumes the form of a young boy who mysteriously appears on the bed of Ajātaśatru, sucking his fingers just like a normal baby. Having conducted a dialogue about the identity of this boy, which is an interesting point I will return below, Ajātaśatru is wholly convinced of Devadatta's superpower, paying Devadatta great respect and making a tremendous amount of offerings. Here, we can see Devadatta's strategy to convert Ajātaśatru is to frighten and intimidate him through magical transformations.

作是言：“調達有大神力，作此變化，使太子日出問訊，種種餽饈而以供養。”於是調達遂不自量，便欲招引畜養徒眾。

*生希有心: Skt *āścaryādbhutadharmāvarjitamatinā* (Gnoli 1977–1978: i. 190); *āvarjitamati* (ibid. ii. 99); *vismaya-jāta*, *vismayāvarjitamati* (SWTF s.v.).

⁴⁰³ *Wanglin* 網林 has a literal meaning of “net forest.” In the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts, the place where the Śākya princes went is named *Nyagrodhārāma*/尼拘陀園 (“the Bayan Grove”; Gnoli 1977–1978: i. 194, T. 1450 [XXIV] 145b15). The Chinese *Wanglin* (“the net forest”) is a vivid description of the banyan trees.

We read almost the same story and the same strategy of converting Ajātaśatru in the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya.⁴⁰⁴ There, Devadatta wields his magical power to show many supernatural transformations in front of Ajātaśatru, which include flying into the sky, revealing or hiding his body at will, and generating smoke or fire from his body. Then, he assumes the form of a young boy wearing decorations of gems and appears in the embrace of Ajātaśatru, sucking Ajātaśatru's finger. Awed by these magical transformations, Ajātaśatru, as the Vinaya puts it, has “his body hair standing on end” (身毛為豎), usually a reaction elicited by horror. The text then also proceeds to the dialogue about the identity of this boy. After intimidating the prince, Devadatta soothes the prince by appearing in his original body, and thus wins the patronage of Ajātaśatru.

In the Pāli version, the way Devadatta manifests himself in front of the prince is more intriguing: he assumes the form of a young boy clad in a girdle of snakes⁴⁰⁵ and appears in the lap of Prince Ajātaśatru (*ajātasattussa kumārassa ucchāṅge pāturahosi*). Ajātaśatru is therefore frightened (*bhīta*) and asks who this mysterious boy is. Having witnessed how Devadatta resumes his monastic form, Ajātaśatru becomes devoutly faithful to Devadatta and provides him with great royal patronage, which then exacerbates Devadatta's corruption.⁴⁰⁶

One recurrent detail in the three versions is worth noting: Devadatta is consistently said to magically appear as a young boy to frighten Ajātaśatru. However, compared to the other two versions of this story, the Pāli version is noteworthy in adding the detail that Devadatta, in the form of the young boy, is decorated with snakes, which naturally reminds us of Śiva, the most famous god associated with snakes in the Indian pantheon. In reading this unusual episode, I harbored some doubts as to what motivated this detail or what it signifies in the

⁴⁰⁴ T. 1428 (XXII) 592a9–18: 爾時提婆達往至太子阿闍世所，以神通力飛在空中，或現身說法，或隱身說法，或現半身說法，或不現半身說法，或身出煙，或身出火，或變身作嬰孩，身著瓔珞，在太子抱上，轉側軟太子指。時太子阿闍世見此變，恐懼身毛為豎。時提婆達知太子恐懼，即語言：“勿懷恐懼！勿懷恐懼！”太子問曰：“汝是何人？”答言：“我是提婆達。”太子言：“汝實是提婆達者，還復汝身。”尋復其身。見已，即增信樂，既信樂已，更增所供養。

⁴⁰⁵ Vin. ii. 184 = Eng. Horner 1938–1952: V. 260: *sakavaṇṇaṃ paṭisaṃharitvā kumārakavaṇṇaṃ abhinimminivā ahimekhalikāya*. The *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* offers a more detailed account of how Devadatta clad himself in snakes: he put four snakes on his hands and feet, placed one snake around his neck, coiled one snake around his head as a cushion, and placed one snake on his shoulder (Dhp-A. i. 139 = Eng. Burlingame 1921: I. 235).

⁴⁰⁶ Vin. ii. 184 = Eng. Horner 1938–1952: V. 260.

composition of this particular story and, moreover, why Devadatta must appear in all these Vinaya versions as a young boy, not a demon or beast that could have been more physically frightening. A further intertextual, cross-religious examination can give us some hints.

We find an episode about Śiva that contains remarkably similar details in the *Droṇaparva*, the seventh book of the *Mahābhārata*.⁴⁰⁷ Here, Śiva appears with a snake as his sacrificial thread (*nāgayajñopavīṭiṃ*, Mbh. vii. 172, 60a); later, after he destroys the triple city of the *asuras*, he transforms himself into a young boy with five tufts of hair (*pañcaśikha*), sitting on the lap of the goddess Pārvatī (*bālam aṅkagatam*, Mbh. vii. 173, 59a). Pārvatī fails to recognize Śiva and therefore inquires as to who on earth this boy is (*umā jijñāsamānā vai ko yam ity abravīt*, Mbh. vii. 173, 59c). This boy, despite his young age, could be really frightening: The god Śakra intends to throw a thunderbolt (*vajra*) at the boy, but the boy paralyzes Śakra's arms first. Frightened gods report the incident to Brahmā, who realizes that the boy is none other than Mahādeva (another name of Śiva), the supreme lord of the universe.⁴⁰⁸ In fact, the theme of Śiva's transformation as a little boy is an ancient topic traced back to the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*. According to Hans Bakker's research,⁴⁰⁹ in this proto-version, Śiva is the grandson begotten by Prajāpati and demands eight names. When this story was developed into a new version in the *Purāṇapañcalakṣaṇa*, Mahādeva creates a boy identical to himself (*ātmanas tulyaṃ sutam*), who is sitting in the lap of Brahmā and cries for eight names, the action of which is interpreted as the personification of "Śiva's cosmic dimension encompassing the entire phenomenal universe."⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁷ Simson 2003: 627. When discovering such noticeable similarities between the two stories, Simson argues that the story of Devadatta appearing as a young boy to frighten Ajātaśatru may have been inspired by the aforementioned Śiva scene in the *Mahābhārata*. Simson therein attempts to demonstrate that Indian legends contain many parallel dichotomies which are deeply rooted in the traditional Indian worldview: on the one side of the dichotomy, there are the Buddha, Brahmā, and the hero Bhīṣma in the *Mahābhārata*, which can be related to the qualities such as seniority, authority, orthodoxy, stability, and the teaching of wisdom, and so forth; and on the other side, there stand Devadatta, Śiva, and the hero Karṇa in the *Mahābhārata*, which are associated with the qualities such as newness, rebellion, rivalry, violence, the practice of *tapas* (asceticism), etc.

⁴⁰⁸ Mbh. vii. 172–173.

⁴⁰⁹ Bakker 1996: 5–43, esp. 6–7, 9–10.

⁴¹⁰ Bakker 1996: 9–10: "Thereupon the 'blue-red' boy requested Brahmā to bestow a domain (*sthāna*) or body (*tanu*) to each name, which resulted in the following combinations: Rudra obtained the sun, Bhava the waters, Śarva earth, Īsana wind, Paśupati fire, Bhīma *ākāśa*, Ugra the initiated brahmin, and Mahādeva the moon. In this way the divine, primordial child in Brahmā's lap was made to personify Śiva's cosmic dimension, his eight embodiments (*aṣṭamūrti*), encompassing the entire phenomenal universe."

We can readily see the remarkable resemblance between the episodes of Devadatta and Śiva: (1). they both assume the form of a young boy sitting on the lap of an adult; (2). snakes appear as the decoration of both figures, and in the *Chuyao jing*'s version of the Devadatta episode—on which I will elaborate soon—Devadatta even similarly wears five topknots (頭上五處);⁴¹¹ (3). when they both appear as young boys, they still frighten people, convincing people of their great power; (4). and finally, a conversation about the identity of the young boy takes place in both cases.

There is indeed another resemblance between Devadatta and Rudra/Śiva—that is, they are both excluded from *bhāgas* (shares). In the case of Devadatta, after he becomes notorious for his evil deeds, he receives no alms. There is also a well-known episode in which Devadatta and his followers beg for alms in a group, but are later criticized by the Buddha, who issues an order prohibiting monks from group begging. Devadatta believes the Buddha's order is meant to exclude him from a share of alms and to cut off his material support and therefore becomes irritated.⁴¹² In the case of Rudra/Śiva, it is well known that Śiva initiates his retaliation against the other gods after being excluded from a share of the sacrifice.⁴¹³

As we can see, the close resemblance between Devadatta's transformation into a young boy and Śiva's transformation into a young boy can hardly be mere coincidence: in both cases, the incarnation into a young child does not function as a way to solicit love (which is usually the case in other stories of the motif "children sitting in parent's lap" as I will discuss below) but to show their great power and intimidate people. Since only the Śiva myth gives the story of a "frightening boy" a logically and ideologically self-sufficient explanation, I believe the Devadatta story here borrowed or at least was inspired by, the above Śiva's myth. This direction of borrowing is more evident in the Pāli version where Devadatta as a snake-

⁴¹¹ T. 212 (IV) 687c25: 是時，調達復作是念：“吾今已得神足，石壁皆過，無所罣礙。吾今寧可化作嬰孩小兒，形貌端正，頭上五處，面如桃華，在阿闍世太子膝上，或笑或號，現嬰兒能。At that moment, Devadatta again thought to himself: “Now, I have attained supernormal power. I can pass through a stone wall without obstruction. Now, I would rather transform myself into a young child.” (The boy he transformed into) had a pleasant appearance, five (topknots) on his head, and his face was (as ruddy) as a peach blossom. Then, he sat in the lap of the prince Ajātaśatru, and smiled for some time and cried for some time, displaying young children's talent.”

⁴¹² T. 1428 (XXII) 594a5–22.

⁴¹³ Cf. Bisschop 2009, especially the section “Śiva in the Two Epics”; Bakker 1996: 7–8.

wearer bears an explicit similarity to the image of Śīva.⁴¹⁴ We can imagine that when the Theravaṃsa editors included this passage in the Vinaya, they already realized the connection between the episode of Śīva and that of Devadatta as the young boy sitting on the lap of Ajātaśatru, and consequently, deliberately added the detail of Devadatta clad with snakes.

However, I am by no means proposing that Devadatta was created under the influence of Śīva. After all, the figure of Devadatta was created quite early in Buddhist literature and has an independent personality. I just attempt to demonstrate the possibility that in the development of the Devadatta narrative, some Buddhists came to realize the similarity between Devadatta and Śīva: Devadatta as the proponent of asceticism and destroyer of the unified *saṅgha* reminded them of the god Śīva. Inspired by such resemblance, Buddhists possibly borrowed the Śīva story and transformed it into a Devadatta story.⁴¹⁵

I now return to the topic of Devadatta's conversion of Ajātaśatru. Compared to the above three Vinaya versions, namely, the Mahīśāsaka, Dharmaguptaka and Pāli Vinayas, the (Mūla)Sārvāstivāda schools adopt a different story. Here, although Devadatta is still reported to magically transform his body into that of an elephant, a horse, a monk, and even a young boy,⁴¹⁶ his strategy is not to frighten Ajātaśatru but to fawn on him. In the meantime, the image of Ajātaśatru also shifts from that of a frightened prince to a curious prince, who shows great fondness toward this boy.⁴¹⁷ The shift in the interplay between Devadatta and Ajātaśatru has already been noted by Lamotte,⁴¹⁸ who further calls our attention to a remarkable detail in this version of the story—Ajātaśatru kisses the boy and has his saliva flowing into Devadatta's mouth. As I demonstrate below, this detail is subject to diverse

⁴¹⁴ However, this hypothesis is not without its problems: after all, as a careful reader may notice, this Śīva story appears abruptly and fits awkwardly into the narrative context of the *Mahābhārata*. According to a personal conversation with Prof. Peter Bisschop, the origin of this Śīva story is a mystery even to Śaiva scholars, as it does not reflect a typical Śīva cult and is rarely recorded in Śaiva literature.

⁴¹⁵ Interestingly, as Prof. Monika Zin mentioned to me in personal correspondence, in the only extant colored iconography of Devadatta, found in Kuča (Grünwedel 1920: Tafel XXVII; Kizil Cave No. 178, Asian Art Museum III 8725c. See the picture in the front cover of this dissertation), Devadatta has a blue body with red hair, which, in my eyes, is perhaps reminiscent of the image of Śīva in the aforementioned *Mahābhārata* story—*kumāro nīlalahitaḥ* (“blue-red boy”; cf. Bakker 1996: 6). However, we cannot draw any further conclusions about this.

⁴¹⁶ T. 1435 (XXIII) 257c4–12; T. 1442 (XXIII) 701a1–10, D. 3, '*dul ba, ca*, 289a4–b4; Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 70–71, D. 1, '*dul ba, nga*, 160a2–7, T. 1450 (XXIV) 168b28–c23.

⁴¹⁷ T. 100 (II) 374b9–c10; T. 1435 (XXIII) 257c12; T. 1442 (XXIII) 701a10, D. 3, '*dul ba, ca*, 289b2; T. 1545 (XXVII) 442a4–7.

⁴¹⁸ Lamotte 1997: 10.

interpretations in different (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda texts and bears considerable significance within the whole Devadatta narrative.

To start with, in the *Chuyao jing* of the Sarvāstivāda tradition, when Devadatta fashions himself as a handsome young boy with five topknots (頭上五處), sitting in the lap of the prince Ajātaśatru, the prince reacts as follows:⁴¹⁹

Nevertheless, Prince Ajātaśatru alone realized that [this boy] was Devadatta. (Ajātaśatru) played with him all day long and never got tired. Sometimes he kissed (Devadatta) while saliva trickling. Sometimes, he held (Devadatta) up, passing him from his left to his right hand. Then, Prince Ajātaśatru thought to himself: “The supernormal power of Devadatta is superior to that of *śramaṇa* Gautama. (Devadatta) can make numerous magical transformations.” At that moment, Ajātaśatru offered him five hundred cauldrons of food daily, and made offerings to Devadatta at any time, never letting offerings be deficient.

When Devadatta transforms himself into a handsome boy in front of Ajātaśatru, the prince, unlike in the above versions, immediately realizes that the boy is Devadatta, without any panic. The two persons develop an intimate relationship: Ajātaśatru places the boy in his lap⁴²⁰ and makes a series of affectionate actions, which include an ambiguous one described as *wu sou tuo* 嗚嗽唾 (literally “kissing, and coughing saliva”).⁴²¹ Although the context suggests that *wu sou tuo* 嗚嗽唾 here must denote something close to affection or fondness between the two figures, what we literally read, especially the part about “coughing saliva,” seems difficult to connect with the connotation of fondness. However, I will suggest below

⁴¹⁹ T. 212 (IV) 687c26–688a2: 然太子阿闍世獨知是調達身，終日翫弄，無有厭足，或嗚嗽唾，或擎身傳左右手中。時太子阿闍世內自思惟：“調達神足勝彼瞿曇沙門，能作無數變化。”時，阿闍世日給五百釜食，隨時供養，不令有乏。

⁴²⁰ It is a common intimate scene among Indian texts that one places a boy in one’s lap to kiss him. *Vātsyāyāna*’s famous *Kāmasūtra* describes a situation when two lovers had no opportunity to touch each other, but they could find a child, place him in their laps, and each kiss and embrace him; then, the child could transfer kisses between the two lovers. Shastri 1964: 3.3.28: *bālasayānka-gatasayāliṅganam cumbanam ca karoti*. Also see Doniger & Kakar 2002: 45n.29, 85.

⁴²¹ In Buddhist texts, we have other cases in which *wu* 嗚 connotes kissing. For instance, “於大眾前抱捉此女，而嗚啞之共為欲事” (*Da zhuangyan lun jing* 大莊嚴論經 T. 201 [IV] 285a7); “有比丘為母抱捉鳴說邪語，是比丘失精” (T. 1435 [XXIII] 443a2).

that the term *wu sou tuo* 嗚啾唾, as a whole, describes the action of kissing, especially when it involves overly affectionate kisses, which sometimes leads to the trickling of saliva.

Long ago, Hopkins (1907) has already noticed that sniffing ($\sqrt{ghrā}$, e.g., Mbh. 13. 105. 58b) and licking (\sqrt{lih} , e.g., J. 93)—an action that inevitably involves saliva—were ancient forms of kissing among ancient Indians to convey affection. The *Mahābhārata* still preserves many scenes of parents sniffing children who climbed to their laps, sometimes at the face (“*vaktram upāghrāya*”), and sometimes at the head (Hopkins 1907: 131). In the relatively ancient layer of the *Dharmaśāstras*, there appears an expression “to drink the moisture of lips” to denote the intimacy between people (ibid. 123). Moreover, as Wilkens has demonstrated (2015: 260–265), licking is also a popular expression of love in Central Asian Buddhist texts. Quoting texts in the languages of Old Uighur, Tocharian, Sogdian, and Khotanese, he argues that the act of licking, not clearly distinguished from kissing, is commonly used to indicate a tender feeling (*Liebkost*) or even veneration.⁴²² One example given by Wilkens, which is quite pertinent to my discussion, is contained in the Tocharian *Araṇemi-jātaka*. There, we can find a scene closely resembling the episode occurring between Ajātaśatru and Devadatta: there, King Araṇemi, just like Ajātaśatru, placed his son Prince Uatta in his lap and “licked” him with his tongue to express his love: “... ergriffen habend, setzt er ihn auf seine Knie [und] begann, [sein] gesichtchen mit der Zunge zu küssen” (Schmidt 2001: 312). In this scene and in Devadatta’s case as well, the occurrence of saliva is expected, but it does not convey anything contemptuous, as our modern etiquette often regards it. Therefore, it is highly possible that saliva, in the Devadatta scene above, expresses intimacy instead of contempt, and *wu sou tuo* 嗚啾唾, the act that occurs between Ajātaśatru and Devadatta, is a figurative expression for a tender kiss.

The same depiction of the Ajātaśatru’s intimacy with Devadatta, in which saliva also functions as an indication of fondness, is further found in the *Shisong lü*: “the prince kissed and embraced him, played around with him, and spat saliva into his mouth” (“太子嗚抱共

⁴²² Wilkens 2015: 260–261: “Die in den indigenen Sprachen Zentralasiens überlieferte buddhistische literatur weist viele gemeinsamkeiten hinsichtlich der Metaphorik und Phrasologie der texte, aber auch einige inhaltliche Übereinstimmungen auf. Im Folgenden soll ein Beispiel dieser engen Beziehungen zwischen der altuigurischen, der tocharischen und der khotansakischen Literatur aufgezeigt werden. Mir war bei der textbearbeitung der altuigurischen DKPaM bald aufgefallen, dass zwei Stellen auf eine charakteristische Geste der Liebkosung verweisen, nämlich dass anstelle von ‘küssen’ (altuig. *öp-*) die Rede von ‘lecken’ (altuig. *yalga-*) ist.”

戲，唾其口中，” T. 1435 [XXIII] 257c11–12). However, compared to the picture in the *Chuyao jing*, where kissing and trickling of saliva are mentioned together as an integral action, the text here separates saliva from the action of kissing and makes it occur independently. As far as I can perceive, the sense of spitting saliva as a real and concrete action seems to be stronger here.

When the same scene is described in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, the whole picture is altered in a more obvious way. Far from indicating intimacy, saliva bears the connotations of defilement, pollution, and contamination.⁴²³ Devadatta is also shifted to a fawning person who intentionally swallows Ajātaśatru’s saliva for the sake of patronage:⁴²⁴

At that moment, Devadatta transformed himself into the form of a magnificent elephant, who entered the back gate of the prince’s (palace) in a composed state and stepped out from the front entrance. He (again) entered the front gate and left through the back gate. He sometimes assumed the form of an excellent horse, entering and leaving (the palace) in the same manner. He sometimes showed himself as a *bhikṣu* with tonsured beard and hair, who wore a monastic robe, held an alms bowl in his hand, and entered and left (the palace) in the same way. At that time, the prince Ajātaśatru thought: “It must be Devadatta making a magical transformation.” Devadatta immediately fashioned himself as a young boy with various jewelry garlands as decoration. He entered the prince’s embrace and turned around and around in the arms of the prince. At that moment, the prince caught the boy, embraced him, kissed him and spat saliva into his mouth. Then, because his mind was occupied with greed for benefits and donations, Devadatta finally choked down the saliva. Then, the prince thereby had an evil idea, thinking: “Wonderful! Devadatta’s virtue is superior to that of the Buddha, the great teacher!”

⁴²³ This is particularly true in the case of *samsargaduṣṭa* (food that is defiled). Food containing other people’s saliva is considered to be defiled and cannot be offered to deities, ancestors, or family members. C.f. Kane 1941: 771.

⁴²⁴ T. 1442 (XXIII) 701a1–12, D. 3, *’dul ba, ca*, 289a4–b4: 時提婆達多，即便化作上妙象身，從太子後門安詳而入，從前大門出；從前大門入，從後門出；或作上馬，同前出入；或作苾芻，剃除鬚髮，披僧伽胝，手中持鉢，同前出入。時未生怨太子作如是念：“此是提婆達多現神變事。”時提婆達多遂即變身為童兒形，具諸瓔珞，便向太子懷中，宛轉而住。是時太子遂捉童兒，抱持嗚啞，便以洩唾內其口中。時提婆達多，為貪利養纏繞心故，遂咽其唾。是時太子因斯發起惡邪之心，作如是念：“奇哉！提婆達多比佛大師其德殊勝。”

The added detail in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya is striking: after Ajātaśatru intentionally spits saliva into Devadatta’s mouth, Devadatta chokes it down out of a craving for benefits (“時提婆達多，為貪利養，纏繞心故，遂咽其唾”). The same narration is also adopted by some other texts, for instance, the *Bieyi Za ahan jing* (T. 100)⁴²⁵ and the *Fo benxing jing* (T. 193, a text composed in verse which resembles the *Buddhacarita*).⁴²⁶ With the understanding that the swallowing of other people’s saliva is a disgusting act, those texts use this detail to demonstrate the depths of Devadatta’s servitude.

Having compared the different versions of Devadatta’s conversion of Ajātaśatru, we see that only the Sarvāstivāda texts, especially those belonging to the Mūlasarvāstivāda schools, accept the account of Devadatta winning Ajātaśatru’s patronage by means of fawning instead of intimidation. By adding the episode in which Ajātaśatru spits saliva into Devadatta’s mouth and Devadatta chokes it down, the (Mūla)Sarovāstivāda monks express the clear intention to depict Devadatta as a greedy person. However, as I demonstrate immediately below, the “saliva” plot has a function beyond that of a mere literary device for unleashing the contempt for Devadatta. It carries much more significance in the Sarvāstivādin ideological context.

In order to fully grasp the significance underlying Devadatta’s act of swallowing Ajātaśatru’s saliva, we need to associate it with another famous episode, in which Śākyamuni Buddha sternly reproves Devadatta as an “eater of saliva” (Pāli *kheḷāpaka*, Chn. *shi tuo zhe* 食唾者). As reported by every Vinaya, Devadatta, yearning for the leadership of the monastic community, demanded that Śākyamuni Buddha should retire and appoint him as the next leader. However, Śākyamuni Buddha refused him by saying thus:

“Devadatta! I would not even give the monastic community to Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. Why should I entrust it to you, corpse (*chava*), lickspittle (*kheḷāpaka*)?”⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ T. 100 (II) 374b17–18: 時，阿闍世抱取嗚啞，唾其口中。提婆達多貪利養故，即嚙其唾。

⁴²⁶ T. 193 (IV) 99c1–7: 每乘金寶車，光曜如天帝；將從狀如天，王趣出臨觀。若來入宮時，每現從空下；所食之御厨，吹五百燒器。在阿闍世膝，變已作嬰兒；現戲吮王唾，王意終不厭。

⁴²⁷ Vin. ii. 188: *Sāriputtamoggallānānam pi kho aham, devadatta, bhikkhusaṅgham na nissajjeyyam, kim pana tuyham chavassa kheḷāsakassā ti.*

We can feel Śākyamuni Buddha’s indignation after hearing Devadatta’s imprudent demand. Reacting in a surprisingly emotional way, Śākyamuni called Devadatta a “corpse” (*chava*) and an “eater of spittle” (*kheḷāpaka*). As Lamotte (1997: 11) observes with acumen, even though Devadatta well deserved such insults in the traditional understanding, Śākyamuni’s articulation of such a harsh rebuke greatly contradicted his consistent image as one with ultimate compassion and benevolence.⁴²⁸ For Buddhists, buddhas always speak truthfully

Regarding the meaning of *kheḷāpaka*, Lamotte (1997) argues that there are two different understandings, viz., “to eat saliva” (e.g. in the [Mūla]Sarvāstivāda Vinaya, and the Pāli traditions) and “to discharge something such as saliva” (e.g., according to Lamotte, in the Pāli exegetical tradition represented by Buddhaghosa’s works, the Mahīśāsaka and Dharmaguptaka Vinaya), with which I do not completely agree. Contrary to his conclusion, I argue that all traditions understand this term as “eating saliva” in an almost uniform way.

The terms used in the Sarvāstivāda and Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, namely, *dan tuo* 噉唾 (“eating saliva”) and *shi tuo zhe* 食唾者 (“the consumer of saliva”), contain clear meanings that need no extra explanation (T. 1435 [XXIII] 258b7; T. 1450 [XXIV] 169b25–6). In the case of the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya, most Chinese Tripiṭaka versions read *shi xian tuo* 食涎唾 (“eating trickling saliva”; cf. T. 1421 [XXII] 18b20; Korean Tripiṭaka K. 895 [XXII] 997a13; Jiaying Zang 嘉興藏 https://dzkings.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/utlib_kakouzou/116_1/0051). Only two Japanese versions (Shōgozō 聖語藏 and 宮内省圖書寮本 [Old Song edition in the Library of the Imperial Household Japan]) read *ru xian tuo* 如涎唾 (“like trickling saliva”), the example used by Lamotte (1997: 6).

The case in want of a more detailed explanation is that of the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya. In this text, Devadatta was called *ti tuo zhi shen* 涕唾之身 (T. 1428 [XXII] 592b13–14). Lamotte understands that this expression describes Devadatta as having “a body [made up] of tears and spittle” and regards this meaning as different from the Sarvāstivādin way understanding (i.e., “eating saliva”). However, I see that the Dharmaguptaka version shows no difference from the Sarvāstivāda tradition. In the story, Devadatta choked down the saliva of Ajātaśatru, and his body can then be understood as one containing other people’s saliva.

As for Buddhaghosa’s commentary, which Lamotte believes to describe Devadatta as “spittle to be discharged,” I still disagree. The text runs *kheḷāsako ’ti ettha mi chājīvena uppannapaccayā ariyehi vantabbā kheḷasadisā, tathārūpe paccaye ayaṃ ajjhoharati ’ti katvā kheḷāsako ti bhagavatā vutto* (Sp. vi. 1275). I translate it as follows:

As for “*kheḷāsaka*” here, the requisites procured by a wrong livelihood should be discharged by the noble ones like saliva; after he [Devadatta] had ingested such requisites (i.e. the saliva-like requisites), the Blessed One called [him] the “eater of saliva.”

In a figurative way, Buddhaghosa compared requisites gained by wrong livelihood to saliva, and associated the Buddha’s word with the story of Devadatta’s swallowing of saliva. Buddhaghosa contrasted Devadatta’s behavior with actions of noble people by saying that the noble people would vomit such *paccayā* like saliva, but Devadatta chose to accept it (i.e. to ingest the saliva). What we find here is still the sense that Devadatta was the one who swallowed saliva. Thus, I can discern only one tradition of understanding the term *kheḷāpaka*.

⁴²⁸ For instance, this paradox was already noticed in the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*. Bodhisattva Kāśyapa asks a similar question there: since Śākyamuni Buddha treats every being as equal to his biological son Rāhula, how could the Buddha insult Devadatta as a swallower of saliva, which even intensifies Devadatta’s malice toward the Buddha and the *saṅgha*? But this Mahāyāna text uses a different solution, as I will discuss later in §4.3. T. 374 (XII) 459a24–29 = T. 375 (XXII) 701b23–29: “若使等視一切眾生，同於子想如羅睺羅，何故復向提婆達多說如是言：‘癡人無羞，食人涕唾。’令彼聞已，生於瞋恨，起不善

(“*dhammaṃ yeva bhāsati no adhammaṃ*”; “*saccaṃ yeva bhāsati no alikaṃ*”), and pleasantly and agreeably (“*subhāsitaṃ yeva bhāsati no dubbhāsitaṃ*”; “*piyaṃ yeva bhāsati no appiyaṃ*”).⁴²⁹ It then becomes a paradox that Śākyamuni Buddha, who never spoke false and untrue words (e.g., “*na hi tathāgatā vitathaṃ bhaṇantī*” [DN. ii. 72], “如來所言，終不虛妄” (T. 1 [I] 11 a17–18), could assume the role of reviler. Sarvāstivāda monks found it a problem that must be remedied in the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā*.⁴³⁰

At that moment, Ajātaśatru showed affection for him, embraced him, and played with him. He (Ajātaśatru) kissed him and spat saliva into his mouth. Devadatta, due to his craving for benefits and offerings, swallowed the saliva. Therefore, the Buddha scolded him: “You are a corpse, a swallower of other people’s saliva!” At the moment he swallowed the saliva, his level of *dhyāna* declined.

In the Sarvāstivāda belief, since Śākyamuni never spoke false words, he called Devadatta an “eater of saliva” only because Devadatta indeed swallowed saliva. Therefore, by emphasizing Devadatta’s action of choking down Ajātaśatru’s saliva, the Sarvāstivāda monks successfully dissolved the paradox: Śākyamuni did not abuse Devadatta at all, but only reported what had in fact occurred.⁴³¹

Outside the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda traditions, many texts also consider Śākyamuni’s abusive words to Devadatta as a theological problem but offer different solutions. The

心，出佛身血。提婆達多造是惡已，如來復記，當墮地獄一劫受罪。世尊！如是之言云何於義不相違背？”

⁴²⁹ Sn. 78. See Lamotte 1997: 12n.27 for more references. Moreover, 33 parallel discussions in Buddhist scriptures are listed on the website <https://suttacentral.net/snp3.3/pli/ms> (accessed 02/19/2019).

⁴³⁰ T. 1545 (XXVII) 442a4–7: 時未生怨憐愛抱弄，鳴而復以唾置口中。提婆達多貪利養故，遂咽其唾。故佛曰：“汝是死屍、食人唾者！”彼咽唾時，便退靜慮。

A similar discussion can also be found at T. 1546 (XXVIII) 27c19–24: 如提婆達多，於定速疾，以神足力，自化己身，作太子像，於阿闍世王抱上，迴轉遊戲。復現相貌。令阿闍世王知是尊者提婆達多。當作太子像時，阿闍世王抱弄鳴之，唾其口中，貪利養故，即便咽之，是以世尊而語之言：“汝是死屍、食唾之人。”

⁴³¹ The same way of understanding Śākyamuni’s insulting words is also found in the *Da zhidu lun*. T. 1509 (XXV) 252b15–25: 佛語提婆達：“汝狂人、死人、噉唾人。”“狂人”者，以提婆達罪重，當入阿鼻地獄，故三種苦切語。“死人”者，似人而不能集諸善法故，亦以提婆達剃頭法服，似如聖人，內無慧命，故名死人。如死人種種莊嚴，轉轉爛壞，終不可令活。提婆達亦如是，佛日日種種教化，惡心轉劇，惡不善法，日日轉增，乃至作三逆罪，以是故，名為死人。“噉唾人”者，提婆達貪利養故，化作天身小兒，在阿闍世王抱中，王鳴其口與唾令噉，以是故，名噉唾人。

Majjhimanikāya includes a paragraph discussing the properness of Śākyamuni’s harsh words. In this text, the Jain master Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta instigated Prince Abhaya to challenge Śākyamuni by asking why Śākyamuni uttered insulting words toward Devadatta:⁴³²

(Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta said to the prince:) “However, if questioned thus by you, the recluse Gotama will answer: ‘Prince, a Tathāgata could not utter a speech that is disliked by others and disagreeable to them.’ Then, you should speak to him thus: ‘Venerable One! Why did you tell Devadatta—that Devadatta will be (reborn) in a miserable way! Devadatta will be (reborn) in the Niraya Hell! Devadatta will stay there for a *kalpa*! Devadatta is incurable!’—and thus Devadatta became angry and displeased with you for these words?”

In response to this sharp question, Śākyamuni answers Prince Abhaya with a metaphor:⁴³³ suppose a young boy gets a stick or a stone in his mouth (“*kaṭṭhaṃ vā kaṭṭhalam vā mukhe āhareyya*”); what should people do to save him? The prince answers that he would try hard to get the stick or stone out, even if it caused the boy to bleed (“*salohitam pi āhareyyaṃ*”), which was done out of compassion for the boy (“*atthi me bhante kumāre anukampā ti*”). Śākyamuni Buddha responds that the Buddha is doing exactly the same thing: “the Tathāgata knows the speech that is real, true and useful, even if it is disliked by other people or disagreeable to them; and in this regard, the Tathāgata knows the proper time to explain this speech. What is the reason? It is because the Tathāgata is compassionate toward all sentient beings (*yañca kho Tathāgato vācaṃ jānāti bhūtaṃ tacchaṃ atthasamhitam, sā ca paresaṃ appiyā amanāpā, tatra kālaññū Tathāgato hoti tassā vācāya veyyakaraṇāya. Taṃ kissa hetu: atthi rājakumāra Tathāgatassa sattesu anukampā ti*”). Unlike the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā* which takes Śākyamuni’s words as a factual occurrence, this text does not deny that the Buddha indeed humiliated Devadatta. Instead, the text argues that insulting words were in actuality a harsh remedy to save

⁴³² MN. i. 392–393 = Eng. Horner 1954–1959: II. 60–61. Translation is based on Horner’s with my minor revisions: *Sace pana te samaṇo Gotamo evaṃ puttho evaṃ byākaroti: ‘Na rājakumāra Tathāgato taṃ vācaṃ bhāseyya yā sā vācā paresaṃ appiyā amanāpā ti’ taṃ enaṃ tvāṃ evaṃ vadeyyāsi: ‘Atha kiñcaraṃ te bhante Devadatto byākato: āpāyiko Devadatto, nerayiko Devadatto, kappattho Devadatto, atekiccho Devadatto ti. tāva ca pana te vācāya Devadatto kupito ahoṣi anattamaṇo’ ti.*

⁴³³ MN. i. 394–395 = Eng. Horner 1954–1959: II. 62–63. For parallels, see the Chinese *Da zhidu lun* T. 1509 (XXV) 321b15–25 and *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毘婆沙論 (**Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*) T. 1521 (XXV) 79b5–8.

Devadatta, which embodies Śākyamuni Buddha's genuine compassion for Devadatta—even if these words would hurt Devadatta's feeling and irritate him.

In a Sarvāstivāda *śāstra* named *Zun poxumi pusa suoji lun* 尊婆須蜜菩薩所集論 (“Treatises Compiled by Venerable Bodhisattva Vasumitra,” T. 1549), which is only preserved in its Chinese translation,⁴³⁴ several ways of understanding Śākyamuni's abusive words are summarized, including both approaches as discussed above.⁴³⁵

For what reasons did the Blessed One call Devadatta “the eater of saliva”? Some people say: “At that time, Devadatta sought a means to harm the *saṅgha*. For this reason, the Blessed One scolded him in order to prevent the minds of other monks from wavering.” Some would say thus: “A purely evil person as such, when educated mildly, still came to attempt several times to injure the body of the Sacred One. At that time, the Blessed One went against Devadatta's will and admonished him with beneficial words.” Some others say: “(He) obtained offering utensils from the Buddha and intended to use them for himself. Therefore, he was called ‘the eater of (the Buddha's) saliva.’” Furthermore, Devadatta once possessed great physical powers. He transformed himself into the form of a young boy, wearing a golden belt around his waist. He was held in the arms of Prince Ajātaśatru, turning around and around and laughing. At that moment, Prince Ajātaśatru embraced him, kissed him, and spat saliva to make him suck. At that moment, Devadatta indeed ingested the saliva. The prince thereby knew this master was Devadatta. At that time, the Blessed One, in order to appease the minds of the other monks, admonished him by saying, ‘You are the eater of saliva.’”

In this discussion, the harsh words of Śākyamuni are interpreted in several ways. In the first two explanations, it is admitted that Śākyamuni indeed insulted Devadatta with harsh words,

⁴³⁴ Dhammajoti 2007: 117.

⁴³⁵ T. 1549 (XXVIII) 763b1–11: 何等故世尊謂調達食唾子？或作是說：爾時調達方便欲壞眾僧，以是之故，世尊呵之，恐諸比丘意有移動。或作是說，淳惡之人，以柔和誨之，*數數往求，欲壞聖躬；爾時世尊逆其意，利語誨。或作是說，若於佛得供養具，調達欲使入己 [> 己]，故曰食唾子。復次調達本有大神足，化作小兒形，金縷帶腰，住阿闍世太子抱上，宛轉戲笑。彼時阿闍世太子抱弄鳴口，與唾使吮，彼時調達亦復食唾，太子亦復知此尊調達。爾時世尊以沙門息心意，呵曰：‘食唾子也。’”

*數數往求: Most Tripiṭaka versions read 數數往求 (include the Korean Tripiṭaka), and only the Jiaying Zang 嘉興藏 reads 往求. The latter is a better reading as similar expressions are repeatedly seen in other texts (e.g., MĀ T. 26 [I] 614b23–24: ... 念三不善念: 欲念、恚念、害念, 是我聖法中說不善, 數往求索也.).

although Śākyamuni’s motivation was fully justified: it was either for the aim of protecting other monks from wavering, or for the goal of dissuading Devadatta from committing more transgressions. In this regard, Sarvāstivāda monks also realized that words such as *kheḷapaka* did not necessarily mean that Devadatta really swallowed the saliva of Ajātaśatru. The third and fourth ways, however, interpret Śākyamuni’s words not as a means to educate and discourage Devadatta, but as a reflection of the truth: Devadatta indeed ingested saliva, either because he used the Buddha’s utensils to eat meals, or he intentionally swallowed Ajātaśatru’s saliva. Therefore, Śākyamuni never spoke harsh or insulting words to Devadatta.

Recently, Habata (2018) presents another possibility to understand the Buddha’s “insulting” words. In her etymological study of the word *kheḷa*, Habata proposes that this word may have been derived from the root *krīḍ* (“to play”), whose more ancient Indo-European form is not clear now. She argues that the term *kheḷāpaka* (or its variant forms *kheḷāsika*, *kheḷāsaka*) reflects a corrupted transmission of the term *krīḍāpana/krīḍāpanaka*. In Buddhist texts, *krīḍāpanaka* is still preserved and is explained as “plaything, animal or person to be used for amusement” (s.v. BHSD). Therefore, she tends to translate *kheḷāsaka/kheḷāsaka* as “a toy or playmate” (Spielzeug, Spielamme), instead of an “eater of saliva,”⁴³⁶ Furthermore, she argues that the other part of the Buddha’s scolding of Devadatta, *chava*, is not a noun with the meaning “corpse” but an adjective which means “miserable.” In this way, the Buddha actually does not say any insulting word. If we accept her hypothesis, then the history of the narrative of Devadatta choking down the saliva can be reconstructed as follows: (1). There was first a story in which Devadatta transformed himself into a young boy, terrifying Ajātaśatru; (2). Then, there developed stories in which Devadatta and Ajātaśatru were quite intimate with each other; the Buddha’s comments of their close relationship also appeared on this stage (my argument of their intimate kissing and Habata’s reconstruction of “playmate” are reflections of this stage of the narrative); (3). Buddhists later were not able to understand the Buddha’s comments and took the Buddha’s words as a stern criticism of Devadatta, calling him “corpse” or “saliva-eater”; (4). These hurtful words of the Buddha later further caused some theological problems for some Buddhist groups, and Sarvāstivāda Abhidharmas proposed that the Buddha said so because Devadatta indeed swallowed Ajātaśatru’s saliva.

⁴³⁶ A causative form derived from the same ancient root $\sqrt{krīḍ}$ is also attested in the language of Ardhamāgadhī, namely, *kheḷāvaṇa*, with the meaning recognizable as “derjenige der [ein Kind] spielen lässt” (“a person who makes a child play”). Cf. Habata 2018: 153.

In summary, we investigate how the stories of Devadatta’s obtaining magical power and Ajātaśatru’s patronage were altered to serve different ideological ends in diverse Buddhist contexts. In schools outside of the (Mūla)Sārvāstivāda, Devadatta’s achievement was generally regarded as an inferior, mundane achievement, through which he attempted to frighten Ajātaśatru to win his patronage. When the (Mūla)Sārvāstivādins narrated the story, the magical power became the means by which Devadatta lured and attracted Ajātaśatru, embodying Devadatta’s obsequiousness. Some (Mūla)Sārvāstivādin monks further developed the detail in which Devadatta voluntarily swallowed Ajātaśatru’s saliva to show the depth of his servility. The development of this plot can probably be hypothesized as follows: confronted by the damning account that Śākyamuni Buddha called Devadatta an “eater of saliva,” these (Mūla)Sārvāstivāda monks felt obligated to solve the theological problem of the depiction of Śākyamuni as an offensive reviler. After all, in their understanding of the nature of *buddhavacana*—namely, the words of buddhas—buddhas never speak false or offensive words. To this end, they altered the story so that saliva functioned more figuratively as an expression of tender kisses between Ajātaśatru and Devadatta, and added the detail in which Devadatta indeed choked down the saliva of Ajātaśatru. By reading the Buddha’s words literally as a factual report, these (Mūla)Sārvāstivādin monks transformed the Buddha’s insulting words from a harsh accusation to a faithful reflection of the truth and successfully dissolved the paradox.

4.1.2.3 Devadatta was not ordained properly: Stories about his illegal monkhood

Apart from diminishing and even denying Devadatta’s early successes, Buddhists further questioned the legitimacy of Devadatta’s ordination. One such story is recorded in the *Zengyi ahan jing*. Unlike the stories above in which the Buddha refuses to impart Devadatta the knowledge of magical power, here Śākyamuni utterly declines Devadatta’s request for ordination:⁴³⁷

Once upon a time, the Buddha dwelled in the Nyagrodhārāma Grove, in Śākya Kapilavastu, together with five hundred great monks. At that moment, Prince Devadatta approached the Blessed One, worshiped the feet of the Buddha with his head, and sat to one side. Then, Devadatta spoke to the Buddha: “Please, Blessed One! May you grant me the path and make me a *śramaṇa*!” The Buddha spoke to

⁴³⁷ T. 125 (II) 802b15–c15.

Devadatta: “You are suitable to distribute donations and extend generosity at home. It would be extremely tough for you to become a *śramaṇa*.” Then, Devadatta repeatedly begged the Buddha: “Please, Blessed One! Allow me into the lowest rank!” The Buddha spoke again: “You should stay at home. You are not suitable to leave home and cultivate *śramaṇa* practices.”⁴³⁸

At that moment, Devadatta generated the following thought: “This *śramaṇa* possesses an envious mind. Today, I had better tonsure myself and cultivate the pure practice. Why rely on this *śramaṇa*? ” Then, Devadatta went back, tonsured himself, put on monastic robes, and declared that “I am a son of Śākya (i.e., a disciple of the Buddha).”⁴³⁹

At that time, there was a monk named Surādha. He cultivated *dhūta* practices, (which include) begging for alms and wearing rag robes. He mastered the five supernormal powers (*abhijñā*) in a lucid way. At that time, Devadatta came to the monk, worshiped the feet of the monk with his head, went forward, and spoke: “May the venerable one (you) impart me the teaching to make me calm and tranquil during the long night of [*saṃsāra*].” Then, the monk Surādha imparted the rules of proper comportment and etiquette to him. [Devadatta] contemplated these teachings, adopted some but rejected some others. Then, Devadatta followed the instruction of that monk without any omission or error. At that moment, Devadatta spoke to the monk: “May (you) the venerable one impart the path to magical power to me. I am fully qualified to cultivate this path.” Then, the monk further instructed him in the path to supernatural powers: “Now you should learn how to differentiate mental lightness and heaviness. Having understood mental lightness and heaviness, you should differentiate the lightness and heaviness of the four great elements, namely, earth, water, fire, and wind. Having understood the lightness and the heaviness of the four great elements, you can then practice the meditative absorption of sovereignty. Having practiced the meditative absorption of sovereignty, you should

⁴³⁸ 一時，佛在釋翅迦毘羅越尼拘留園中，與大比丘眾五百人俱。爾時，提婆達兜王子往至世尊所，頭面禮足，在一面坐。是時，提婆達兜白佛言：“唯然，世尊！聽我道次得作沙門。”佛告提婆達兜：“汝宜在家，分檀惠施。夫為沙門，實為不易。”是時，提婆達兜復再三白佛言：“唯然，世尊！聽在末行。”佛復告曰：“汝宜在家，不宜出家修沙門行。”

⁴³⁹ 爾時，提婆達兜便生此念：“此沙門懷嫉妬心，我今宜自剃頭，善修梵行。何用是沙門為？”是時，提婆達兜即自退歸，自剃鬚髮，著袈裟，自稱言：“我是釋種子。”

further practice the meditative absorption of vigor. Having practiced the meditative absorption of vigor, you should also practice the meditative absorption of thought. Having practiced the meditative absorption of thought, you should then practice the meditative absorption of observing the precepts. In this way, you will soon attain the path of magical power.”⁴⁴⁰

At that moment, having received instruction from the master, Devadatta differentiated mental lightness and heaviness. He further knew the lightness and heaviness of the four great elements. He exhaustively practiced all sorts of meditations without omission. Not long after, the great fame of Devadatta became widespread.⁴⁴¹

Differently from the conventional story in which Devadatta joined the monastic community together with other Śākya princes, here the Buddha declared that Devadatta was not fit to live a monastic life and therefore refused his request. Nevertheless, Devadatta, being not frustrated, tonsured himself and conducted a self-ordination, which, however, is regarded as illegal in Vinaya regulations.⁴⁴² That is to say, duplicity runs throughout Devadatta’s whole

⁴⁴⁰ 爾時，有一比丘名修羅陀，頭陀行。乞食，著補納衣，五通清徹。是時，提婆達兜往至彼比丘所，頭面禮足，前言：“唯願尊者當與我說教，使*長夜而獲安隱。”是時，修羅陀比丘即與說威儀禮節，思惟此法，捨此就彼。是時，提婆達兜如彼比丘教而不漏失。是時，提婆達兜比丘言：“唯願尊者當與我說神足道，我能堪任修行此道。”爾時，比丘復與說神足之道：“汝今當學心意輕重；已知心意輕重，復當分別四大地、水、火、風之輕重；已得知四大輕重，便當修行自在三昧；已行自在三昧，復當修勇猛三昧；已行勇猛三昧，復當修行心意三昧；已行心意三昧，復當行自戒三昧；已修行自戒三昧，如是不久便當成神足道。”

* *changye* 長夜 (**dīrgharātrī*, literary meaning “long night”) indicates the “all the woes of existence” in the Buddhist usage (cf. Zürcher 2013 [1980]: 113). It is commonly used in the formula *shengsi changye* 生死長夜 (“the long night of births and deaths”) to refer to *saṃsāra*.

* 自在三昧，勇猛三昧，心意三昧，自戒三昧：In the *Zengyi ahan jing*, these four *samādhis* form the concept of four *ṛddhipāda* (T. 125 [II] 658a6–8: 有四神足，云何為四？自在三昧行盡神足；心三昧行盡神足；精進三昧行盡神足；誠三昧行盡神足). Does these four items correspond to the common list of the four *ṛddhi-pādas*? The four elements or bases of supernatural power are usually presented as 1). *chanda-samādhi-prahāṇa-saṃskāra-samanvāgata ṛddhipādaḥ* (“the basis of supernatural power that is the meditative absorption of zeal accompanied by the volition of striving”); 2). *citta-samādhi-prahāṇa-saṃskāra-samanvāgata ṛddhipādaḥ*, 3). *vīrya-samādhi-prahāṇa-saṃskāra-samanvāgata ṛddhipādaḥ*, 4). *mīmāṃsā-samādhi-prahāṇa-saṃskāra-samanvāgata ṛddhipādaḥ* (BHSD s.v.; Schlosser & Strauch 2016: 68.)

⁴⁴¹ 爾時，提婆達兜受師教已，自知心意輕重，復知四大輕重，盡修諸三昧，無所漏失。爾時不久，便成神足之道，如是無數方便作變無量。爾時，提婆達兜名聲流布四遠。

⁴⁴² According to the Vinayas, there must be ten proper monks appearing as witnesses for a legal ordination to occur. Moreover, a new monk must ritually rely on a master monk to obtain ordination. T 1421 (XXII) 111c3;

religious career: from the very beginning, he was not even a legal monk, not to mention his later destructive deeds. Apparently, the composers of the *Zengyi ahan jing* were not bothered at all by the stipulation that a schismatic must be a monk, to say nothing of being a proper and respectful monk. Although the text later acknowledges that Devadatta was renowned for his magical power after diligent practice, he was intrinsically a deceiver whose entire monkhood was false.

A less harsh accusation of Devadatta's monkhood is found in the Dharmaguptaka *Fo benxing ji jing* 佛本行集經, which also highlights the unjustified procedure of his going forth:⁴⁴³

At that moment, having investigated Devadatta's previous and future *karmas* with right mindfulness, the Blessed One realized his inner thought. Upon investigation, he spoke to Devadatta, saying thus: "Devadatta! Take care not to leave home and go forth. You should return home and cultivate the path at home. You can bring the wealth you earn to make donations and produce various kinds of merits. You need not go forth in the Dharma of my (time)." ... Devadatta went to the places of venerable and senior monks in succession. However, the venerable and senior monks uniformly responded to Devadatta with these words: "Since the Blessed One has uttered such words, you must certainly do what you are supposed to do." Then, no matter where Devadatta went, he was not able to obtain permission. Riding on

T. 1425 (XXII) 235c20–23; T. 1428 (XXII) 763b22–27; T. 1435 (XXIII) 424a17–18, etc. Cf. Sasaki 1996, 1997.

However, buddhas are exempted from this Vinaya rule. Cf. Tounier 2018: 88ff.

⁴⁴³ T. 190 (III) 919a8–923a29: 爾時，世尊正念觀彼提婆達多前後事業，知其心行，觀已，即告提婆達多，作如是言：“提婆達多！汝今慎莫捨家出家，但當還家，在家修道，持諸財錢，以用布施，作諸功德，於我法中，不須出家。”... 提婆達多，如是次第，處處至於大德上座諸比丘所，而諸大德上座比丘，亦皆語彼提婆達多作如是言：“世尊既有如此之語，汝必應當作如是事。”爾時，提婆達多所至之處，皆不許已，還乘白象，向迦毘羅婆蘇都城，還於家內... 於時阿難、提婆達多，二人猶故不得出家，從世尊所，迴還至於雪山之下。時彼山下，有一長老姓跋哪瑟吒，名曰僧伽，其人修行，已住三果，成就*四禪，恒常依彼雪山而住。爾時，跋哪瑟吒僧伽 (*Bhayacittasaṅgha)，見阿難等二人來至，逆慰之言：“諸釋童子何因來此？”時彼二人而報之言：“我等今者，樂欲出家，故來於此。善哉聖者！願度我等，令得出家。”爾時，跋哪瑟吒僧伽，不曾觀察提婆達多童子之行，不練其智，即令二人捨家出家，及受具戒。

Sichan 四禪: BHSD s.v. *dhyāna (savitarkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekaṃ prītisukhaṃ iti prathamadyānaṃ, adhyātmapramodaṇāt prītisukhaṃ iti dvitīyaṃ, upekṣāsmṛtiṣaṃ-prajanyaṃ sukhaṃ iti tṛtīyaṃ, upekṣāsmṛtiparīsuddhir aduḥkhāsukhā vedaneti caturthaṃ dhyānaṃ it)*; Schlosser & Strauch 2016: 68.

his white elephant, he went back to Kapilavastu and returned home ... (The story of how Devadatta conferred with Ānanda to go forth together is omitted here)

At that time, Ānanda and Devadatta still could not go forth. They returned from the place of the Blessed One and reached the foot of a snowy mountain. At that moment, at the foot of the snowy mountain, there lived an elder whose surname was Bhayacitta. His given name was Saṅgha. As to his level of cultivation, he already reached the three fruits (of the *śrāvaka* path) and had attained the four stages of meditation. He had always lived on that mountain. At that time, upon noticing the arrival of the two persons (i.e., Devadatta and Ānanda), Bhayacittasaṅgha approached and greeted them: “Why have you Śākya princes come here?” Then, they both responded with these words: “Now, we intend to go forth and therefore come here. Wonderful Sage! May you ordain us and let us go forth.” At that moment, Bhayacittasaṅgha, without observing the deeds of the prince Devadatta, without examining his wisdom, immediately allowed them to leave home and go forth, and let them receive full ordination.

Having predicted the sins of Devadatta after joining the monastic community, the Buddha attempted to dissuade him from going forth. Just like what we read in the story of Devadatta’s pursuit of magical power, Devadatta did not give up, even if he was refused again and again by the Buddha’s principal disciples. He conspired to go to a remote place where nobody recognized him and sought ordination. Having persuaded his brother Ānanda to be his companion, he finally got ordained by a monk named Bhayacittasaṅgha who skipped the procedure of examining Devadatta’s *karmas* and failed to recognize Devadatta’s malignancy. Here, Devadatta’s image as a conspirator is presented vividly in front of us: forbidden by the Buddha to join monastic communities, Devadatta exploited a loophole to become a Buddhist by seeking a master in a remote place. In this way, Devadatta’s monkhood is depicted as full of trickery.

However, although the stories of Devadatta’s illegal ordination were composed with a clear mind to extend his sin to the very beginning of his religious career, these stories indeed cause tensions with respect to other details about Devadatta. First of all, as we have already mentioned, if we consider this story in a legal context, Devadatta’s illegal ordination precludes the possibility that he could be accused of the crime of *saṅghabheda*; otherwise, it would constitute a paradox. In addition, the story of how Devadatta takes pains to seek

ordination simultaneously demonstrates his great resolution to undertake religious life, which would render a positive message: Devadatta possesses a great determined, unwavering mind to go forth.⁴⁴⁴

The above stories of Devadatta's illegal ordination reveal the sentiment that an evildoer like Devadatta could not have a legal monkhood. Interestingly, in Vinaya texts, we also find accounts that convey a similar message. For instance, the Mahīśāsaka *Wufen lü*—a Vinaya already exhibiting a strong hatred toward Devadatta, as we have repeatedly mentioned above—comments that Devadatta should be deprived of the qualification of being a fully ordained monk:⁴⁴⁵

At that moment, Devadatta drew the blood of the Buddha. The monks did not know how to deal with him and therefore spoke to the Buddha. The Buddha said: “One who draws the blood of the Buddha with a vicious mind will not be reborn in my teaching (*śāsana). He should not be allowed to go forth and receive full ordination. If he has already received full ordination, he should be banished.” The schismatic monk Devadatta should not be granted permission to go forth in the same way.

This discussion comes from the *Pravrajyāvastu* (“issues on monastic ordination”) section in which restrictions on ordinations are usually addressed. In short, it stipulates that transgressors who draw the blood of the Buddha or cause a schism should either (1) not be allowed to receive ordination in the case that they have not yet been admitted into the *saṅgha*,⁴⁴⁶ or (2) must be expelled in the case that they have already been admitted. Here, the example of Devadatta reveals the composer's opinion that he should not have been allowed to join the monastic community at all. A similar discussion also appears in the Dharmaguptaka version of the *Pravrajyāvastu*, which similarly regulates that sinners who split the *saṅgha* or shed the Buddha's blood, such as Devadatta, should not receive

⁴⁴⁴ This reminds us of another notorious monk Mahādeva who also committed *ānantarya* crimes. In several versions of Mahādeva's biography, he is also reported to receive his ordination in a dishonest way. See Silk 2009: 24, 238n.22.

⁴⁴⁵ T. 1421 (XXII) 117b23–26: 爾時，調達惡心出佛身血，諸比丘不知云何待遇，以是白佛。佛言：“惡心出佛身血，於我法中不復生，不應與出家受具足戒，若已受具足戒應滅擯。”調達破僧，不應與出家，亦如是。

⁴⁴⁶ However, practically speaking, it is almost impossible to affirm that a person is a future schismatic or blood-shedder when that person has not yet committed such an act. In this sense, the Vinaya seems to stipulate a condition that could not be practiced in reality, especially in Devadatta's case,

ordination if they are not yet monks; and if they have been ordained, their ordination should be taken away. The same regulation is further found in the Pāli and Sarvāstivāda Vinayas.⁴⁴⁷

Furthermore, the Vinayas also associate one more rule of ordination with Devadatta stories: namely, that a candidate must be censured before his ordination. For instance, in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya(s), when Upāli asked the Buddha whether a schismatic or a shedder of the Buddha's blood can be reordained, the Buddha stipulated that a preceptor/ordination monk must survey in advance whether the candidate was once a schismatic or a blood-shedder. Those who give ordination without such a survey will incur the *duṣkṛta* offense.⁴⁴⁸ The inclusion of this survey into the statutory procedure for ordination indeed concurs with the previous story in the *Fo benxing ji jing*, in which Devadatta obtained ordination because the monk Bhayacittasaṅgha failed to survey Devadatta's *karmas*. The

⁴⁴⁷ Vin. i. 89 = Eng. Horner 1938–1952: IV. 113: *saṅghabhedako bhikkhave anupasampanno na upasampādetabbo, upasampanno nāsetabbo. lohituppādako bhikkhave anupasampanno na upasampādetabbo, upasampanno nāsetabbo 'ti*. Monks, if a schismatic is not ordained, he should not be ordained; if he is ordained, he should be expelled. Monks, if a shedder of (a Truth-finder's) blood is not ordained, he should not be ordained; if he is ordained, he should be expelled.

Shisong lü T. 1435 (XXIII) 154c4–11: 佛在舍衛國，佛語諸比丘：“若有人惡心出佛身血，不應與出家。若與出家受具足，應滅擯。何以故？是惡心出佛身血人，不生我善法比尼故。有人非法非法想，破僧已非法見，此後得罪。非法法想，破僧已非法見，此後得罪。非法非法想，破僧已疑，此後得罪。是人不應與出家受具足。若與出家受具足，應滅擯。何以故？破僧人，不生我善法比尼故。

Cf. also the *Sarvāstivāda Vinaya-mātrkā* 薩婆多部毘尼摩得勒伽 T. 1441 (XXIII) 580a9–14: “云何得與出家受具足戒？”答：“非故惡心出佛血，此得與出家受具足戒。云何不得？惡心出血。破僧人，或得與出家受具足戒、或不得。若法想受籌，因彼受籌僧破，得與受具足戒。作非法想，不得與受具足戒。” However, this text allows schismatics who are in accordance with the Dharma to receive ordination (T. 1441 [XXIII] 566b26–29: 問：“破僧人不得與出家受具足戒，頗有即行此事得與出家受具足戒耶？”答：“有。非法想破僧者，不得與出家受具足戒。法想破僧者，得與出家受具足戒。”)

⁴⁴⁸ MSV *Pravrajyāvastu* T. 1444 (XXIII) 1040b26–c6: 具壽鄔波離白佛言：“若復有人，先曾出家，破壞僧伽，於後更來求出家者，應與出家不？”佛言：“不應。”佛告鄔波離：“從今已去，若有人來欲出家者，苾芻應問：‘汝曾破僧伽不？’若非，應度。若不問者，得越法罪。”又白佛言：“若復有人，於佛世尊起惡逆心，出佛身血。其人志求，於佛法僧，心樂出家修持梵行者。有如是者，應與度不？”佛言：“不應。若有人來求出家者，苾芻應問：‘汝非惡心出佛身血不？’若非，應度。若不問者，得越法罪。”

Related discussions of the formulaic interrogation before ordination are also seen in Sasaki 1996 and Silk 2007: 276. For instance, in the Mahāsāṅghika Vinaya, the censorship contains the following questions: “You have not destroyed the pure practices of nuns, have you? You have not remained a robber, have you? You have not been a repeat apostate, have you? You have not ordained yourself, have you? You have not been a murderer of your parents, have you? You have not been a murderer of an arhat, have you? You have not been a schismatic, have you? You have not drawn blood from the body of the Buddha with vicious intention, have you?” (T. 1425 [XXII] 413b22–26: 不壞比丘尼淨行不？非賊盜住不？非越濟人不？非自出家不？不殺父母不？不殺阿羅漢不？不破僧不？不惡心出佛身血不?)

price paid for Bhayacittasaṅgha's mistake was heavy, as the future notorious schismatic thereby entered into the monastic community.

In conclusion, the stories in which Devadatta tonsured himself, or received his ordination in a duplicitous manner, reflect a voice among Buddhists that Devadatta should not have entered the community at all. This sentiment, when reflected in the Vinaya rules, becomes the rule that a schismatic or a shedder of the Buddha's blood is not supposed to be ordained, and if he has already joined the monastic community, his monkhood should be rescinded. The Devadatta stories are even linked to another legal rule concerning ordination: because Devadatta sneaked into the monastic community because his preceptor failed to examine his past *karmas*, the Vinayas establish a procedure for ordination which entails a mandatory survey of the candidate in advance.

4.1.2.4 Summary

With the mindset that Devadatta was Śākyamuni Buddha's primary assailant, it is natural for Devadatta's sins to be understood as intrinsic reflections of his evil nature. Although I do not cover how Buddhist narrators expanded Devadatta's evilness in its entirety, the cases I examine here, namely, those of Devadatta's early religious career, suffice to demonstrate how the polemics against Devadatta developed in the common Buddhist approach to Devadatta's sin. Stories of his early achievements, especially those concerning his obtaining of magical power and his winning of Ajātaśatru's patronage, were developed in ways that were less closely connected with the legal discussions of schismatics in the Vinayas.

Although Devadatta's early success originally signified, in the legal context, that Devadatta was a legitimate schismatic, his achievements were later downgraded to an inferior, mundane form of achievement, namely, magical power. The stories of how Devadatta mastered magical power function on at least two levels: on the one hand, through mastery of magical skills, Devadatta had enough capability to win the patronage of Ajātaśatru and accumulated a high prestige to instigate a legal schism; on the other hand, magical power further facilitated Devadatta's evil behavior and increased his level of sinfulness. The narrative of how he converted Ajātaśatru was also developed in varying versions in different schools, embodying different ideologies. The story in the Theravaṃsa, Mahīśāsaka, and Dharmaguptaka Vinayas, perhaps due to the influence of a mythological factor originating on Indian soil—namely, the still mysterious Śiva plot in the

Mahābhārata—adopted a narrative in which he frightened Ajātaśatru to win his patronage. However, when the (Mūla)Sārvāstivādins narrated the story, magical power became the means by which Devadatta fawned on Ajātaśatru. Furthermore, in the Sārvāstivāda versions, the episode in which Devadatta literally choked down Ajātaśatru’s saliva probably reflects the understanding of the nature of *buddhavacana* in this school: since buddhas only speak truthful and kind words, when the Buddha called Devadatta an “eater of saliva” in response to his demand for the leadership of the *saṅgha*, the Sārvāstivāda monks interpreted that Devadatta really choked down Ajātaśatru’s saliva. In addition, I have also investigated the stories in which Devadatta is said to have been illegally ordained. It is easy to understand that these stories were composed with a mind to extend his sins to the very beginning of his religious career. Obviously, these stories were created in later time as Devadatta’s illegal ordination contradicts the legal requirement that a schismatic must be a proper monk. As we can see, when the Devadatta stories were developed into this stage as a narrative of an utterly evil person, the significance of the schismatic rulings in the Vinayas had already faded away.

4.1.3 Tension within Devadatta’s image: A schismatic vs. an evildoer

Although in section 4.1.2 I omit a discussion of Devadatta’s committing several other *ānantaryakarmas*, Devadatta is indeed widely known as an evil figure among Buddhists. Buddhist texts, including both Āgama/Nikāyas and Mahāyāna *sūtras*, frequently accuse him of crimes, including attempting to murder the Buddha several times and killing a nun-arhat, in addition to splitting the monastic community during the lifetime of the Buddha, which are categorized as *ānantaryakarmas* by Abhidharma literature. However, as I have repeatedly mentioned, to be a qualified schismatic in the legal context, one must be a pure and respectful monk. In this regard, a contradiction emerges: how could Devadatta, a culprit who was accused of committing many heinous crimes, be qualified as a schismatic who could split the *saṅgha*? That is to say, in the process of extending Devadatta’s role to that of the embodiment of evil itself is accompanied, some parts of the Devadatta narrative become incompatible: his status as the culprit who was responsible for *ānantaryakarma* transgressions negates the possibility that Devadatta was a legal schismatic. This is particularly true when his early religious career, the only glorious period of Devadatta’s life, had been significantly tarnished, and the legitimacy of his monkhood was denied in more recently developed stories.

To modern historians, this conflict can be understood from a historical perspective: since diverse elements in the Devadatta narrative were created in a variety of social and religious contexts when those elements became conflated in the course the time, tensions would inevitably occur. However, Buddhist monks, who could hardly have possessed a modern historical sense, most probably could not establish this historical understanding. Then, have Buddhist traditions ever sensed his incompatibility between Devadatta's roles as a schismatic and as an evildoer who even offended *ānantaryakarmas*? If there existed a perception of this inconsistency among traditional Buddhists, how did they reconcile Devadatta's images as both a schismatic and an evildoer?

The incompatibility of Devadatta's role as an instigator of schism with his role as the notorious perpetrator of other evil deeds, especially those later associated with the *ānantaryakarma* notion, has been observed by traditional Buddhists. In order to reconcile the two conflicting aspects of Devadatta's image, many Buddhists have already initiated the discussion of the sequence of his different activities, which is recorded in the *Abhidharma-mahāvibhāṣā*:⁴⁴⁹

Question: Did Devadatta first split the *saṅgha* and later eradicate his root for [producing] wholesome [*karmas*], or did he first eradicate his root for wholesome [*karmas*] and later split the *saṅgha*?

(Answer:) Someone claims that he split the *saṅgha* before eradicating his root for wholesome [*karmas*]. Why? Because only those who are endowed with morality, broadly learned, properly behaved, born in noble families, awe-inspiring, and skillful in speech can cause a schism. If he had already eradicated his root for wholesome [*karmas*], he would have lost his pure morality. He would not be superior and consequently could not cause a schism. The venerable Vasumitra also comments thus: "Devadatta first split the *saṅgha*, and then effaced his root for wholesome [*karmas*]." If he eradicated his root for wholesome [*karmas*] before inciting a schism, he would not have incurred the sin of abiding in hell for a *kalpa* when causing the schism. Why? Because [only] a *pudgala* [i.e., the individual

⁴⁴⁹ T. 1545 (XXVII) 603c11–604a7. The other two Chinese versions (T. 1546, 1547) and the surviving Sanskrit fragment of the Sarvāstivāda *Vibhāṣā* do not contain the corresponding part. See Sasaki 2000a for general information about the three Chinese translations of the *Vibhāṣā*. Cf. also Enomoto (1996) for the surviving Sanskrit fragment of a *Vibhāṣā*.

existence as the entity in transmigration] who does not eradicate his root [for wholesome *karmas*] would regard an unrighteous matter as unrighteous and realize that the instigation of a schism is reprehensible. If a *pudgala* regards unrighteous matters as righteous and assumes that the instigation of a schism is not reprehensible, such a schismatic would never incur the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*. Only under the condition that one perceives the unrighteous matter as unrighteous and realizes the crime of causing a schism will he incur the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*.⁴⁵⁰

According to this principle, is it the case that all schismatics will incur the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*? Suppose there are people who incur the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*; can all of them cause a schism? (With regard to these questions), the response should be paraphrased in the following four sentences: (1). There are cases in which a schismatic does not incur the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*, namely, when one regards an unrighteous matter as righteous and causes a schism under the assumption that causing a schism is not

⁴⁵⁰ 問：提婆達多為先破僧後*斷善根，先斷善根後破僧耶？

或有說者：彼先破僧，後斷善根。所以者何？要具尸羅，多聞端正，貴族威肅，言詞善巧，乃能破僧。若斷善根，便失淨戒，非增上故，不能破僧。尊者世友亦作是說：“提婆達多先破壞僧，後斷善根。”若先斷善根，後破僧者，於破僧時，應不能生一劫住罪。所以者何？非斷善根補特伽羅，於非法中起非法想，於破僧中起有罪想。若於非法起於法想，於破僧中起無罪想，而破僧者終不能生一劫住罪。要於非法起非法想，於破僧中起有罪想，如是，破僧方能生起一劫住罪。

由此道理，諸破壞僧一切皆生劫住罪耶？設有能生劫住罪者，一切皆能破僧耶？應作四句：(1). 或有破僧非能生起一劫住罪，謂於非法起於法想，及於破僧起非罪想而破壞僧；(2). 或有能生一劫住罪而非破僧，謂斷善根；(3). 或有破僧亦能生起一劫住罪，謂於非法起非法想，於破僧中起有罪想而破壞僧；(4). 或有不能破壞於僧，亦不能生一劫住罪，謂除前 (**apūrva*)想。

大德說曰：“彼起破僧加行時，亦起斷善加行。起斷善加行時，亦起破僧加行。”是故，彼破僧時則斷善，斷善時則破僧。彼由俱時造二罪故，成就極重，惡不善業，而無一念悔愧之心。

duan shangen* 斷善根 (mūlaccheda*, or **samucchinnakuśalamūla* [attested in Abhidh-k-bh. 29.7, 43.1, etc.]): the exact significance of this term throughout Buddhist traditions awaits a more careful study. One common understanding of *shan'gen* 善根 (“wholesome root,” skt. *kuśalamūla*), as stated in the Chinese **Ekottarikāgama*, is a threefold root: namely, the root absent of covetousness, antipathy, and delusion (*kuśalāḥ saprayogāntā alohadveṣamohajāḥ*. Abhidh-k-k 4.69, found in Abhidh-k-bh 241. 25; cf. also T. 125 [II] 614b14–16: “云何為三？不貪善根、不恚善根、不癡善根). Note that the concept of *mūlaccheda* should be distinguished from that of another term, *icchāntika* (Chn. *yichanti* 一闡提; cf. Karashima 2007, Radich 2011: 39n.124), although the term *icchāntika* in the hermeneutic traditions of *Tathāgatagarbha* shares an overlapping implication with *mūlaccheda* in the sense of excluding one from attaining buddhahood. However, according to Karashima (2007), *icchāntika* originally means “somebody who claims,” mainly referring to the conservative monks who argued against the then emerging tenet of *Tathāgatagarbha* proposed by the Mahāyāna monks.

reprehensible. (2). There are also cases in which a person incurs the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa* but is not a schismatic, namely, when one has lost his root for [producing] wholesome [*karmas*]. (3). There are further cases in which a schismatic incurs the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*, namely, when one who regards an unrighteous matter as unrighteous causes a schism with the awareness that causing a schism is reprehensible. (4). There are again cases in which a person neither instigates a schism, nor incurs the punishment of abiding in hell for a *kalpa*, namely, those who are excluded from the aforementioned cases.

The great venerable one (i.e., Dharmatrāta, Chn. *Fajiu* 法救)⁴⁵¹ states: “When he exerted himself in the activity of instigating a schism, it simultaneously gave rise to the activity of eradicating his root for [producing] wholesome [*karmas*]. When he exerted himself in the activity of eradicating his root for wholesome [*karmas*], it simultaneously gave rise to the activity of instigating a schism.” Therefore, when he caused a schism, his root for wholesome [*karmas*] was eradicated; when he eradicated his root for wholesome [*karmas*], he caused a schism. Due to the simultaneous committing of the two sins, he created grave evil and unwholesome *karmas*, but without generating a single thought of regret.

The purpose of this long discussion, as easily noticed, is to explain away the contradiction between the two conflicting aspects of Devadatta’s image. The text first puts forward the question of whether Devadatta first caused the schism, or first committed other sins that eradicated his root for producing wholesome [*karmas*] (most probably, *ānantaryakarmas* are implied here), and replies with a sequence proposed by “some monks.” However, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* here does not intend to stir up a polemic among Buddhists, because it largely agrees with this sequence (its agreement is more clearly indicated in another paragraph which I immediately show below). In order to reconcile Devadatta’s image as a notorious evildoer with the Vinaya regulation of schismatics, Devadatta must first have caused the schism and later committed other transgressions that eradicated his root for producing wholesome *karmas*. This is because, if Devadatta committed the other sins first, he would naturally have lost his status as a proper monk and, consequently, had no chance to instigate a schism. In this sense, proposing a chronology for Devadatta’s biography is a remedial measure to resolve the

⁴⁵¹ Lin 1949: 314ff.

tension between different ideological aspects of the Devadatta stories, and to make the narrative more sensible.

As the text discusses further, another Vinaya discussion of schism is also called to mind. In section 3.2.3, we have demonstrated that the Vinayas distinguish justified schisms from unjustified schisms that lead offenders to hell. The prerequisite for an unjustified schism is that the schismatic clearly knows what is righteous or unrighteous, but states otherwise. Based on this Vinaya regulation, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* states that if Devadatta had already lost his root for making wholesome *karmas*, he could not clearly discern unrighteous matters from righteous ones, and could not judge appropriately whether schism is blameworthy or not. In this case, he would receive no punishment in hell even if he instigated a schism. Therefore, in order to justify his descent into hell, the composers of the *Mahāvibhāṣā* again argued that all the events that portray Devadatta as an evildoer must have occurred after his schismatic attempts. Throughout the above discussion, we can see that the composers of this Abhidharma text paid ample attention to the Vinaya regulations for schisms.

However, in the last part of the above discussion, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* indeed puts forward a new, different argument concerning the dichotomy between Devadatta's loss of his root for wholesome *karmas* and his transgression of *saṅghabheda*. For the previous monks, when posing the question of the temporal sequence between the “loss of his root for wholesome *karmas*” and his schismatic activities, they had to differentiate the moment of *duan shan 'gen* 斷善根 (“loss of his root for wholesome *karmas*”) from the time when he committed other *ānantaryakarmas*, with the schismatic transgression excluded. That is to say, previous monks believed that when Devadatta caused a schism, he had not yet entirely lost his root for wholesome *karmas*, which occurred only after he committed other forms of *ānantaryakarmas*. However, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* tries to dissolve the dichotomy between Devadatta's schismatic activities and the loss of his root for wholesome *karmas* by proposing that these two events occurred simultaneously: Devadatta's schismatic moment was the very instant when his root for wholesome *karmas* was entirely lost, which highlights the gravity of the sin of *saṅghabheda* among all *ānantaryakarmas*.

Although the *Mahāvibhāṣā* argues for unifying Devadatta's *saṅghabheda* and the loss of his root for wholesome *karmas*, it does not disagree with the chronology between Devadatta's other *ānantaryakarmas* and his schismatic transgression proposed by other monks. In another

paragraph, it explicitly confirms that Devadatta must first have caused a schism before he assumed his other notorious roles:⁴⁵²

Question: If (Devadatta) first committed other *ānantaryakarmas* and then created a schism, which retribution would he first undergo when he was reborn in hell? Suppose he first underwent retribution for the other *ānantaryakarmas*; would the sin of causing a schism bear fruit in subsequent lifetimes? Or, if he first underwent retribution for instigating a schism, would the sin of the other *ānantaryakarmas* bear fruit in subsequent lifetimes?

Answer: If he first committed other *ānantaryakarmas*, he would not have caused a schism. If he first created a schism, he would have been able to subsequently commit other *ānantaryakarmas*. His subsequent [*ānantaryakarma*] transgressions were caused by the overwhelming karmic potency of splitting the *saṅgha*. They similarly incurred the retribution of being reborn in the *Avīci*, but [the retributions] would take place in his subsequent life (lives) where he would suffer from his heinous deeds and follow his *ānantaryakarmas*. It should be understood according to this rule. Again, he caused a schism before committing other *ānantaryakarmas*. His subsequent transgressions were caused by the overwhelming karmic power of splitting the *saṅgha* and similarly incurred the retribution of being reborn in the *Avīci* hell, resulting in a maximum of a one-*kalpa* lifespan of retribution [in the *Avīci*]. This lifespan cannot be extended. As for his other [*ānantaryakarmas*], in his subsequent life (lives), he will suffer from his heinous deeds and follow his *ānantaryakarmas*. The length of his lifespan (in hell) should be also understood according to this rule.

Here, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* confirms the proper monkhood as a prerequisite for being a legal schismatic. In order to make the accusations of Devadatta valid and sensible, Devadatta must first have initiated his schismatic actions before committing other heinous sins. Moreover,

⁴⁵² T. 1545 (XXVII) 620b6-16: 問：若先造餘無間，後乃破僧，彼生地獄，先受何果？若先受餘無間果者，破僧應成順後次受？若先受破僧果者，餘無間應成順後次受？

答：若先造餘無間業，彼後不能破僧。若先破僧，後便能造餘無間業。彼後所造，皆由破僧增上力故，同招無間地獄果，餘順次生受惡行隨無間業，准此應知。又先破僧，後造餘無間業，彼後所造皆由破僧增上力故，同招無間，乃至極受一劫壽果，更無增壽，餘順次生受惡行隨無間業，壽量長短亦准此知。

the *Mahāvibhāṣā* accentuates the seriousness of *saṅghabheda* among the five *ānantaryakarmas*: it claims that the schismatic transgression is the fundamental sin, with a powerful potency that even precipitates other *ānantaryakarmas* to occur. In addition, the *Mahāvibhāṣā* also discusses the chronological sequence between various retributions for different *ānantaryakarmas*: the schismatic sin and the other four sins can each lead people to hell as punishment; since Devadatta must have incurred the schismatic sin first, he would first undergo the hellish punishment for a *kalpa* for his schismatic sin; after his schismatic sin is exhausted, he will immediately receive retribution for his other *ānantaryakarmas* in subsequent lives. However, for one birth, the maximum period of stay in the Avīci is one *kalpa*. If the retribution for his other *ānantaryakarmas* altogether exceeds one *kalpa* of stay in the Avīci hell, he will stay there for one *kalpa* in one birth. The residual retribution will take place in his subsequent life (or lives) with the same maximum lifespan limit in hell.

In fact, the notion that the schismatic sin must have predated the other four *ānantaryakarmas* is the consensus widely reached by the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma literature. For instance, a similar discussion can be found in the **Samyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya* (*Za apitan xinlun* 雜阿毘曇心論, T. 1552):⁴⁵³

The crime of causing a schism would result in the punishment of descending into the Avīci hell for a *kalpa*. If one commits other types of sins of immediate retribution, he will receive retribution in other hells, and sometimes he will descend into the Avīci. After that, he could not have caused a schism. If he commits other crimes after splitting the *saṅgha*, all his sins will result in the [descent into] the Avīci hell as the fruit. One who conducts various evil deeds will receive a broad, soft body, so as to undergo a variety of sufferings. If one has already committed

⁴⁵³ T. 1552 (XXVIII) 898c27–899a4: 壞僧罪，無擇地獄中受一劫報。若作餘惡行種，餘地獄報，彼或無擇。彼後不能壞僧。壞僧後作餘惡行，彼一切皆無擇地獄果。若多行惡行者所受身，廣大而柔軟，多受眾苦。餘無間業後不能壞僧者，要族姓端正，戒聞才辯，如是之人乃能壞僧。以彼自立為大師故。 Cf. Dessein (1999 : I. 231).

The same argument is also found in the **Abhidharma-nyāyānusāra* 阿毘達磨順正理論 and the **Abhidharma-samyapradīpika* 阿毘達磨藏顯宗論. Here, the perpetrator of the other four sins of *ānantaryakarma* is not able to further commit the sin of *saṅghabheda*, because a perpetrator of other *ānantaryas* would receive subsequent retributions first. T. 1562 (XXIX) 587c19–24 = T. 1563 (XXIX) 886b27–c3: 即由此證造餘逆後不能破僧，以造餘逆及受彼果，處無定故。 Translation: In view of the above argument, it can be deduced that the one who has already committed other heinous crimes has no capability to cause a schism. This is because the perpetrator of other heinous crimes would receive due retributions and be reborn in an unfixed location (**avyasthāna*).

other sins of immediate retribution, he will not instigate a schism, since only one from a decent family and endowed with morality, knowledge, intelligence, and eloquence can split the *saṅgha*. This is because only such a person can establish himself as a great master.

Thus, we can infer that determining the “proper” chronological sequence for Devadatta’s transgressions, as the key to resolving the tensions within the Devadatta narrative, has been endowed with a considerable significance by many Buddhists, especially the Abhidharma composers.

However, do the Vinayas accept the above-proposed sequence in the narration of Devadatta’s biography? Or, is this chronology only a retrospective notion established by the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma composers? In the table below, I list how different versions of Devadatta’s biographies—including the five Vinayas of the Sthavira offshoots, one version from the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, and one from the Chinese *Zengyi ahan jing*—arrange the sequence of Devadatta’s committing of different *ānantaryakarmas*.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁴ See T. 1421 (XXII) 19b24–20b19; T. 1428 (XXII) 592b17–594b27; T. 1435 (XXII) 260a13–265a29; Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 166–204; DA i.139–144; T. 125 (II) 803a4–803c29.

Table 4.1.3. The sequence of Devadatta's *ānantaryakarmas* (Cf. Table 3.1.2 [I–II])

	His first <i>ānantaryakarma</i>	His second <i>ānantaryakarma</i>	His third <i>ānantaryakarma</i>
<i>Wufen lü</i>	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 14, 11, 12)	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	∅
<i>Sifen lü</i>	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 11, 12)	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	∅
Pāli <i>Vinaya</i>	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 11, 12, 14)	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	∅
<i>DhA</i>	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 11, 12, 14)	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	∅
<i>Shisong lü</i>	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 12, 11, 14) ⁴⁵⁵	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	∅
MSV	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 11, 12, 14)	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	Murdering the arhat-nun Utpalavarṇā ⁴⁵⁶
<i>Zengyi ahan jing</i>	Instigating a schism (episode 15)	Attempt to murder Śākyamuni (episodes 12, 14)	Murdering the arhat-nun

A closer examination of the accounts of his *ānantaryakarmas* reveals that most versions of Devadatta's biography do not accept the sequence proposed in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts. The majority of his biographies place Devadatta's attempts to murder the Buddha before his schismatic actions. For instance, the Mahīśāsaka Vinaya explicitly states that because Devadatta was not able to murder Śākyamuni, he generated the thought of splitting Śākyamuni's *saṅgha*.⁴⁵⁷ The Dharmaguptaka Vinaya accepts the same narrative order: having first failed to murder Śākyamuni, Devadatta then lost his honor and offerings and later initiated the schism.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵⁵ In the *Shisong lü*, before Devadatta's murder of Śākyamuni, he attempted to cause a schism, but this attempt was thwarted and discouraged by Śākyamuni. Therefore, I dismiss this act from the discussion of the sequence of the five *ānantaryas*, because he did not put the schism into practice at that moment.

⁴⁵⁶ I accept the sequence in the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions of the MSV *Saṅghabhedavastu*, while dismissing the Chinese version in which the murder of the Utpalavarṇā is placed before other *ānantaryas*, considering that the Chinese version has apparently been more heavily corrupted.

⁴⁵⁷ T. 1421 (XXII) 20b3–4: 我既不能得害於佛，唯當破其和合僧耳！ (Since I could not murder the Buddha, the only thing I can do is to split his *saṅgha*!)

⁴⁵⁸ As we have discussed above, Devadatta had to beg for alms from house to house in a group after he lost his offerings. Having heard that Śākyamuni issued a ruling against group begging, Devadatta was irritated as he regarded this ruling as Śākyamuni's strategy to cut off his source of food. Thus, Devadatta became determined to incite a schism. T. 1428 (XXII) 594a19–22: 提婆達即生此念：“未曾有！瞿曇沙門乃斷人口

The Vinayas' sequence is easy to understand: it is typical that the Vinayas first narrate background stories before moving on to specific Vinaya regulations. In the case of Devadatta stories, no matter what stories are contained in the Vinayas, Devadatta's schismatic deeds have to be situated at the end directly before the regulations against *saṅghabheda*, so that the Vinayas can smoothly move to the specific rules against schism. Consequently, the Vinayas usually first narrate the stories about his attempted murders of the Buddha and then move on to his schismatic deeds, for the sake of keeping the content logically connected.

Only the *Zengyi ahan jing* places Devadatta's schism prior to his attempts to murder the Buddha: after Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana successfully returned Devadatta's followers to Śākyamuni's side, the text indicates that "this was the moment when Devadatta initially committed (one of) the five *ānantaryakarmas* (T. 125 [II] 803a26: "此是提婆達兜最初犯五逆惡"). The correspondence between the *Zengyi ahan jing* and the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma proposition may be explained by the hypothesis that this part of the *Zengyi ahan jing* was composed under the influence—or at least with the awareness—of the discussion of a "proper" sequence for the five *ānantaryakarmas*. After all, the composers of the *Zengyi ahan jing* were quite familiar with the concept of the five *ānantaryakarmas* and closely associated this concept with the figure of Devadatta.⁴⁵⁹

Now we can see that the sequence of Devadatta's transgressions in the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma works must be a retrospective construct that had not yet been formed when the Vinaya stories of Devadatta came into being. This conclusion further strengthens my argument in section 3.2.3 that during the time when Devadatta's stories were created, the meaning and extended significance of the five *ānantaryas* had not yet been thoroughly established.

食。我寧可破彼僧輪。我身滅後可得名稱，言‘沙門瞿曇有大神力、智慧無礙，而提婆達能破彼僧輪。’” (Devadatta generated such a thought: “This has never happened! Śramaṇa Gautama is going to cut off people's source of food. I would rather split the wheel of his *saṅgha*, and after death, I will gain such a fame, namely, ‘Śramaṇa Gautama possesses great magical power and unobstructed wisdom. But Devadatta can still split the wheel of this *saṅgha*.’”)

⁴⁵⁹ E.g. T. 125 (II) 567a27, c12, 570b26, 803a26, b20, 804b10, 806a11, 818a28. The Pāli parallel, the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, also contains a discussion of the five transgressions of immediate retribution, including a relative hierarchy. However, this Pāli text does not adopt the terminology *ānantaryakarmas*, but uses the long phrase, “five actions that lead to the lower realms, to hell, which cause agony and are incurable” (*pañca āpāyikā nerayikā parikuppā atekicchā*. AN. iii. 146; Silk 2008: 21, 22, 236n.6&7).

In fact, Buddhist texts also observe the discrepancy between the proposed sequence of the five *ānantaryas* and Devadatta's sins in the Vinayas. In one Mahāyāna treatise, *Dasheng yizhang* 大乘義章 (T. 1851), composed by a sixth-century Chinese monk named Huiyuan 慧遠,⁴⁶⁰ the contradiction between the Vinaya sequence and the Abhidharma sequence of Devadatta's sins is noted.⁴⁶¹

If we follow the proposition of the **Saṃyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya*, it must be the case that the instigation of a schism occurred prior to the drawing of the Buddha's blood. This is because only a pure person could split the *saṅgha*. However, in the *Sifen lü*, it first narrates the drawing of the Buddha's blood and later mentions the schism. How does its story proceed? Devadatta first instigated Ajātaśatru to murder his father (the king), and Devadatta himself intended to murder the Buddha, with the expectation of establishing a new king and a new buddha to edify the world. He first attempted to murder the Buddha. Due to his attempted murder of the Buddha, the notoriety of Devadatta became widespread. His material benefits and offerings came to be eliminated. These five people had to beg for alms from one house to another, which motivated their schismatic minds. Afterward, they instigated a schism. Therefore, it is known that their schism must have occurred later (than his attempted murder of the Buddha).

The above two statements are both sacred words. It is difficult to determine which is correct and which is not. If we intend to reconcile the two statements, the Vinayas indicate that the first perpetrator of drawing the Buddha's blood commits no offense. Therefore, Devadatta was able to split the *saṅgha* (afterward). The statement in the *Saṃyukta-abhidharma-hṛdaya* is based on his subsequent offenses. He must have first split the *saṅgha* and then drawn the blood of the Buddha. If he first drew the blood of the Buddha, he could not have split the *saṅgha*.

⁴⁶⁰ About this Huiyuan, see Tanaka 1990: 20ff.

⁴⁶¹ T. 1851 (XLIV) 610a22–b3: 若依雜心，要先破僧，後出佛血。清淨之人，能破僧故。四分律中，先明出血，後明破僧，彼說云何？提婆達多先教世王殺害其父，自欲殺佛，望為新王新佛化世故。先害佛，以害佛故，惡名流布，利養斷絕，五人相將家家乞食，因即起於破僧之心，遂便破僧。故知破僧定在其後。

二說云何，並是聖言，難定是非。若欲和會，律中所說，就最初者出血無犯故，得破僧。雜心所論，據彼後時所防(>犯)者語，必先破僧後得出血。若先出血，不得破僧。

Huiyuan correctly senses the contradiction between the Vinaya version (specifically here, the *Sifen lü*) of Devadatta’s sins and the Sarvāstivāda proposition. His way of reconciling both versions is to employ the Vinaya rule that the first perpetrator does not reap the sin—even if Devadatta drew the blood of the Buddha before he split the *saṅgha*, he would not be guilty (*anāpatti*) because he was the first perpetrator of this offense (*ādikarmika*). Therefore, he could still fulfill the condition of splitting the *saṅgha* before receiving punishment in hell. However, Huiyuan’s apology can only be read as a sort of far-fetched explanation, which is easily controverted in the related discussion in other Buddhist texts. For instance, in the *Shanjian lü piposha* 善見律毘婆沙, the Chinese summary translation of the *Samantapāsādikā*,⁴⁶² a similar question, as to whether Devadatta should be regarded as the first transgressor (*ādikammika*), is put forward and answered:⁴⁶³

Question: For the rest of the precepts, the initial transgressor would not be regarded as violating the precept. Did Devadatta also not violate the precept?

Answer: Because the monastic community had already remonstrated him three times, but he refused to back down, he indeed violated the precept.

No matter whether this conversation reflects a question that really existed, or it is just an imaginary exchange, it truly touches upon a paradox found in the Vinayas—that is, if the first transgressor can be pardoned for violating precepts, should this rule be applied to Devadatta himself, the first schismatic? Or, we can paraphrase the question: how could he be a violator of rules since there were no rules yet? The Chinese translation of the *Samantapāsādikā* answers that, because Devadatta had already been admonished and warned by the *saṅgha* three times before his schism,⁴⁶⁴ he was not a first-time transgressor. The Pāli *Samantapāsādikā* discusses this issue in a more detailed way.⁴⁶⁵ It first quotes the antecedent

⁴⁶² On the school affiliation of this Chinese translation, see Heirman 2014. According to her, the translator Saṅghabhadra may have had some connections with the Abhayagirivāda school and was also familiar with the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya. In this Chinese translation, some influence from the Dharmaguptaka Vinaya can be found, which concurs with the ideas proposed in Bapat & Hirakawa 1970: 1–liv.

⁴⁶³ T. 1462 (XXIV) 769b22–23: 問曰：“餘戒最初不犯，調達亦應不犯？”答曰：“以其僧三諫不捨故，所以犯罪。”

⁴⁶⁴ That Devadatta was admonished by individual monks and the monastic community more than three times is described consistently in the *Saṅghāvaśeṣa* (Pāli *Saṅghādisesa*) of the Vibhaṅgas of every Vinaya. For instance, Vin. iii. 171–172; T. 1421 (XXII) 20b19–c5; T. 1425 (XXII) 281c12–282b8; T. 1428 (XXII) 594c7–595a14; T. 1435 (XXIII) 24b22–25a7; T. 1442 (XXIII) 702c10–704a9.

⁴⁶⁵ Sp. iii. 610–611.

in which a monk named Ariṭṭha Gaddhabādhīpubba,⁴⁶⁶ after being admonished three times, directly incurred the *pācittiya* offense for refusing to abandon his wrong view, although he was the first perpetrator of this transgression (*ariṭṭho bhikkhu gaddhabādhīpubbo yāvataṭṭhaṃ samanubhāsanāya na paṭinissajji*, Sp. iii. 610). Therefore, the text argues that Devadatta could not escape punishment in the same manner.⁴⁶⁷

In conclusion, in the process of creating a condemnable Devadatta, two aspects of Devadatta’s image—namely, his role as a schismatic in the Vinayas and his role as a perpetrator of other transgressions—inevitably conflicted with one another. As we have already concluded in the third chapter, the core image of Devadatta is that of a schismatic, and in the Vinayas, a schismatic first needs to be a proper monk. However, the ongoing intensification of Devadatta’s sin, especially after the understanding of his sin was deeply intertwined with the category of the *ānantaryakarmas*, not only made Devadatta almost the embodiment of evil itself but also lead to an intrinsic loophole in the Devadatta narrative itself: how could a sinner, evil as such, whose monkhood was suspected to be false, commit a schism? Ancient Buddhists also perceived this conflict. The composers of the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts, in order to dissolve this conflict, proposed a carefully designed chronology of Devadatta’s different sins. According to these texts, Devadatta must first have instigated a schism, and then committed other *ānantaryakarmas*. This proposition should be regarded as a retrospective means to reconcile Vinaya regulations with the *ānantaryakarma* theory. However, this Abhidharma proposition is not supported in the Vinayas. Vinayas place Devadatta’s schismatic stories after his other heinous crimes, as the Vinayas always situate the legal regulations about *saṅghabheda* at the end, and Devadatta’s schismatic stories have to be placed directly before these statutory regulations to make narration fluent and logically coherent.

⁴⁶⁶ About this figure, see DPPN., s.v. “*Ariṭṭha (Sutta) 1*”. His story is mainly recorded in the section of the *pācittiya* offense (Vin. iv.135).

⁴⁶⁷ One narrative in the Sarvāstivāda *Shisong lū* seems to have been composed against the background of the argument about the “first offender” paradox. In this Vinaya, before Devadatta’s act of murdering Śākyamuni, he attempted to instigate a schism, but was persuaded by Śākyamuni from carrying it out (T. 1435 [XXIII] 259b6–c14). That is to say, Devadatta actually attempted to split the *saṅgha* twice. This arrangement seems to me a clever design to render Devadatta not as an “initial” offender, as he had already been reprimanded for the same offense before. In this way, the Vinaya convention that the first transgressor escaped punishment can be avoided in Devadatta’s particular case.

4.1.4 Summary

Different understandings of Devadatta's sins have been highlighted in this section. In the potentially earlier narrative layer, it is not his innately evil nature that is most highlighted and condemned. Instead, stories of Devadatta are commonly utilized as an example to illustrate the dangers of desires for excessive worldly profit, which can corrupt even a decent monk with firm resolve. Devadatta usually appears as a victimized monk who is bewildered by worldly desire.

This sympathetic reading of Devadatta's corruption, although commonly appearing in the Vinaya stories of Devadatta, cannot represent the mainstream approach to understanding his sins in Buddhist literature preserved at present. More frequently, Devadatta's downfall is imputed to his personal evilness, and his sins are extended to many other serious transgressions. As a result, he becomes almost an embodiment of pure evil qualities, responsible for various evil deeds, especially his presumptuous challenge of the Buddha. In the discussion of the extension of Devadatta's sins, I have focused on how his early religious achievements are tarnished. There are several narrative traditions that take this direction. Many stories are composed to diminish Devadatta's attainment of the level of magical power, a form of mundane and inferior achievement. This is particularly the case for the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda schools, where Devadatta's mastery of magical power no longer reflects a glorious achievement but his greedy nature. The connection between Devadatta's knowledge of magical power and his greediness is further reinforced in the stories of how he converted Ajātaśatru. In these stories, the yearning for material profit motivated Devadatta to pursue the support of Ajātaśatru. Wielding his magical power, Devadatta made various transformations in front of Ajātaśatru and successfully won Ajātaśatru's patronage. However, different Buddhist schools convey different messages through Devadatta's conversion of Ajātaśatru. In the Theravaṃsa, Mahīśāsaka, and Dharmaguptaka schools, Devadatta is reported to frighten Ajātaśatru with his magical transformations, the most noticeable one being his manifestation as a young boy, which bears a remarkable resemblance to a still unclear myth of Śiva. In comparison, the (Mūla)Sarvāstivāda schools believe Devadatta's strategy is not to frighten Ajātaśatru but to fawn on him, and Ajātaśatru shifts from a frightened prince to a curious one who shows great interest in this boy. The further events of the plot, in which Devadatta voluntarily swallowed Ajātaśatru's saliva out of servility, perhaps reflect a rigid understanding of the nature of *buddhavacana* in several

(Mūla)Sarvāstivādin texts: calling to mind that the Buddha once scolded Devadatta as “an eater of saliva” (perhaps due to a corrupted transmission of the word *kheḷāsaka/kheṭāsaka*), these monks abandoned the figurative function of saliva to embody the affection between Ajātaśatru and Devadatta, and changed it into a story in which Devadatta indeed swallowed the saliva of Ajātaśatru in order to demonstrate the depths of Devadatta’s servitude.

However, as more and more stories were created that extend and exaggerate Devadatta’s evilness, less and less attention was paid to the legal discussion of schismatics. Consequently, the Vinaya requirement that a schismatic must be a proper, respectable monk frequently turned out to be incompatible with the new compositions about Devadatta’s evil deeds. Many traditional Buddhist monks, as reported in Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma texts, were well aware of this conflict. In order to reconcile Devadatta’s image as a notorious evildoer with his central image as a schismatic, they proposed a chronological sequence for the various *ānantaryakarmas* Devadatta incurred: he must first have committed the sin of instigating a schism before other kinds of *ānantaryakarmas*. However, this chronology, as a retrospective construct, cannot be confirmed in the Vinayas. Different aspects of Devadatta’s image, due to their various contexts of composition, contradict each other, making the Devadatta stories one of the most complicated but intriguing narrative complexes, with quite an elusive religious significance.

4.2 Theoretical challenges to the Buddha's authority when Devadatta was portrayed as a powerful enemy

It is a widely accepted idea among sociologists that creating a common enemy contributes to the construction of identity, both personal and social.⁴⁶⁸ The Buddhist vilification of Devadatta can also be understood from this perspective: through the diabolization of Devadatta, the schismatic “other,” Buddhists manage to reach a loose but consensual community identity. However, in the process of creating a powerful, troublesome enemy, the absolute power and capability of the hero (i.e., the Buddha in our case) is simultaneously compromised and even challenged, raising questions such as: Why could the omnipotent Buddha not prevent Devadatta from committing those evil sins? How could the evildoer Devadatta have the capability to jeopardize the Buddha's monastic community and even injure the Buddha himself? The same doubt can also be raised toward the present birth of Devadatta: if Devadatta was always an evildoer in his past lives, how do we explain the fact that Devadatta was born as a human, and beyond that, a noble human (Śākya prince) in this life, which was only the fruition of wholesome *karmas*?

4.2.1 Why did Śākyamuni admit Devadatta, inviting the schismatic to enter the *saṅgha*?

This question must have bewildered many Buddhists and aroused the interest of the composers of the *Milindapañha*. In one dialogue between Nāgasena and King Milinda, the *Milindapañha* directly touches on one of these questions: if Śākyamuni Buddha was really the omniscient one, why did he allow Devadatta, the future schismatic, to receive ordination?⁴⁶⁹

⁴⁶⁸ Since the time of Emile Durkheim, the father of sociology, the significance of creating a powerful enemy in strengthening social solidarity has been well recognized. For a short summary of recent related scholarship, see Sullivan et al. 2014: 292–293.

⁴⁶⁹ Mil. 108–109: “*Kiṃ pana, bhante nāgasena, buddho jānāti devadatto pabbajitvā saṅghaṃ bhindissati, saṅghaṃ bhinditvā kappaṃ niraye paccissati*”ti?

“*Āma, mahārāja, tathāgato jānāti ‘devadatto pabbajitvā saṅghaṃ bhindissati, saṅghaṃ bhinditvā kappaṃ niraye paccissati*’”ti.

“*Yadī, bhante nāgasena, buddho jānāti ‘devadatto pabbajitvā saṅghaṃ bhindissati, saṅghaṃ bhinditvā kappaṃ niraye paccissati*’ti, tena hi, bhante nāgasena, buddho kāruṇiko anukampako hitesī sabbasattānaṃ ahitaṃ apanetvā hitaṃ upadahaṭṭhi yaṃ vacanaṃ, taṃ micchā. Yadi taṃ ajānitvā pabbājesi, tena hi buddho

“However, revered Nāgasena, did the Buddha know that Devadatta would split the *saṅgha* after he went forth and that after splitting the *saṅgha*, Devadatta would be tortured in hell for a *kalpa*?”

“Yes, great king, the Tathāgata knew that Devadatta would split the *saṅgha* after he went forth and that after he split the *saṅgha*, he would be tortured in hell for a *kalpa*.”

“If, revered Nāgasena, the Buddha knew that Devadatta would split the *saṅgha* after going forth, and knew that after he split the *saṅgha*, he would be tortured in hell for a *kalpa*, then, Venerable Nāgasena, it is a false statement that the Buddha, being compassionate, merciful and desiring welfare of others, has relieved all sentient beings of ill, and furnished them with welfare. However, if the Buddha let Devadatta go forth without knowing (his future misfortune), then the Buddha was not omniscient. This is indeed a double-edged question put to you. Please unravel this great tangle and dispel the criticism of the adversaries. In the distant future, monks with insight like you will be hard to find. Please manifest your power here.”

In the above paragraph, Milinda points out a quite acute and forceful problem in Devadatta’s stories: since it was Śākyamuni Buddha who permitted Devadatta’s renunciation, if the Buddha did not realize that Devadatta was a future schismatic, the Buddha would not be an omniscient one (*asabbaññū*); on the other hand, if the Buddha indeed predicted Devadatta’s future schismatic activities, then his supreme compassion, kindness, and beneficence (*kāruṇiko anumāpako hitesī*) would be challenged, as he provided no help in preventing Devadatta from the fate of incurring horrible retribution for causing a schism. That is to say, the Devadatta narrative gives rise to the tricky conundrum of balancing Śākyamuni’s omniscience and compassion: either Śākyamuni’s omniscience would be compromised, or his compassion would be impaired.

Having expressed such doubt, the *Milindapañha* offers a solution to this paradox. In Nāgasena’s response, he confirmed both Śākyamuni’s supreme compassion and his omniscience. According to Nāgasena, Śākyamuni had already recognized the future

asabbaññūti. Ayampi ubhato koṭiko pañho tavānupatto, vijaṭehi etaṃ mahājaṭaṃ, bhinda parāpavādaṃ. Anāgate addhāne tayā sadisā buddhimanto bhikkhū dullabhā bhavissanti. Ettha tava balaṃ pakāsehi”ti.

Translation is based on Horner 1963–1964: I. 151–152, with my revisions.

schismatic deed of Devadatta, and he ordained Devadatta out of compassion. Śākyamuni understood that one's *karmas* would be limited once admitted to the monastic community, and therefore he accepted Devadatta's ordination, whereby Devadatta's sufferings could be confined—"One's infinite *karma* will be limited after he goes forth in my teaching, and the suffering due to his previous *karmas* will also be limited."⁴⁷⁰

However, the meaning of the quoted sentence needs to be examined in the Buddhist ethical and karmic contexts. First of all, what does it mean to limit Devadatta's affliction to a lesser degree (*pariyantakatam dukkham bhavissati*) by admitting him into the Buddhist monastic community? Does it imply that Devadatta could have committed even worse crimes if he had not gone forth? Probably not, since in Buddhist understandings of sinfulness, there is no sin more heinous than Devadatta's transgressions, including causing a schism in the lifetime of the Buddha, attempting the murder of the Buddha, drawing the Buddha's blood or killing an arhat. Nāgasena possibly meant that, after making Devadatta a Buddhist monk, the Buddha could limit Devadatta's suffering by rescuing him from *saṃsāra*, the almost infinite karmic loop, since one's *karmas* would transmigrate endlessly without the proper deliverance (i.e., the Buddhist teaching). However, the ultimate salvation of Devadatta came at the expense of exposing him to more lurid but terminable afflictions in the Avīci. Comparing Śākyamuni to a kindhearted person who begged the king to revoke the death penalty of a thief and to replace it with the punishment of cutting off the thief's hands and feet, Nāgasena actually implied that Śākyamuni led Devadatta to undergo dreadful afflictions in the Avīci with the final goal of rescuing Devadatta from *saṃsāra*. In other words, in Nāgasena's explanation, Śākyamuni was fully aware of the potential crimes that Devadatta would commit afterward, but instead of preventing Devadatta from incurring such horrible retribution, Śākyamuni allowed these crimes to occur. This acquiescent attitude, according to Nāgasena, would not cause Śākyamuni any demerit (*na kiñci apuññaṃ āpajjeyya antamaso gaddūhanamattaṃ pi*), as Devadatta's sin was his own fault. Again, with the analogy that Śākyamuni was like a physician who cut open the wound of the

⁴⁷⁰ Mil. 108–109: *imassa apariyantakatam kammaṃ mama sāsane pabbajitassa pariyantakatam bhavissati, purimaṃ upādāya pariyantakatam dukkham bhavissati.*

CPD. s.v. *apariyanta*. In Horner's translation, she comments that *apariyantakata-kamma* connotes an infinite karmic retribution, in which "no term is set to these results ever wearing to a karmic close, so they will go on continuously" (Horner 1963–1964: I. 152n.3). That is to say, according to my understanding, the significance of this concept is similar to that of the first noble truth: beings undergo infinite transmigration (*saṃsāra*) between different living states, and therefore always experience suffering (*dukkha*).

wounded and employed painful treatments to heal the wound, Nāgasena argued that Śākyamuni had already alleviated Devadatta's suffering in the long run, although in a painful, harsh manner. Nāgasena believed that Śākyamuni's strategy was indeed effective: at the moment of dying, Devadatta found his faith in Śākyamuni Buddha,⁴⁷¹ which secured his attainment of pratyekabuddhahood in a considerably distant future.⁴⁷²

At first glance, Nāgasena's apology, which likened Śākyamuni to a benefactor who saved a sinner from truly appalling punishment by proposing a less intensive punishment, sounds convincing. However, there exists a logical fallacy in Nāgasena's assumption: compared to a "thief with the death penalty" and a "seriously wounded one," Devadatta had already been treated as the heinous sinner before he actually constituted such horrific crimes. If Devadatta had not been admitted into the monastic community, he would not have become the "thief with the death penalty" or the "significantly wounded one who urgently needs salvation."

The paradox between the Buddha's omniscience and compassion in Devadatta's case is also noted and discussed in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. In its version of Devadatta's death, Devadatta, right before fully sinking into the earth, pronounced his final verses and placed his faith in the Buddha. The text immediately adds the following comment after these verses of Devadatta:⁴⁷³

The Tathāgata, having indeed seen this condition, made Devadatta go forth. This is because, if Devadatta had not gone forth, remaining as a layman, he would have committed grievous crimes and not been able to create the condition to escape from

⁴⁷¹ Mil. 111: *devadatto, mahārāja, maraṇakāle: "Imehi aṭṭhīhi tamaggapuggalaṃ, devātidēvaṃ naradammaṣārathīṃ; samantacakkhuṃ satapuññalakkhaṇaṃ, pāṇehi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ upemī'ti, pāṇupetaṃ saraṇamagamāsi* (Great king! Devadatta, at the moment when he was dying, sought refuge when still alive, proclaiming: "With these bones, with all [my] lives, I take refuge in the Buddha, who is the best of men, the god above gods, the charioteer who disciplines men, the omniscient one, the one bearing marks of one hundred kinds of virtues.")

⁴⁷² Mil. 111: *cha koṭṭhāse kate kappe atikkante paṭhamakoṭṭhāse saṃghaṃ bhindī, *pañcakoṭṭhāsaṃ nīraye paccitvā tato muccitvā aṭṭhissaro nāma paccekabuddho bhavissati* (In a *kalpa* consisting of six sections, he split the *saṅgha* after the first section. After he was tortured in hell for the rest of the five sections, he would be liberated and become a *pratyekabuddha* with the name Aṭṭhissara). *DPG.: *pañcakoṭṭhāse*.

⁴⁷³ Dhṛp-A. i. 147–148: *idaṃ kira thānaṃ disvā tathāgato Devadattaṃ pabbājesi. sace hi so na pabbajissa, gihī hutvā kammaṃ ca bhāriyaṃ akarissa āyatibhavassa ca paccayaṃ* [DPG *āyatīṃ bhavanissaraṇapaccayaṃ*] *kātuṃ na sakkissa, pabbajitvā pana, kiñcāpi kammaṃ bhāriyaṃ karissati, āyatibhavassa paccayaṃ* [DPG *āyatīṃ bhavanissaraṇapaccayaṃ*] *kātuṃ sakkhissattīti tena taṃ sathā pabbājesi. So hi ito sataṣaṣakappamatthale* [DPG **ke*] *Aṭṭhissaro nāma paccekabuddho bhavissati*.

rebirth in the future; but if he had gone forth, no matter what grievous crimes he had committed, he would be able to create the condition to escape from rebirth in the future.” (At the end of a hundred thousand *kalpas*, he will become a *pratyekabuddha* named Aṭṭhissara.)

In this discussion, the text repeats almost the same viewpoint as found in the *Milindapañha*, namely, Śākyamuni’s admission of Devadatta precisely reflects his compassion for Devadatta rather than his ignorance of Devadatta’s potential crimes. In the explanation of the text, Śākyamuni had already predicted that Devadatta was fated to be swallowed by the earth after going forth; however, Śākyamuni still allowed his ordination, because this would lead to an opportunity to liberate Devadatta from *samsāra* in the future (*āyatim bhavanissaraṇapaccaya*). If Devadatta had missed the opportunity, he would never have been able to liberate himself from the circuit of rebirths (*āyatim bhavanissaraṇapaccayaṃ kātuṃ na sakkissa*).⁴⁷⁴

It is not merely the Theravaṃsa Buddhists who are concerned about whether Śākyamuni’s admission of Devadatta reflected his impaired clairvoyance. The *Shengjing* 生經 (T. 154), a collection of *jātaka* stories translated into Chinese during the third century, also asks the same question as to why Śākyamuni allowed Devadatta to join the Buddhist community:⁴⁷⁵

At one time, the Buddha dwelled in the Gṛdhra-kūṭa Mountain in Rājagṛha, together with 1,250 great monks. At that moment, the monks thought to themselves: “In virtue of the dignity and majesty (*anubhāvena*) of the Buddha, which all gods feel sympathetically, unusual things occur. In this regard, the Blessed One always relies on compassion and mercy, but Devadatta returns malignancy to the Tathāgata. The Buddha treats him with great mercy and magnanimity.” Some monks then spoke thus: “In the past, did the Buddha fail to perceive the malignancy of Devadatta, (not realizing) that Devadatta possessed a guileful and vicious mind, and consequently allowed his going forth and tonsure?” Some other monks each explained: “The

⁴⁷⁴ However, a careful examination of this argument poses a new problem in our understanding of the Buddhist karmic system: Is it part of a *karma* theory that a sentient being has only one chance to attain liberation from *samsāra*, and the opportunity is so rare and priceless that it is even worth the price of enormous sufferings in the Avīci hell?

⁴⁷⁵ T. 154 (III) 101b15–c5.

Buddha has already foreknown that Devadatta would become malignant, possessing a guileful and dangerous mind.” Some then spoke: “Who allowed Devadatta’s tonsure and made him a *śramaṇa*?” The Buddha heard the discussion of these monks from a distance and approached them, speaking thus to the monks: “The viciousness of Devadatta is immeasurable. I could speak endlessly about it even if only quoting the main points [of his viciousness].”⁴⁷⁶

The Buddha said: “Indeed! Indeed! The monk Devadatta always possesses a vicious mind toward the Tathāgata and is never peaceful and pleasant. (In contrast,) I discipline him with a compassionate mind. From an extremely remote past that is beyond measure, the Buddha has already foreknown that Devadatta is vicious and possesses a dangerous and guileful mind, but I still attempt to discipline him with a compassionate mind. Since I have always perceived the fact of [his true nature], I make him a Buddhist monk. I hope to help him establish and gather noble virtues. Based on this, I plan to save him through the effect brought about by (the act of) going forth. Devadatta takes refuge in me while possessing a vicious mind not only in this life, but I always greatly expand my truly compassionate intention to discipline him.”⁴⁷⁷

Through the lips of confused monks, the text points out the severe paradox in Devadatta’s renunciation: since Devadatta became a schismatic after joining the Buddhist monastic community, and since the Buddha was omniscient, how to explain the fact that it was the Buddha himself who ordained Devadatta? Utilizing a strategy similar to that of the *Milindapañha*, the text explains this from the perspective of Śākyamuni’s ultimate compassion. Accordingly, Śākyamuni was indeed omniscient and had already realized Devadatta’s future offenses; however, Śākyamuni still permitted Devadatta’s ordination because Śākyamuni hoped to offer Devadatta an opportunity to accumulate wholesome

⁴⁷⁶ 一時，佛遊王舍城靈鷲山中，與大比丘千二百五十人俱。爾時諸比丘，心自興念：“承佛威神，諸天感之，得未曾有。於是世尊，常以慈愍，調達而反害意，向於如來。佛以大哀弘意待之。”或復比丘而說此言：“往者世尊，豈不察知調達凶惡，心懷詭害，而令捨家除其頭髮？”或有比丘各各議言：“佛已預知調達凶惡心懷危詭。”或有議言：“誰令調達除頭髮，而作沙門？”佛遙聞之諸比丘眾共議此事，便到其所，告諸比丘：“調達凶惡，不可稱量，舉要言之，言不可竟。”

⁴⁷⁷ 佛言：“如是，如是！其比丘調達者，常以害心向於如來，未曾和悅，吾以慈心而降伏之。昔者過去久遠時世已來難量，從爾以來，佛久知之，調達凶惡，心懷危詭，吾以慈心而降伏之。續知如此，故為沙門，欲令建立攝取善德，以是為本，由因出家緣得救護欲計。調達不但今世求吾之便而懷害心，吾常至真慈心弘普而降伏之。”

karmas. After all, in Buddhist ethics, being a monk is a most meritorious thing.⁴⁷⁸ However, this argument is also fragile, and it is easy to imagine counterarguments: the admission of Devadatta into the *saṅgha* did not merely provide him the opportunity to generate wholesome *karmas*; more importantly, it opened the gate for Devadatta to split the monastic communities.⁴⁷⁹

In addition, there have been other ways proposed to resolve the paradox of Śākyamuni's admitting Devadatta. Recall the stories in the *Zengyi ahan jing* and the *Fo benxing ji jing* in which Devadatta was accused of receiving illegal ordination. In these stories, Śākyamuni, who was omniscient and foresaw the perils Devadatta would cause to the *saṅgha*, refused Devadatta's demand for ordination. In both stories, Śākyamuni advised Devadatta to remain a householder and to accumulate merit by making donations to the monastic community (note the contradiction with the above n. 473 in which the Buddha believed Devadatta had to go forth in order to obtain liberation from *samsāra*). However, Devadatta was not frustrated but chose to tonsure himself (in the *Zengyi ahan jing*)—or to practice as a Buddhist monk covertly in remote areas until he deceived a monk into conferring upon him official ordination (in the *Fo benxing ji jing*). The duplicity highlighted here can be understood as a strategy to help Śākyamuni avert the possible charge of unwisely ordaining Devadatta. Even though the Buddha had already perceived the past and future (unwholesome) *karmas* of Devadatta, and even though he had refused to admit Devadatta into the monastic community out of compassion, he could not prevent Devadatta from deceptively obtaining ordination.

⁴⁷⁸ There are many Avadāna stories that illustrate the great merit one would reap upon becoming a monk. For instance, in the *Śrīvyddhi-avadāna*, discussed in the second chapter above, the merit of going forth is described as follows: “the fruit of making a donation, which blesses one for ten births and causes one to be reborn in the realm between the six heavens and the human world ten times, is still inferior to the merit of allowing others to go forth or going forth by oneself. Why? The merit as the fruit of making a donation is limited, whilst the merit of going forth is immeasurable and boundless ... Therefore, the Buddha explained that [the amount of] merit of going forth is higher than Mount Sumeru, deeper than the great ocean, and wider than the space (T. 202 [IV] 376b7–28: 布施之報，十世受福，六天人中，往返十到，猶故不如放人出家，及自出家功德為勝。何以故？布施之報，福有限極；出家之福，無量無邊...是故佛說出家功德，高於須彌、深於大海、廣於虛空).

⁴⁷⁹ Although we are also told that becoming a monk reaps tremendous merit, whether the sin incurred by Devadatta's transgressions as a monk outweighed the merit accumulated in his Buddhist career or the other way round, is still an open debate. This discussion could generate another lengthy theological debate that may produce more questions than solutions, and therefore, I have to put it aside due to considerations of space of my dissertation.

4.2.2 Why was Devadatta able to encounter the Buddha as a Śākya prince in this life?

The image of Devadatta as the Śākyamuni's chief rival has fueled the literary imagination of Buddhists, and a large amount of *jātaka* stories interrelating the past lives of Devadatta and Śākyamuni Buddha have been composed and disseminated by Buddhists of different sectarian schools, geographical territories and chronological periods. The majority of these Jātakas castigate Devadatta for his malice toward Śākyamuni Buddha and explain Devadatta's evil nature as the karmic result of his habitual past-life role of being the persecutor of Śākyamuni Buddha.⁴⁸⁰ For instance, in the *Milindapañha*, Nāgasena states that over the course of numerous previous lives, Devadatta always played the antagonist to Śākyamuni.⁴⁸¹

However, if Devadatta always did harm to the Buddha and accumulated unwholesome *karmas* in his past lives, how could Devadatta be reborn as a human and encounter Śākyamuni Buddha in this life, something which, according to the *karma* doctrine, is a highly positive result? Many ancient Buddhists realized this paradox in Devadatta's *karmas* and offered solutions to resolve it. In the *Milindapañha*, the solution is to openly acknowledge the good deeds of Devadatta in his past lives (Mil. 200–205). In one paragraph, it even asserts that Devadatta was occasionally superior to Śākyamuni in their past lives:⁴⁸²

“Revered Nāgasena, you say, ‘Devadatta is entirely black, possessed of dharmas that are entirely black; the Bodhisattva is entirely white, possessed of mental states that are entirely white.’ But on the other hand, in rebirth after rebirth, Devadatta was the same as the Bodhisattva regarding his renown and entourage and was

⁴⁸⁰ For instance, the *Kurungamiga-jātaka* (J. 21), *Godha-jātaka* (J. 141), *Kurungamiga-jātaka* (J. 206), *Cullanandīya-jātaka* (J. 222), *Suvannakakkata-jātaka* (J. 389), *Campeyya-jātaka* (J. 506), *Chaddanta-jātaka* (J. 514), *Khaṇḍahāla-jātaka* (J. 542), etc.

⁴⁸¹ Mil. 136; Horner 1963–1964: I. 190.

⁴⁸² Mil. 200–204. “*Bhante nāgasena, tumhe bhaṇatha ‘devadatto ekantaṇṇho, ekantaṇṇhehi dhammehi samannāgato, bodhisatto ekantasukko, ekantasukkehi dhammehi samannāgato’ti. Puna ca devadatto bhava bhava yasena ca pakkhena ca bodhisattena samasamo hoti, kadāci adhikataro vā. Yadā devadatto nagare bārāṇasiyaṃ brahmadattassa rañño purohitaputto ahoṣi, tadā bodhisatto chavakacaṇḍālo ahoṣi, vijjādharo, vijjāṃ pariappitvā akāle ambaphalāni nibbattesi. Ettha tāva bodhisatto devadattato jātiyā niḥiṇo yasena ca niḥiṇo ... Devadattopi, mahārāja, issariye ṭhito janapadesu ārakkhaṃ deti, setuṃ sabhaṃ puññasālaṃ kāreti, samaṇabrāhmaṇānaṃ kapaṇaddhikavaṇṇibbakānaṃ nāthānāthānaṃ yathāpaṇihitaṃ dānaṃ deti. Tassa so vipākena bhava bhava sampattiyo paṭilabhati. Kassetam, mahārāja, sakkā vattum vinā dānena damena saṃyamena uposathakammena sampattiṃ anubhavissati?’” The English translation is based on Horner 1963–1964: I. 289–290, 295, with my revisions.*

sometimes even more eminent. When Devadatta was the son of King Brahmadata's priest in Bārāṇasī, the Bodhisattva was then a wretched *caṇḍāla*, a sorcerer who had uttered a charm and produced unseasonal mango fruits. Here, the Bodhisattva was inferior in birth to Devadatta and inferior in renown." ... (Devadatta's other glorious past lives are omitted here.)

"Yet, Great King, when Devadatta was established in authority, he gave protection to the people, built bridges, rest houses, and halls for (making) merit and gave donations to *śramaṇas* and brahmins, to the unprotected poor, traveling mendicants and beggars, according to his aspiration. When his *karma* bore fruit, in life after life, he acquired prosperity. Of whom is it possible to say, Great King, that without generosity, self-control, restraint, without carrying out the Observance, one would obtain prosperity?"

The paradox in Devadatta's rebirth is so forceful that the traditional *jātaka* way of adding more evil deeds to this figure cannot work anymore. The composers of the *Milindapañha* must have been well aware of this situation. They attempted to rescue the Devadatta narrative from becoming a total antinomy by resorting to the *karma* theory itself: since Devadatta enjoyed a noble birth and encountered the Buddha in his present life, he must have accumulated wholesome *karmas*. Treating him as an ordinary person who accumulated both wholesome and unwholesome *karmas* in his past lives, the text claims that Devadatta was once a benevolent person who provided relief for the poor and donated generously in his past lives. Owing to the merit produced by these positive *karmas*, Devadatta was reborn into numerous privileged lives, some of which were even superior to the contemporary past lives of Śākyamuni. By acknowledging that Devadatta once had glorious achievements, the text explains why Devadatta had the fortune to be born into the Śākya family and encountered Śākyamuni as one of his cousins.

Moreover, the *Shengjing* 生經 (T. 154) proposes a different way to cope with the paradox of Devadatta's rebirth. Although similarly correlating Devadatta's present life with his deeds in one of his past lives, the *Shengjing* does not attribute his current birth to the

wholesome *karma* he once accumulated, but instead to the power of a vow once taken by him when he was an acquaintance of the Bodhisattva.⁴⁸³

Incalculably long *kalpas* ago, one person made a significant donation and offered alms to thousands of heretics and brahmins. For dozens of years, a rule was established among brahmins that the one who knows more about scriptures takes a superior seat. Among them, there was a brahmin who was senior in age and rich in wisdom. He ranked at the top of the assembly. At that moment, the Bodhisattva was a young boy and also dwelled in the mountain to study scriptures and science. His knowledge was so broad as to cover every subject.⁴⁸⁴

At that time, he came to the assembly and seated himself at the far end of the crowd. He took turns asking the people next to him what they knew. One after the other, they [proved] not to be his equals. When he approached the head seat and asked about the knowledge of the senior brahmin, the senior brahmin was also inferior to the young boy. [However,] over the past 12 years, (the senior brahmin) had been filled with desires. (This is because) the one who knows the most scriptures was offered nine products: golden horses, silver saddles and bridles, lovely girls, golden water jars and golden water plates and golden or silver bedding, and other supremely delicate things like this.⁴⁸⁵

The senior brahmin then thought to himself: “In the past 12 years, nobody could rival me. However, this young boy has suddenly surpassed me. People will, therefore, look down on me. The material gains are not worth mentioning, but the loss of fame is not an easy thing (for me).” Therefore, he spoke to the young boy: “I can give you all nine kinds of thing that are donated to me, but you should take a slightly lower position than mine. Let me take the higher position.”⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸³ T. 154 (III) 107c17–108a17.

⁴⁸⁴ 昔無數劫時，有一人大興布施，供養外道梵志無數千人。數年之中，諸梵志法，知經多者，得為上座。中有梵志，年耆多智，會中第一。時儒童菩薩，亦在山中，學諸經術，無所不博。

⁴⁸⁵ 時來就會，坐其下頭，次問所知，展轉不如，乃至上座，問長老梵志所知，亦不如儒童。十二年向己欲滿。知經多者，當以九種物以用施之。九種物者，金馬、銀鞍勒及端正女、金澡罐及金澡盤、金銀床席，皆絕妙好，如是之比，有九種物。

⁴⁸⁶ 長老梵志，便自思惟：“吾十二年中，無係我者，而此年少，歎乃勝吾，人可羞恥。物不足言，失名不易。”便語儒童：“所施九物，盡當相與，卿小下我，使吾在上。”

The young boy replied: “I base myself on principle, not on importunate actions. If I realized my inferiority, I would definitely take a lower position without any resentment.”

The senior brahmin was vexed and annoyed; he left the seat and gave it to him. The seat was decorated with seven kinds of jewels and was extremely exquisite. The senior brahmin asked the young boy: “What is the purpose of your study?”

He answered: “I pursue *abhisambodhi* in order to liberate all sentient beings.”⁴⁸⁷

The senior brahmin became malicious and spiteful and thought to himself: “Life after life, I vow to impede you from fulfilling your wish. I will prevent you from achieving it! Even if you become a buddha, I will still disturb you and do unwholesome things.” Then, he thought to himself again: “Since good people take a different path from the evil ones, I’m afraid I will not encounter him [in my following births]. The only solution is to cultivate my virtues devotedly. In this way, I will meet him.” Thereupon, he [generated the mind of] practicing the six *pāramitās* and simultaneously cultivating various virtues, without a single thought of abandonment. Therefore, the senior brahmin departed and distributed the nine products obtained from the donors to all brahmins. Having made them divide [the nine products], he made each of them deduct one silver coin to give to the young boy, [with the words]: “He [the senior brahmin] refuses to receive the nine products and make us divide them equally.” After the young boy received the coins, they parted from each other.⁴⁸⁸

(In this way,) until the Bodhisattva completed the path, Devadatta was always following the Bodhisattva, [the two] being born together and dying together as

⁴⁸⁷ 儒童答曰：“吾自以理，不強在上，若我知劣，我自在下，無所恨也。”

梵志懊惱，避座與之，七寶校飾，極為精妙。長老梵志，因問儒童：“卿之學問，何所求索？”

答言：“吾求阿惟三佛，度脫萬姓。”

⁴⁸⁸ 長老梵志，心毒患生，內誓願言：“吾當世世壞子之心，令不得成，若故作佛，亦亂之不宜。”復念言：“善惡殊途，恐不相值，唯當大修德，爾乃相遇耳。”便行六度無極，兼修諸善，恒無廢捨之意。於是別去，施主九物與諸梵志，使各分之己，各減一銀錢，追與儒童：“不受九物，使吾之等普分得之。”儒童受已，各自別去。

brothers. Devadatta always harmed the Bodhisattva. At that time, the senior brahmin was Devadatta, and the younger boy was Śākyamuni Buddha. In virtue of the original vow, they never separated from each other. This is the [whole course,] from the beginning to the end.”⁴⁸⁹

From the story, we can see that the composers of the *Shengjing* indeed felt an imperative to address the conflict between Devadatta’s role as an inveterate evildoer in his numerous past lives and his present encounter with Śākyamuni. In order to make the two aspects compatible, the text narrates a Jātaka story in which a senior brahmin (Devadatta), out of hatred, swore to prevent the Bodhisattva from attaining buddhahood in each life. In order to fulfill his vow, the senior brahmin strove to cultivate the six *pāramitās* and accumulate wholesome *karmas* so that he could be born in the same realm of the Bodhisattva. That is to say, in order to harmonize Devadatta’s good present birth with his consistent role as an injurer of the Buddha, the text concedes that Devadatta once practiced the six *pāramitās*, although his practices were motivated by the hatred of Śākyamuni Buddha. Because of the power of his strong volition to obstruct Śākyamuni in every life and his efforts to fulfill this vow, Devadatta was able to be born into the Śākya family and became a cousin of Śākyamuni.

The *Shengjing* also narrates another intertwined past life between Śākyamuni and Devadatta, which renders a new understanding of the interaction between these two figures: In a remote past, a wealthy householder promised to marry his daughter to the brahmin who possessed the best knowledge. Devadatta, an old, ugly but wise brahmin, was the most intelligent of five hundred brahmins, but the householder was reluctant to marry his daughter to him. Later, with the arrival of a new brahmin (the Bodhisattva in a past life), young and handsome, and also possessed of vast knowledge, the story develops as follows:⁴⁹⁰

The assembly of the five hundred brahmins were all inferior to (the Bodhisattva) in wisdom, and therefore, the young brahmin took a higher seat. At that moment, at the sight of him, the parents of the girl became greatly elated: “We have been

⁴⁸⁹ 菩薩道成，調達恒與菩薩相隨，俱生俱死，共為兄弟，恒壞菩薩。爾時長老梵志，調達是也；
儒童者，釋迦文佛是；以本誓故，恒不相離，是其本末也。

⁴⁹⁰ T. 154 (III) 75a6–b17.

looking for a son-in-law for a really long time. Today, our wish is finally fulfilled.”

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However, the senior brahmin spoke thus: “I am already advanced in age, and the householder has promised to marry his daughter to me for a long time. If you let me marry the girl, I will give you all the wealth granted to me. You should give up this girl. Out of sympathy for my old age, you should not hurt and insult me.”⁴⁹²

However, the young brahmin replied: “It is not correct to overstep the [limits of] the rule to yield to social courtesies. I should be the one who marries her. Why should I give her to you?” After three months had entirely passed, they married the maiden to the young brahmin.⁴⁹³

The mind of the senior one was invaded with malice and wickedness: “You hurt and insult me and grab my wife. I will act as your foe life after life. I will harm you. I will defame you. I will never let it go!”⁴⁹⁴

The young brahmin constantly acted with a compassionate mind, but he (i.e., the senior brahmin) alone possessed malicious intention. The Buddha said to the monks: “The senior brahmin at that moment was Devadatta now; the young brahmin was me. The girl was Gopikā. Our karmic connection in the previous life has not yet been disentangled.”⁴⁹⁵

In a similar fashion, the text turns to the power of Devadatta’s vow of revenge to explain why Devadatta was always born together with Śākyamuni. The composers of this story must

⁴⁹¹ 五百之眾，智皆不及。年少梵志則處上坐。時，女父母及女見之，皆大歡喜：“吾求女婿，其日甚久，今乃獲願。”

⁴⁹² 年尊梵志曰：“吾年既老，久許我女，以為妻婦。且以假我，所得賜遺，悉用與卿，可置此婦，傷我年高，勿相毀辱。”

⁴⁹³ 年少答曰：“不可越法以從人情。我應納之，何為與卿？”三月畢竟，即處女用與年少梵志。

⁴⁹⁴ 其年老者，心懷毒惡：“卿相毀辱，而奪我婦，世世所在，與卿作怨。或當危害，或加毀辱，終不相置。”

⁴⁹⁵ 年少梵志常行慈心，彼獨懷害。佛告諸比丘：“爾時年尊梵志，今調達是。年少梵志，我身是也。其女者瞿夷是。前世之結，于今不解。”

have been familiar with the stories of Devadatta and Śākyamuni's marriage contest.⁴⁹⁶ Therefore, they tracked the karmic connection back to a parallel situation in one past life when the Buddha married a girl whom Devadatta was supposed to marry. However, in addition to the apparent accusation of Devadatta's jaundiced and irritable personality, this story also expresses slight blame toward the Bodhisattva himself, in view of the fact that Devadatta was, in fact, the first to secure the promise of marriage (久許我女), even though Śākyamuni's knowledge was superior to that of Devadatta. That is to say, Devadatta's eternal hostility toward Śākyamuni was somehow connected to the not fully justified deed of Śākyamuni, in which Śākyamuni stole the fiancée of Devadatta in a past life. Here, the text seems to be tolerant of the view that Śākyamuni once accumulated negative *karmas* in his past lives.⁴⁹⁷

A similar explanation for the deep-rooted hatred of Devadatta is also given in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya in its account of the story of the *jīvaṃjīva* birds.⁴⁹⁸

At that moment, many monks harbored doubts in their mind: “May the Blessed One tell us more about this story. For what reason is there antagonism between the Blessed One and Devadatta ever since their past lives?”

⁴⁹⁶ Note that only in the *Lalitavistara* the woman who Devadatta and the Bodhisattva fought over is Gopikā/Gopā (*juyi* 俱夷; T. 186 [III] 500c18ff. = Lefmann 1902: 142, line 8; Strong 2001: 44–45, 158). In the common versions of the marriage contest between Devadatta and the Bodhisattva, the woman is Yaśodharā rather than Gopikā (Mvu. i. 128–131, ii. 75–77; T. 187 [III] 561c14ff.; T. 190 [III] 707c25ff.;). In the MSV tradition, the stories about Gopikā disclose more about her great strength; for instance, she easily made a hole through the floor with her toe when she first met the Bodhisattva (T. 1450 [XXIV] 112b8–c9); as another example, Gopikā easily threw Devadatta into a pond (Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 259ff., D. 1, 'dul ba, nga, 289b3ff., T. 1450 [XXIV] 149b23ff.).

⁴⁹⁷ The discussion of whether the Buddha had accumulated bad *karmas* has raised a heated debate. For basic studies, see Walter 1990; Cutler 1997; Strong 2012; and Chen 2015: 11ff.

⁴⁹⁸ T. 1450 (XXIV) 195b2–21, Gnoli 1977–1978: II. 177–17: 時諸苾芻心生疑惑：“唯願世尊廣說因緣，世尊共提婆達多，宿世以來，因何有惡？”

爾時世尊告諸苾芻：“汝等諦聽！乃往昔時，近此海邊，有一共命之鳥，一身兩頭：一鳥名法、一名非法。其非法鳥當時眠睡，法鳥眠覺，見流水上，有一甘菓，逐流而來，嘴以取之，作是念：‘彼既睡眠，我今欲喚睡覺共食？為復自食？’復作是念：‘為同一身，我若食已，彼亦得飽。’即便食之。後時非法睡覺已，見法有異，復聞香氣，怪而問曰：‘是何香氣？’答曰：‘我食甘菓。’復問：‘菓今何在？’報言：‘非法！為汝睡眠，此已食訖。’答曰：‘如汝所作，非是好也，我自知時。’後時法鳥眠睡之次，非法見一毒菓於水上流，引嘴往取食之，二俱迷悶，心狂昏亂。爾時非法即設誓言：‘當來所生之處，生生世世，共汝相害，常共為怨。’時法答曰：‘願我生生世世，常共汝為善友。’”

爾時世尊告諸苾芻：“汝意云何？時法鳥者即我身是，非法者即提婆達多是，於彼時中始生怨結，我常行利益之心，天授常懷損害之意。”

The Blessed One spoke to the monks thus: “Listen attentively. In the past, near the shore of this ocean, there lived a *jīvamjīva* bird which had two heads on the same body. One head was named Dharma and the other Non-Dharma. At that time, when the bird Non-Dharma was sleeping, the bird Dharma woke up and saw a sweet fruit floating in the water. He pecked it with his beak and thought thus: ‘Since he is still asleep, shall I wake him up to eat together? Or shall I eat it by myself?’ He then thought in this way: ‘Since we share the same body, he will be satiated if I eat it.’ Thereafter, he ate it. A while later, when Non-Dharma woke up, he perceived that Dharma was [slightly] different. He further smelled a fragrance and became suspicious, asking thus: ‘What is this fragrance?’ [Dharma] answered: ‘I ate a sweet fruit.’ [Non-Dharma] further asked: ‘Where is the fruit now?’ (Dharma) replied: ‘Non-Dharma! Because you were sleeping then, I have already eaten it all.’ [Non-Dharma] responded: ‘What you have done is not good. I know the [proper] time [to do things].’ Later, at the moment when the bird Dharma was sleeping, Non-Dharma saw a poisonous fruit floating in the river. He drew his beak and ate it, and both of them became faint, with their heart palpitating greatly and their consciousness in disorder. At that moment, Non-Dharma made this vow: ‘In my future rebirths, I will always do harm to you, life after life, and always be your enemy.’ At that moment, Dharma answered: ‘May I always be your reliable friend.’”

At that time, the Blessed One spoke to the monks: “What do you think? The bird Dharma was me. Non-Dharma was Devadatta. Our enmity originated from that time. I have constantly practiced with a compassionate mind, while Devadatta has always possessed evil intentions.”

This text traces the enmity between Śākyamuni and Devadatta back to a lifetime when they comprised the two heads of a *jīvamjīva* bird. Devadatta, as the evil head, was irritated because the Bodhisattva, the good head, ate a sweet fruit alone without waking him up. Although the Bodhisattva justified himself that they shared the same body and whatever one ate would ultimately be shared by the other, we have to admit that the Bodhisattva’s action was morally ambiguous, which incurred the endless hatred of Devadatta. In this way, the text gives an explanation of why they were frequently born in the same family in numerous Jātaka stories and why Devadatta could always inflict injuries on the Bodhisattva.

4.2.3 How was Devadatta able to injure the Buddha? Theories about the Buddha's bad *karma*

The stories about Devadatta's vow of revenge, as contained in the *Shengjing* and the *jīvamjīva-jātaka*, actually touch on a third paradox in the Devadatta stories: that is, how could Devadatta physically harm Śākyamuni, the omniscient one? A conventional solution, usually offered by Jātaka stories, is to highlight Devadatta's habitual tendency to inflict injuries on Śākyamuni over countless past lives. As these Jātaka stories intend to prove, it is the *karma* system that always sustains their antagonism. However, in the process, Buddhists could not parry the question of how the antagonism between Devadatta and Śākyamuni was initiated in the karmic loop since there must have been a beginning to Devadatta's enmity to Śākyamuni. The above stories of Devadatta's vow of revenge can then be read as an attempted answer to this question: Devadatta's enmity to Śākyamuni was engendered from the moment Devadatta felt offended by Śākyamuni's not wholly proper deeds.

In fact, a similar answer is also given by a narrative named *Kavikumārāvadāna*, preserved in the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Sanḅhabhedavastu* in Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese, in addition to many other narrative collections such as Kṣemendra's *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*.⁴⁹⁹ Since this is a long story, and its Sanskrit version, based on the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Sanḅhabhedavastu*, was recently translated into English by Asplund (2013: 45–54), I only introduce the version from the Chinese Mūlasarvāstivāda *Sanḅhabhedavastu* briefly. King Sarjarasa had a crown prince named Sūryanemin, who was the former incarnation of Devadatta. Before the death of King Sarjarasa, one of his queen consorts was pregnant, and according to the augur, the expected baby boy would murder the incumbent king and seize the kingship. Therefore, Sūryanemin, the new king, gave the order to kill this pregnant queen consort of his father but was dissuaded by the minister, who advised the new king to wait until the delivery of the baby: if it were a girl, it would constitute no threat to Sūryanemin. However, it turned out that a boy was born, but he was rescued by the minister, who secretly exchanged him with a newborn girl from a fisher family. No doubt this boy prince was the former incarnation of Śākyamuni. When this boy grew up, he showed a talent for literature, and people, therefore, called him by the name *kavi* ("poet"). Later, after realizing that Kavi was his half-brother, King Sūryanemin made many attempts to murder Kavi, all of which ended in futility. In order to survive, Kavi mastered

⁴⁹⁹ For the definition of *Kavikumārāvadāna* and related texts, see Asplund 2013: 4–17.

magical power and transformed himself into a woman who approached and seduced King Sūryanemin. In the end, he successfully murdered King Sūryanemin and replaced him as the new king (T. 1450 [XXIV] 195b2–197a6). In the version of this story contained in the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, the whole story takes place after the incident in which a stone cast by Devadatta injured Śākyamuni’s feet. The aim of Śākyamuni’s monologue of the *Kavikumārāvadāna* story is to explain the previous *karma* that led to Śākyamuni’s injury. In this sense, the composition of the *Kavikumārāvadāna* is an answer to the question of why Devadatta was able to injure Śākyamuni physically. As the story illuminates, Śākyamuni’s current suffering was the karmic fruit of his murder of Devadatta in their past lives. In this way, the animosity between Devadatta and Śākyamuni is partially, if not entirely, attributed to Śākyamuni’s own bad *karma*.

If, in the above version of the *Kavikumārāvadāna*, Śākyamuni’s murder of Devadatta can be partially justified because it was Devadatta who first attempted to persecute Śākyamuni, Śākyamuni became a pure murderer in the *Anavataptagātha*. The *Anavataptagātha* is a compendium of the past karmic events of Śākyamuni himself and his principal disciples. This text is completely preserved in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, and a more archaic version is contained in the Chinese translation *Fo wubai dizi zishuo benqi jing* 佛五百弟子自說本起經 (T. 199; Salomon 2008: 52), attributed to Dharmarakṣa (竺法護, ca. 230–316). In this early Chinese translation, Śākyamuni’s previous bad *karma* is recounted as follows:⁵⁰⁰

Once (I was one of) three brothers who were in dispute over wealth. I pushed them down into the deep valley and lifted stones to murder them. Because of the crime I had committed, I descended into the Great Mountain hell. I was broiled and burned in the Black Rope [hell] (*kālasūtra naraka*) and experienced extremely acute pain. It is due to the effect of my residual *karma* that, Devadatta lifted the rock and when the rock fell, it injured the toes of the Buddha.

In this account, Śākyamuni, blinded by his greed for wealth, murdered his own brothers. Even though he received punishment in hell for innumerable years, his residual *karma* still

⁵⁰⁰ T. 199 (IV) 201c12–18: 曾為三兄弟，而共爭錢財，推撲墜深谷，石*抬以殺之。以是所犯罪，墮太山地獄，燒炙在黑繩，毒痛甚酷苦。以此有餘殃，調達石所抬，於是石墮落，中傷佛足指。*抬>堆 in Song, Yuan, Ming versions of Chinese Tripiṭaka.

influenced his life even after he attained buddhahood. Shocking as it appears, this part of the story is accepted by all extant versions of the *Anavataptaḡāthā*. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhaiṣajyavastu* version,⁵⁰¹ Devadatta is further recognized as the brother who was murdered by Śākyamuni. In this way, a karmic loop is created in which Devadatta, the previous victim, is born as the inflictor, while Śākyamuni, the former persecutor, becomes the victim.⁵⁰²

The recognition of Śākyamuni’s past unwholesome *karmas* seems to have been a well-established tradition in the *Anavataptaḡāthā*. The same story is also narrated in the *Foshuo xingqi xingjing* 佛說興起行經 (T. 197),⁵⁰³ a karmic autobiography of the Buddha himself, which is possibly “a substantially reworked version of the last chapter of the *Anavataptaḡāthā*, and which was apparently excerpted and treated as a separate text and reworked or redacted in a Mahāyāna-influenced environment” (Salomon 2008: 34):

Once the Buddha was dwelling by the great lake Anavatapta, together with five hundred great monks who were all arhats and fully endowed with six magical powers, with the sole exception of Ānanda. At that time, the Buddha spoke to Śāriputra: “In a remote past, in the city of Rājagrha, there was a householder named Sudāna. He possessed great wealth and was abundantly rich in treasures, elephants, horses, seven kinds of jewels, attendants, and hired servants. He possessed sufficient properties. He had a son named Sumati. The father, Sudāna, suddenly died. Sumati also had a brother named Suyaśas who was born from a different mother. Sumati thought: ‘How shall I contrive so as not to share with Suyaśas?’ Then Sumati thought: ‘The only way is to kill him. In this way, I need not share with him.’ Sumati spoke to Suyaśas: ‘Younger brother! Let us go to the Ḡḡhrakūta Mount. I want to talk about some past and future matters.’ Suyaśas answered: ‘Fine.’ Sumati then held the hand of his younger brother and climbed up the

⁵⁰¹ T. 1448 (XXIV) 94a11–b12, D.1, ‘*dul ba, kha* 313b5–314b1 (cf. Yao 2012: 511–512).

⁵⁰² The Mūlasarvāstivāda *Bhaiṣajyavastu* further relates another past-life story, which explains why his foot was pierced by a stick: as a merciful merchant, Śākyamuni once saved a covetous merchant during their sea journey; however, the covetous one, out of envy for the merciful one’s treasure, attempted to chisel the boat so as to make the merciful one’s treasure sink into the water. The merciful merchant, in order to prevent the boat from sinking into the water, pierced the chest of the covetous one with a stick. 根本說一切有部毘奈耶藥事 T. 1448 (XXIV) 94b18–c5 = D.1, ‘*dul ba, kha* 314b1–314b. Cf. Yao 2012: 512–513.

⁵⁰³ T. 197 (IV) 170b12–c3. Fei Changfang’s *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記 attributes this to Kang Mengxiang of the late Han dynasty, which is not accepted by modern scholarship. Nattier (2008: 102–109) does not include this text in Kang Mengxiang’s bibliography.

mountain. Having climbed the mountain, he took him to the edge of an extremely high cliff, pushed him down the cliff, and then crushed him with stone. Thereupon, Suyāśas immediately died.”⁵⁰⁴

The Buddha said to Śāriputra: “Do you not know who the householder Sudāna was? He was none other than my father, King Śuddhodana. The son Sumati at that moment was me. The younger brother was the present Devadatta.”⁵⁰⁵

The Buddha said to Śāriputra: “I at that time coveted wealth and murdered my younger brother. Because of these sins, for innumerable millennia I was burned and tortured in hell and was crushed by an iron mountain. Because of my residual *karma* from that time, even if I have now already achieved *abhisambodhi*, I cannot get rid of this old enemy. When I was traveling around on the Gṛdhrakūta mountain, Devadatta lifted a rock with the width of six *zhangs* [around 60 feet] and length of three *zhangs* and threw it at my head. The god of the Gṛdhrakūta mountain, whose name was Kimbila, caught the rock with his hands. But the small pieces of gravel from the rock still burst forth and hit the toe of the Buddha, drawing blood.”⁵⁰⁶

The underlying motivation for the composition of this narrative can be perceived in the following way: in the conventional karmic framework of an always evil Devadatta versus an always good Buddha, the narrators must have found it hard to accommodate the fact that Devadatta was able to injure Śākyamuni. Therefore, the narrators chose to make the concession that Śākyamuni, just like all other beings, also committed transgressions in his past lives, and was also subject to karmic retribution. In this way, by attributing Śākyamuni’s

⁵⁰⁴ 一時佛在阿耨大泉，與大比丘眾五百人俱，皆是阿羅漢，六通神足，唯除一比丘——阿難也。是時，佛告舍利弗：“往昔過去世，於羅閱祇城，有長者名曰須檀，大富，多饒財寶、象、馬、七珍、僮僕、侍使，產業備足。子名須摩提。其父須檀，奄然命終。須摩提有異母弟，名修耶舍。摩提心念：‘我當云何設計，不與修耶舍分？’須摩提復念：‘唯當殺之，乃得不與耳。’須摩提語修耶舍：‘大弟，共詣耆闍崛山上，有所論說去來。’修耶舍曰：‘可爾。’須摩提即執弟手上山，既上山已，將至絕高崖頭，便推置崖底，以石墮之。便即命絕。”

⁵⁰⁵ 佛語舍利弗：“汝知爾時長者須檀者不？則今父王真淨是也；爾時子須摩提者，則我身是；弟修耶舍者，則今地婆達兜是。”

⁵⁰⁶ 佛語舍利弗：“我爾時貪財、害弟，以是罪故，無數千歲，在地獄中燒煮、為鐵山所墮。爾時殘緣，今雖得阿惟三佛，故不能免此宿對。我於耆闍崛山經行，為地婆達兜舉崖石，長六丈、廣三丈，以擲佛頭。耆闍崛山神，名金埤羅，以手接石，石邊小片迸，墮中佛脚拇指，即破血出。”

sufferings to his own bad *karma*, rather than to the unwholesome *karma* of Devadatta, Buddhists find a solution to resolve the paradox of Śākyamuni’s present sufferings.

The *Anavataptagāthā*’s approach to the Buddha’s past negative *karma* had also influenced the Pāli *Pubbakammapiḷoti-apadāna* (“The *apadāna* of the strands of previous *karmas*”).⁵⁰⁷ This story also accepts the same karmic explanation, namely that Śākyamuni, as a greedy brother, killed his half-brother for the sake of inheritance. Moreover, this *apadāna* story imputes another two sins to Śākyamuni in the explanation of the physical injury caused by Devadatta: in a past life, Śākyamuni threw a shard of pottery at a *pratyekabuddha*, and in another past life, being King Patthiva, he killed a man with a knife.⁵⁰⁸ We can see, in the process of making sense of the Buddha’s injury by Devadatta, the text concedes that Śākyamuni once committed unjustifiable transgressions and was doomed to receive retribution.

However, the admission of Śākyamuni’s unwholesome *karmas* inevitably produces a side effect: Devadatta’s attacks on Śākyamuni could thus be understood as what was deserved by Śākyamuni, which somehow partially relieves Devadatta of responsibility as the guilty party. At the same time, the authority and perfection of Śākyamuni Buddha are no doubt impaired in this process. No wonder it became a heated debate among Buddhists as to whether the Buddha had accumulated unwholesome *karma*.⁵⁰⁹ As suggested by Strong (2012:

⁵⁰⁷ Ap. 299ff.; Walters 1990: 75ff. The influence of the *Anavataptagāthā* on the Pāli text *Apādāna* is examined by Cutler 1994: 30ff. According to Cutler (ibid. 31–32) and Walters (1990: 77–79), the *Pubbakammapiḷoti apadāna* was a direct borrowing from the *Anavataptagāthā*. Cf. also Bechert 1961: 28ff.

⁵⁰⁸ In comparison, most of late canonical Pāli texts or early commentaries (e.g. those by Buddhaghosa) refuse to accept that the Buddha once had negative *karma*, which resulted in his present sufferings. For instance, the *Milindapañha* denies that the Buddha once possessed negative *karma*, and it explains why the Buddha was injured by Devadatta in two ways: “1. Its proximate cause was a freak of nature (the earth sent two boulders to intercept Devadatta’s hurled rock but the collision happened to cause a shard to splinter off); 2. and the real cause ... was the sorrow-working deed of that ungrateful, wicked Devadatta” (Walter 1990: 83). The *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* regards Devadatta as the external agent, the cause of the Buddha’s suffering (Dhp-A. i. 133ff.).

However, in a later development, the Pāli commentators represented by Dhammapāla revived the affirmation of the Buddha’s bad *karmas* in the Theravaṃsa tradition. Such examples are the commentary on *Udāna* by Dhammapāla and one commentary on the *Pubbakammapiḷoti-apadāna*. Cf. Walters 1990: 84ff.

Durt (2006: 77) observes that the *Shijiapu* 釋迦譜, a Chinese biographical anthology of the Buddha, refuses to include much details of the Buddha’s sufferings.

⁵⁰⁹ For the various Buddhist discussions of this controversial topic, see Walter (1990: 79ff.) and Strong 2012. Three viewpoints are summarized by Strong (ibid. 19ff.): 1. the Buddha’s afflictions are regarded as the result of his own past bad *karma*, as in the textual tradition of the *Anavataptagāthā*, including the Pāli

21), we may find a didactic purpose in the acceptance of the Buddha's bad *karma*. Soteriologically speaking, the acknowledgment of the bad *karma* of the great disciples and Śākyamuni would be a form of encouragement for ordinary believers: if people as prominent as the great arhats and the Buddha still possessed some bad *karma*, there is still hope for us ordinary people, who could not entirely avoid making mistakes or doing silly things, to be as perfect as those noble ones. In this regard, although the recognition of Śākyamuni's bad *karma* would somehow jeopardize the idealized image of Śākyamuni, it yields powerful soteriological ramifications.

Now we should take some time to summarize what has been discussed above. As a consequence of the gradual intensification of Devadatta's evil deeds, Devadatta is naturally cast as a significantly powerful enemy who could directly challenge Śākyamuni. Devadatta's dreadful notoriety raised some retroactive questions that in turn troubled Buddhist editors. The controversy surrounding Devadatta's ordination, his favorable rebirth, and his ability to injure Śākyamuni are the most apparent dilemmas that arose from this process. Buddhist monks have also perceived these problems and offered several attempted solutions to resolve the theological crisis, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Regarding the admission of Devadatta, a standard solution is to emphasize the farsighted mercy of Śākyamuni, arguing that Śākyamuni permitted Devadatta's ordination due to his profound compassion. In the *Milindapañha*, it is stated that Śākyamuni was not ignorant of Devadatta's future deeds; instead, he admitted Devadatta in order to give him a chance to escape from *samsara* and limit his potential sufferings in the long run. In the *Shengjing*, a similar statement is also made: Śākyamuni, out of compassion and mercy, allowed Devadatta to enter the *saṅgha* to give him the opportunity to accumulate good *karma*. However, as I have already demonstrated, these apologies contain some logical loopholes or fatal flaws: if Devadatta had not been admitted to the Buddhist community and become the sinner who committed *ānantaryakarmas*, it would not be imperative to save him. After all, there are no forms of transgression that are graver than those committed by Devadatta.

2. Some Buddhist texts concern another paradox regarding Devadatta's noble rebirth.

Pubbakammapiḷoti-apadāna; 2. his mishaps are understood as the result of the bad deeds of other people, as can be found in the *Dhammapadaaṭṭhakathā* and the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*; or 3. no one is responsible for the Buddha's sufferings, and some other-than-karmic explanations are found, e.g. in the *Milindapañha*.

Since Devadatta is the embodiment of evil, why was he born a Śākya prince and cousin of Śākyamuni? The *Milindapañha* proposes that it was due to Devadatta's past wholesome *karma*. The text argues that every being, including Devadatta and Śākyamuni, is governed by the rules of karmic transmigration, and in some past lives, Devadatta even led a noble life, while Śākyamuni held a lower status. However, in this framework, Devadatta's image as a longtime evildoer could not be retained, and Śākyamuni's eternal, unquestionable perfection is also challenged. The *Shengjing*, however, adopts another strategy to explain Devadatta's encounter with Śākyamuni: in one past life, Devadatta was offended by Śākyamuni and made a vow of revenge that he would always follow Śākyamuni and do harm to him. This explanation, however, is also based on the premise that Śākyamuni's actions are not entirely immune to controversy.

3. The third, crucial paradox lies in the accusation that Devadatta drew blood from the Buddha. The most popular solution is to strengthen the notion of "parallel *karma*," in which "good guys in this life were good guys in past lives, and bad guys in this life were bad guys in the past as well" (Strong 2012: 22). This karmic framework of the utterly evil Devadatta versus the wholly noble Śākyamuni, which largely answers many Buddhists' doubts, however, makes the origin of the karmic loop an unfathomable enigma. When tracing the intertwined karmic pasts of Śākyamuni and Devadatta, many Buddhists inherited the hermeneutic tradition established in the *Anavataptaḡāthā*, namely that Devadatta's hostility was due to Śākyamuni's own bad *karmas*: Devadatta was able to draw the blood of Śākyamuni because Śākyamuni had murdered him in the past.

As we can see, when Buddhists began to treat the stories of the shocking evil deeds of Devadatta seriously, they perceived the incompatibility between these stories and Buddhist karmic theory. Confronted with the thorny paradoxes deriving from the Devadatta narrative, they realized that an eternally evil Devadatta could not entirely accommodate Buddhist karmic cosmology, and they had to abandon the stereotype that Devadatta was always an evil person or to concede to the imperfect past of Śākyamuni. Such paradoxes, as I see it, are inherent to the narratives of powerful enemies both within and beyond the Buddhist world. Just as sociologists who study the significance of "enemies" have acutely observed, the construction of an enemy is an irrational process, "marked by fervor and superstition and capable of fomenting extreme antisocial actions with little regard for sound judgment" (Sullivan et al. 2014: 293). This is particularly true in the construction of Devadatta as the

common enemy: in this process, Buddhists exhibited an extremely high enthusiasm and fertile imagination. Without a careful examination whether these new stories would be compatible with Buddhist doctrine in general, Buddhists quickly expanded the role of Devadatta to that of the embodiment of evil and depravity, which posed challenges for some well-established Buddhist doctrines.

The thrust of my argument should be reiterated: within the framework of Devadatta as the powerful enemy, it is almost impossible to retain the absolute and supreme authority of Śākyamuni Buddha. The paradoxes must have puzzled certain Buddhists for a considerably long time, until a new, even subversive, understanding of the personality of Devadatta was advanced—the Mahāyāna understanding of Devadatta.

4.3 An ultimate solution to the challenge to the Buddha: Mahāyāna approaches

As I have argued in the previous section, mainstream Buddhists approached the religious significance of the Devadatta stories mainly as narratives of an evildoer, the enemy of Śākyamuni, and therefore, they were enthusiastic about imputing more evil qualities to Devadatta. However, the ongoing degradation of Devadatta became increasingly incompatible with the Buddhist karmic theory. In order to accommodate the evilness of Devadatta within the karmic system, Buddhists had to either sacrifice Śākyamuni's image as a continuously perfect being or abandon the notion of Devadatta's stereotypical evilness in his past lives. That is to say, adding more evil deeds to Devadatta's (past-life and present-life) biographies would not further increase his evilness but, conversely, impair Śākyamuni's perfection. Mahāyāna monks, perhaps realizing the theological problems posed by Devadatta's ever-increasing evilness, show no further interest in deepening Devadatta's depravity. Embracing new ideological views of the buddha-nature and Buddhist cosmology, Mahāyāna followers propose several novel interpretations of the religious significance of Devadatta, often viewing him in a favorable light. In the following discussion section, I examine three Mahāyāna strands of interpretation of Devadatta and analyze how they employed certain Mahāyāna ideologies (most widely, *upāyakauśalya*, "skill in means") to develop their favorable understanding of Devadatta.

4.3.1 The *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*

[Bodhisattva Kāśyapa spoke to the Buddha:] “If you view all sentient beings as your children, as Rāhula, why did you turn to Devadatta and say: ‘You are foolish and shameless. You eat other people’s saliva!’? This made Devadatta generate hatred after hearing [these words], develop an unwholesome mind, and draw blood from the body of the Buddha. When Devadatta committed such sins, the Tathāgata further prophesied that he was doomed to descend to hell to be punished for one *kalpa*. Blessed One! How could such statement sayings not contradict each other in their meanings?”⁵¹⁰

Through the lips of Kāśyapa, the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* puts forward a doubt that may occur to many Buddhists: since the Buddha is stated to be equally compassionate to all sentient beings, why does he “insult” Devadatta in such a harsh manner?

The *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* answers that the hurtful words of the Buddha precisely embody the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha. This is because, “even though words are coarse and rough, on the condition that they are truthful and not false, and if at that moment this teaching could benefit all sentient beings, I (the Buddha) will articulate it despite the fact that it is not pleasant to hear.”⁵¹¹ In other words, the Buddha’s compassion is manifested through the didactic purpose served by these seemingly abusive words: although the means is harsh, the end is sympathetic. Buddhas always know the right occasion and message to speak, which is far beyond ordinary people’s ability to comprehend.

Moreover, while abandoning the “superficial” reading of Devadatta as an evildoer, the text further advances a more sophisticated understanding of this figure, with the aid of the Mahāyāna doctrine of *upāyakaśālyā* (“skill in means”). In this new reading, Devadatta is by no means a villain: surpassing the cognitive capability of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, Devadatta reaches a level quite close to that of buddhas:⁵¹²

⁵¹⁰ T. 374 (XII) 459a24–29 = D. 119, *mdo sde, nya*, 257a7: (迦葉菩薩白佛言): “若使等視一切眾生同於子想，如羅睺羅，何故復向提婆達多說如是言：“癡人無羞，食人涕唾。”令彼聞已，生於嗔恨，起不善心，出佛身血。提婆達多，造是惡已，如來復記，當墮地獄一劫受罪。世尊！如是之言，云何於義不相違背？”

⁵¹¹ T. 374 (XII) 460b27–29 = T. 375 (XII) 703a3–5 = D. 119, *mdo sde, nya*, 257a7–b1: 若有語言，雖復龜癩，真實不虛，是時是法能為一切眾生利益，聞雖不悅，我要說之。

⁵¹² T. 374 (XII) 460c29–461a9 = T. 375 (XII) 703b7–16; D. 119 = *mdo sde, nya*, 258b2–5: 善男子！我於爾時，實不罵辱提婆達多。提婆達多亦不愚癡食人涕唾，亦不生於惡趣之中，阿鼻地獄受罪一劫，亦

Gentlemen! At that moment, I never reprimanded Devadatta, nor insulted him; Devadatta was neither a fool who ate other people’s saliva, nor was he reborn in evil realms and punished in the Avīci hell for a *kalpa*. He never drew blood from the body of the Buddha. He did not commit four heinous sins, nor slandered the true Mahāyāna Dharma. He was not an *icchāntika*, not a *śrāvaka*, nor *pratyekabuddha*. Gentlemen! What was attained by Devadatta was indeed not the level of *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas*, but only what is seen and known by buddhas. Gentlemen! Therefore, you should not ask the question of why the Tathāgata reprimanded and insulted Devadatta. On the stage [achieved] by the buddhas, you should not raise such doubt [which is] like a web [covering one’s mind].

In contrast to the conventional approach of condemning the evils of Devadatta, the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* simply denies Devadatta’s entire transgressions as actual occurrences: he actually never harmed Śākyamuni, never drew his blood, never descended into hell for punishment, and was never an *icchāntika*; consequently, the Buddha also never insulted Devadatta. This fresh interpretation of Devadatta must be illuminated together with the new understanding of buddhas’ transcendental nature, as advanced in the Mahāyāna movement. In the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, the buddha-nature is identified with transcendental reality:⁵¹³ no one, not even hundreds of thousands of demons, could launch an assault on and draw blood from the bodies of tathāgātas, as “tathāgātas possess no flesh and blood, no tendons or veins, no bones or marrow” (如來之身無有肉血、筋脈、骨髓). The injuries to the Buddha, Dharma, or *saṅgha* committed by Devadatta were no more than illusory manifestations in accordance with the cognitive level of the mundane world (隨順世間，如是示現; **lokānūvartanā*),⁵¹⁴ analogous in a way with the

不壞僧出佛身血，亦不違犯四重之罪、誹謗正法大乘經典，非一闍提，亦非聲聞、辟支佛也。善男子！提婆達多者，實非聲聞緣覺境界，唯是諸佛之所知見。善男子！是故汝今不應難言，如來何緣呵責罵辱提婆達多。汝於諸佛所有境界，不應如是生於疑網。Also see T. 376 (XII) 890c10–15.

⁵¹³ Cf. T. 374 (XII) 416c12–16 = D. 119, *nya*, 138b7–139a2: 假使百千無量諸魔，不能侵出如來身血。所以者何？如來之身，無有肉血、筋脈、骨髓。如來真實，實無惱壞。眾生皆謂法、僧毀壞，如來滅盡。而如來性真實無變，無有破壞，隨順世間，如是示現。For the discussion of the Mahāyāna understanding of the buddha-nature and related controversies, see Ruegg 1989, esp. 18ff. Also cf. Radich 2015: 110.

⁵¹⁴ This statement falls into what Radich terms as radical “corollaries of docetic Buddhology,” in which “the true nature of the Buddha is often presented as pertaining only and entirely to the realm of ultimate reality and final liberation.” (Radich 2015: 107).

Buddha's manifestations of undergoing the processes of birth, aging, sickness and death, undertaking six years of ascetic practice, and being extinguished by entering into *parinirvāṇa*⁵¹⁵—all these records should not be taken as the truth of the ultimate level (*paramārtha*), but as that of the surface level (*saṃvṛti*). In this way, the evil deeds of Devadatta are characterized as nothing but a skillful means (*upāyakauśalya*) for the didactic purpose of urging Buddhist monks to obey the monastic codes, while the real nature of the Buddha was not subject to any damage. This point is further clarified elsewhere in the text: “Devadatta performed schismatic activities and manifested various physical forms and appearances for the sake of establishing precepts.”⁵¹⁶ Of course, the transcendental significance contained in Devadatta's trespasses can only be understood by buddhas, not by *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas*, who are not endowed with the sufficient cognitive power to fathom it.

In summary, the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* contends that there are several different levels of analysis of Devadatta's religious significance: only by the standards of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* is Devadatta viewed as an utter villain who commits grave transgressions and is doomed to descend into hell. However, at the cognitive level of buddhas, since the buddha-nature is the ultimate truth, and the body of the Buddha is immune to being injured, all the transgressions of Devadatta are merely illusory manifestations for pedagogical purposes: the sins of Devadatta serve as expedient means to illustrate the horrible retribution for committing such violations and to urge Buddhist monks to obey the Vinaya rules. In the ideological context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, as reflected in the new doctrines of the buddha-nature and the skillful means, the Devadatta narrative itself appears in a new light, and the evil nature of Devadatta is ultimately refuted.⁵¹⁷

⁵¹⁵ Cf. T. 374 (XII) 548a12–15 = D. 119, *ta*, 153b1–3: 十方諸佛方便示現，一切眾生及一闍提悉有佛性，不信如來生老病死及修苦行、提婆達多真實破僧出佛身血、如來畢竟入於涅槃、正法滅盡，是名菩薩信心具足。For some analyses of the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* approach to the buddha-nature (*tathāgatagarbha*), see PDB *s.v.* *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and Radich 2015: 108.

⁵¹⁶ T. 375 (XII) 655a9–10. (如)提婆達示現壞僧，化作種種形貌色像，為制戒故。Also see T. 376 (XII) 888c15–20: 示現有對，如調達壞僧，僧實不壞，如來方便，示現壞僧，化作是像，為結戒故 (Translation: This is to demonstrate the opposite, just like the schism incurred by Devadatta. The *saṅgha* in actuality was not split. The Tathāgata applied the skillful means to demonstrate what was a split of the *saṅgha* and conjured up such forms, for the sake of making precepts).

⁵¹⁷ Interestingly, the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* also mentions a record that intimately connects Devadatta with Mahāyāna Buddhism. In an attempt to criticize Mahāyāna traditions, the opponents of Mahāyāna traditions attributed the so-called *Vaipulya sūtras* (方等經典, *shin tu rgyas pa'i mdo sde*) to

4.3.2 The *Lotus Sūtra*

Compared to the above *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra* approach, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (“Lotus Sūtra”) advances a more revolutionary understanding of the religious significance of Devadatta. In its so-called “Devadatta chapter,”⁵¹⁸ the *Lotus Sūtra* strongly advocates that Devadatta was not an enemy, but, conversely, the aide of Śākyamuni Buddha (cf. Goshima 1986: 55–57), who was responsible for imparting the *Lotus Sūtra* to Śākyamuni and thus facilitated Śākyamuni’s achievement of the six *pāramitās*.⁵¹⁹

The Buddha once preaches that he “is always pursuing the *Lotus Sūtra* without fatigue in numerous past *kalpas*” (無量劫中, 求法華經, 無有懈倦). He was frequently reborn as a king, who was always endowed with a mind of radical generosity. Aspiring to unsurpassed awakening (*bodhi*) and with a mind never regressing, he announced to the world that he would exchange anything for a piece of true Dharma (We can guess that the story must have occurred during the decline of the Dharma). A seer who knew the *Lotus Sūtra* approached him and promised to impart this *sūtra* to him on the condition that the Bodhisattva was willing to act as his personal attendant. In pursuit of the Dharma, the Bodhisattva gladly carried out his promise and attended to the seer steadily for a thousand years. Then, the Buddha concludes that:⁵²⁰

Devadatta, as the *Vaipulya sūtras* were not included in the nine divisions of scriptures of the Tathāgata: “(Opponents state:) ‘Within the nine divisions, I have never heard any single sentence, any single word, or any fragmentary saying from the *Vaipulya sūtras*. Had the Tathāgata ever stated that the *sūtras* contain ten sections? The so-called *Vaipulya sūtras* contain numerous texts. It is supposed to be known that they were all created by Devadatta, who composed mendacious statements with the aim of destroying all the truth.’” (九部印中, 我未曾聞有方等經一句一字片言之音, 如來說經有十部耶? 方等經者, 其部無量, 當知皆是調達所作, 壞一切義而作虛說. T. 376 [XII] 881a13–16). See also T. 374 (XII) 404a5–10; T. 376 (XII) 881a12 = T. 375 (XII) 644c9–14; D. 119, *mdo sde, nya*, 105b3–5. For a deeper interpretation of this passage with regard to the *vaipulya* features among the *navaṅgas*, see Tournier 2017: 45.

⁵¹⁸ It has been well studied that this chapter was initially an independent text that was later added to the *Lotus Sūtra*. For the discussion of the textual history of this chapter, see Tsukamoto 1970, Groner 1989: 58–61 and Shioiri 1989.

⁵¹⁹ For its Sanskrit version, see e.g. Kern & Nanjō (1908–1912: 256–259). The English translation of the Sanskrit version can be found in Kern (1884: 243–247) and Burnouf (1852: 157). Quotations in my discussion are from Kumārajīva’s translation *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經 T. 262 (IX) 34b24–35a1.

⁵²⁰ T. 262 (IX) 34c25–35a1: 爾時王者, 則我身是; 時仙人者, 今提婆達多是。由提婆達多善知識故, 令我具足六波羅蜜, 慈悲喜捨, 三十二相, 八十種好, 紫磨金色, 十力、四無所畏、四攝法、十八不共神通道力。成等正覺, 廣度眾生, 皆因提婆達多善知識故。

“At that time, the king was me, and the seer was Devadatta. By the aide of Devadatta, the friend of virtue, I was able to become fully endowed with the six *pāramitās*, sympathy, compassion, joy and equanimity, the 32 marks and 80 auspicious signs, the Jāmbūnada-golden color, ten kinds of powers, four forms of fearlessness, four methods of winning over people, and 18 kinds of uncommon supernatural powers of the path (*āvenikā dharmā*). I was able to attain the perfect supreme awakening and extensively liberate sentient beings, thanks to the virtuous friend Devadatta.”

Here, as opposed to his conventional image as an inferior conspirator, Devadatta assumes a prominent role here as the transmitter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, who greatly facilitates the awakening of Śākyamuni’s buddhahood. In other words, Devadatta becomes a mentor, an initiator, who introduces Śākyamuni to the knowledge of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The significance of Devadatta is further confirmed by the prophecy made by the *Sūtra* that Devadatta would become a future buddha called Devarāja (Chn. *tianwang* 天王).⁵²¹ In non-Mahāyāna texts, although Devadatta is recognized to have the potential to restore his root to produce wholesome *karmas* due to his timely faith in Śākyamuni, established before death, the level of his future achievement is only limited to that of being a *pratyekabuddha* (cf. Li 2018a, “Prophecy”). In this respect, the *Lotus Sūtra* again exhibits a radical understanding of the positive role of Devadatta.

4.3.3 The *Upāyakauśalyasūtra* and other Mahāyāna sūtras

Both the statement that Devadatta’s transgressions are merely illusory (e.g., in the *Mahāyāna-mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*) and that Devadatta is a revealer of the Dharma to Śākyamuni (e.g., in the *Lotus Sūtra*) have their theoretical foundation, at least in part, in the same doctrine, *upāyakauśalya* (“skillful in means”). In order to illuminate how the doctrine of *upāyakauśalya* serves to justify Devadatta’s transgressions, we now turn to the interpretation of Devadatta in the *Upāyakauśalyasūtra*.⁵²²

⁵²¹ T. 262 (IX) 35a1–14; T. 263 (IX) 105b20–c10; T. 264 (IX) 169b3–25; T. 265 (IX) 197b13–23. Cf. Goshima 1986: 55–57.

⁵²² T. 346 (XII) 178a5–21: 復次，智上！我念昔為菩薩時，彼提婆達多在在處處常隨於我。何以故？彼提婆達多雖來我所伺求嫉害，而能令我圓滿六波羅蜜多，能令無量眾生得大利益。所謂若時欲令眾生得大快樂，我不能行布施攝法，提婆達多即來我所乞妻子、奴婢、頭、目、手、足，我於爾時

Furthermore, Jñānottara! I remember that in the past, when I was still a Bodhisattva, Devadatta always accompanied me everywhere. Why? Although Devadatta approached me to seek opportunities to injure me, he helped me fulfill the six *pāramitās*, which significantly benefited immeasurable sentient beings. It is said that, at the time, [Devadatta] intended to make all sentient beings obtain great bliss, but I was then not able to practice donation, as [one of the four] methods to win people over. Devadatta approached me and begged for my wives, sons, male and female servants, my head, eyes, hands, and feet. At that moment, I was able to renounce all of them. With respect to my generosity, he spoke thus: ‘Such [behavior] is called cultivating difficult practices, which can arouse the root for wholesome *karmas* in [the mind of] sentient beings.’ While I made the donations, innumerable sentient beings generated a mind of adoration and established pure confidence in the practice of donation. Again, at a time when I strictly obeyed precepts by the power of the Bodhisattva vow, Devadatta approached me to impair my strict obedience to the precepts. At that moment, I showed great resolution and never wavered, and did not violate the precepts. Innumerable sentient beings beheld (my resolution), and thereafter all held to strict obedience to precepts. Again, at a particular time, Devadatta became resentful toward me, injured me and insulted me. I, however, never generated hatred but maintained the mind of forbearance. Having beheld such incidents, countless sentient beings all established the practice of forbearance. Because of Devadatta, I fulfilled all my practices of perseverance, meditation, wisdom, and so forth, and caused innumerable sentient beings to have obtained significant benefits.

To summarize the meaning of the above discussion, Devadatta’s transgressions are nothing but skillful means that aim at creating occasions for the Bodhisattva to fulfill the six *pāramitās* along the Bodhisattva path. If Devadatta had not committed such grave sins, the

皆悉能捨。以能捨故，彼作是言：‘如是名為難行之行，能令眾生起發善根。’我作是施時，有無量眾生起愛樂心，於布施行得淨信解。又復若時我以菩提願力，住淨戒行，提婆達多來詣我所欲破淨戒。我於爾時堅固不動，不壞戒行。有無量眾生見是事已，悉住清淨戒地。又復若時，提婆達多於我起其忿恚打罵，我於爾時不生瞋恨，住忍辱心。有無量眾生見是事已，皆住忍行。所有精進、禪定、智慧等行，以提婆達多故，我皆圓滿及令無量眾生得大利益。For parallels, see also T. 310 (XI) 155c6–28, 607b5–23; T. 314 (XI) 768a10–c2; D 82, *dkon brtsegs, cha*, 69a2–4; D 261, *mdo sde, za*, 309a5–b4. The English translation of the two Tibetan versions is found in Tatz 1994: 86–87. Also cf. the discussion in Chen 2015: 74–77.

brilliance of the Bodhisattva would not have been manifested so evidently, and sentient beings would not have had the opportunity to witness the magnificent deeds of the Bodhisattva. With the application of the idea of skillful means, Devadatta's evilness is entirely deconstructed, and his image is converted from that of an evildoer into that of a virtuous man possessing the bodhisattva spirit of self-sacrifice—by committing violent crimes, Devadatta creates opportunities for Śākyamuni to attain buddhahood even though he runs the risk of falling into hell.

In fact, if we broaden our perspective to the other Mahāyāna apologies for Devadatta, we find that *upāyakaśālyā* is indeed the most common strategy used to justify Devadatta's seemingly evil deeds. For instance, the *Mahāmeghasūtra* refutes the statement that Devadatta once harmed Śākyamuni, and it further contends that Devadatta is none other than a bodhisattva who actively facilitates Śākyamuni's religious career (T. 387 [XII] 1095a12–1096b18. Cf. Chen, 2015, 87–89). Likewise, the *Da fangbian fo bao'en jing* 大方便佛報恩經 (T. 156), a *sūtra* composed in China with strong Mahāyāna traits, also acknowledges the positive role Devadatta's crimes play in the attainment of Śākyamuni's buddhahood. Only criticizing Devadatta for harming the Buddha in the beginning part, the text quickly comments that Śākyamuni is grateful to Devadatta because Devadatta's wicked deeds cause Śākyamuni to attain buddhahood rapidly.⁵²³ It praises Devadatta as a great bodhisattva who, with the spirit of self-sacrifice, is ready to bear hellish suffering as long as sentient beings can be liberated from *samsāra*.⁵²⁴

In short, the Mahāyāna *sūtras* commonly discard Devadatta's conventional image as a heinous evildoer and propose a new, revolutionary interpretation of Devadatta, in which Devadatta is a positive aide of Śākyamuni. Underlying the promotion of Devadatta to the state of being a bodhisattva are the Mahāyāna doctrines of the buddha-nature or skillful means. This new approach to Devadatta's religious role can be regarded as a revolutionary alternative proposed by Mahāyāna Buddhists to supplant the views of mainstream Buddhism.

⁵²³ T. 156 (III) 148b7–12: 提婆達多為利養故，毀害於我。乃至今日成佛，亦為利養，出佛身血，生入地獄。提婆達多常懷惡心，毀害如來，若說其事，窮劫不盡，而如來常以慈悲力，愍而哀傷。我以值遇提婆達多故，速得成佛，念其恩故，常垂慈愍。

⁵²⁴ T. 156 (III) 148b21–24: 提婆達多言：“我處阿鼻地獄，猶如比丘入三禪樂。”佛言：“菩薩摩訶薩修大方便，引接眾生，其受生死無量苦，不以為患。若有人言：‘提婆達多，實是惡人，入阿鼻獄者。’無有是處。”

4.4 Summary

Devadatta is conventionally portrayed as a heinous, evil person, to whom various unfavorable qualities are attributed. However, this stereotype is the result of long historical development. As I have discussed in the third chapter, his earliest image, found at the same time in the Vinayas of the Mahāsāṅghika and Sthavira offshoots, was no more than that of an active separatist. Based on his schismatic prototype, more and more stories are created and ascribed to him, making him the most notorious antagonist of Buddha Śākyamuni and the most depraved culprit in Buddhist literature.

No doubt, a notorious Devadatta is created for multiple religious purposes. The most straightforward function is to serve as a foil for the glorious Buddha Śākyamuni. The worse the nature of Devadatta, the more glorious that of Śākyamuni. The stark contrast highlights the bravery, wisdom, compassion, and other qualities of Śākyamuni, strengthens the nobility of the Buddha, and protects the Buddha's authority from being disrespected or even impaired. On a more practical level, the stories of Devadatta can be read as a pedagogical means to illustrate the disastrous results of evil deeds, and consequently, to direct people to maintain ethical conduct. However, the rampant growth of Devadatta's evil behavior also impairs the unchallengeable prestige of the Buddha: in the process of creating a dark opponent who commits almost all manners of sins, some paradoxes emerge, including: how do we explain the fact that an omniscient Buddha did not realize the schismatic future of Devadatta, and permitted his ordination? How could Devadatta enjoy a good rebirth and encounter the Buddha if he was an utter villain? How do we understand the fact that Devadatta was able to harm Śākyamuni, the omnipotent Buddha of our age? Many Buddhists already realized these problems and attempted to offer some solutions. They sought to solve the problem surrounding the Buddha's compassion: the Buddha's acquiescence to Devadatta's ordination reflected not his ignorance but his sincere sympathy, thereby saving Devadatta from *samsāra*. Another common strategy is to accentuate the role that past *karmas* play in the present life of Devadatta: in some texts, he is said to have accumulated wholesome *karmas* in his previous lives, which explains his birth in the Śākya clan; in some other texts, he is stated to possess a perpetual hatred of the Bodhisattva over the course of numerous previous lives, and even vowed to follow and harm the Bodhisattva in innumerable lives. However, all of these explanations either contain some loopholes or have to concede some past unwholesome *karmas* on the part of Śākyamuni. Many Mahāyāna Buddhists seemed not to have been

convinced by the interpretation of Devadatta in Mainstream “schools,” and held a revolutionary understanding of the personality of Devadatta: they believed that the deeds of Devadatta were evil in disguise, but virtuous in actuality. Devadatta, in this new context, was no longer an enemy but a helper of the Buddha. His crimes were also understood as expedient ways to educate people about the dangers of such evil deeds.

In short, the image of Devadatta as an abominable evil-doer who commit various kinds of criminals is a historical product with diverse elements that arose at different times and under multiple ideologies. This image of Devadatta, in the most straightforward manner, serves as a negative example to stimulate Buddhist followers to obey the rules and to avoid committing the same transgressions. Beyond this pedagogical purpose, the Devadatta narrative has significant implications in broader theological and historical contexts: it reflects how different groups of Buddhists from diverse areas and periods approached the role of sinner regarding its interplay with the Buddha’s authority. On the one hand, they extended the degree of Devadatta’s sinfulness in order to underscore the Buddha’s compassion and power; on the other hand, they realized that the gradual expansion of Devadatta’s sinful deeds could be counterproductive, as it would contradict the omnipotent abilities of the Buddha. The Mahāyāna’s unconventional interpretation can be regarded as an attempt to ultimately solve the challenge issued by Devadatta to the Buddha’s authority: Devadatta was never a bitter foe, a challenger to the Buddha; conversely, he was an aide who assisted the Buddha in attaining buddhahood and liberating sentient beings from suffering.

In the chapters 2, 3, and 4, I have investigated two different types of challenges confronted by the Buddha as represented in Buddhist narratives: one is the threat issued by his foremost disciple, Śāriputra, as part of the power-interplay between the noble teacher and eminent disciple; the other is the challenges advanced by Devadatta, a bitter foe and antagonist of Śākyamuni. There is another dimension to the power dynamic between the Buddha and his disciples, namely, how the Buddha’s authority should be inherited, especially after the Buddha had attained *parinirvāṇa*. In the following section, I focus on diverse issues surrounding the succession of the Buddha’s authority, which, again, opens a window onto the Buddhist emic understandings of the significance and position of the Buddha within the monastic community.