



The Śrāvastī Miracles: Some Relationships Between their Literary Sources and Visual Representations in Dvāravatī

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ABSTRACT The Śrāvastī miracles are among the Buddha’s principal miracles and could even be considered the prototypical Buddhist miracle stories. The narrative of these miracles is preserved in a variety of languages in different versions and is represented in the visual art of ancient India, Central Asia, as well as Southeast Asia. The objective of this study is to reexamine the visual representations of the Śrāvastī miracles found in the period of Dvāravatī, which spanned from the seventh to the eleventh centuries CE, via a comparative study of textual sources and their possible relationships to the 24 artefacts (9 types) found in the central, northeastern and southern parts of present-day Thailand. This study reveals that these artefacts illustrate important narrative elements from various Buddhist traditions, such as: (1) the demonstration of miracles (the miraculous growth of a tree and the multiplication of the Buddha, which comprises the Twin Miracle, the Great Miracle, the creation of the duplicate Buddha, and the performance of a miracle akin to the one experienced in the fourth absorption), (2) the depictions of the (six) defeated non-Buddhist ascetics, (3) of King Prasenajit, and (4) of Brahmā and Indra, bodhisattvas, and unspecified deities. The rich corpus of Dvāravatī artefacts illustrating these miracles implies that the artists might have clearly drawn their inspiration from various textual sources based mostly on the Theravādin and Mūlasarvāstivādin records. It is also possible that they were made based on known scriptures of that time, which in turn were the results of mixed interpretations of the Theravādin, Mūlasarvāstivādin, and other unknown texts. Alternatively, it is also possible that the visual representations do not reflect any connection to textual sources, as these artefacts cannot be attached to any particular Buddhist tradition and even less so to a specific “school.” These findings demonstrate how the key elements of a narrative from the literary sources have been transformed through visual representations, evidenced by these Dvāravatī artefacts showing their local formulation as well.

KEYWORDS the Śrāvastī miracles, the miracle narratives, visual representations, Dvāravatī, Moulded tablets, Votive tablets, Buddhism

Introduction

The narrative of the Śrāvastī (Pāli: Sāvattihī) miracles recounts important events of the Buddha's preaching career, in which he performed miracles to primarily overcome the pride of *non-Buddhist ascetics*.¹ The miracles are ubiquitous in Buddhist literature and they are depicted in many other forms of representations across different regions and time periods. Their visual representations are found in the art of ancient India, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. In Thailand, they are depicted in many artefacts, some in complex compositions, from the Dvāravatī period, which is one of Thailand's oldest religious and artistic cultures, to the Ratanakosin period around the early nineteenth century CE. The depiction of Śrāvastī miracles as a part of the Buddha's biography appears to be a popular theme in Dvāravatī culture, as evidenced by its presence on numerous artefacts in stone, stucco, and terracotta. [1]

In the seventh century, two Tang dynasty Chinese monks, Xuan Zang and Yi-jing, dubbed a country in the region that has been called Southeast Asia since WWII as Tu-hu-po-ti and Tu-hu-lo-po-ti, respectively. Both names are derived from the Sanskrit toponym Dvāravatī, which means “having doors or gates” (Brown 2014, 189; Ghosh 2017, 38). There had been a lot of debate regarding the actual center of the Dvāravatī political entity. Judging from the discovery of archaeological evidence, most scholars still believe that the Dvāravatī political entity was based in the area of the lower and upper Chao Phraya river basin that is in present-day central Thailand. Its center is most likely located at U-Thong or Nakhon Pathom; however, some proposed it to be at Si Thep (see Woodward 2010, 93; Ghosh 2017, 38; Saisingha [2562 BE] 2019, 83–92; Krairiksh 2012, 31–32, 108–9). The name also suggests the center's importance as a coastal trading port and reflects the influence of Indian culture in the region (Saraya 1999, 50).² The word “Dvāravatī,” according to Dhida Saraya (1999, 41), has been used to denote three significant meanings: it was used by academics to identify a style of art, to refer to Buddhist art and culture during the period when Dvāravatī art was being produced, and to name a state or a group of towns. According to Ghosh, based on epigraphic and archaeological evidence, the Dvāravatī political entity dates back to about the sixth century up until the ninth century CE. However, its art, culture, and settlement types might have survived up to the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE, and it would have spanned a wider geographical area than central Thailand alone (2017, 38). Similarly, Brown (2014, 189) has made an argument that “the period of Dvāravatī, and probably most art associated with the name, can be securely placed only in the seventh and the eighth centuries.” Although most scholars speak of Dvāravatī as lasting until the eleventh century CE, they do so with little evidence. In fact, the political reality between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE for most of Thailand is still relatively unknown (Brown 2014, 191). Archaeological remains, which are mostly religious in nature, help us to understand the history, political organization, and geographical extent of this polity, and even the Buddhist rituals and practices which are a part of the belief systems of this kingdom. Ghosh sums up (2017, 38) that “the rise of Dvāravatī is one of the diverse developments of the seventh century, characterized generally by new influences from India, the absence of any single dominant centre and the increasing importance of Buddhism.” [2]

1 Several English words have been used to translate this term “*tīrthika*”: “heretic” (Rotman 2008); “rival holy-men” (Fiordalis 2014, 6n22); “*tīrthyas*” (Burnouf 1876, 145). I translate this term as “non-Buddhist ascetics” in this study according to Cone (2001–2021).

2 Skilling interprets the literal meaning of Dvāravatī as “Possessing Gates,” a metaphor for a strong city—only a walled and fortified city needs gates (2003, 102). This could signify an urban center filled with activities.

Buddhism and intra-Asian interactions occur through a multifaceted process, with ideas sometimes filtering back to places that were the original transmission centres (Sen 2014, xii). The transmission of Buddhism not only means the spread of religious doctrine alone. It also involves the spread of art forms, ritual items, and ideas (Ghosh 2017, 35). The spread of art forms, like those depicting Śrāvastī miracles, is one such distinguished piece of evidence and is thus the subject of this research article. [3]

Many scholarly works have been published on Śrāvastī miracles, ranging from comparative studies of visual and literary traditions to ritual implications. They are filled with a wide variance of opinions and have caused considerable confusion.³ This is not surprising as in my previous studies (Sirisawad 2019), I have shown that there are at least 17 narratives of this theme extant in Pāli, Sanskrit, Gāndhārī, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Thai. And they were transmitted by the Mūlasarvāstivādins, the Dharmaguptakas, the Theravādins, and by those of unidentified school-affiliations. Not all of these versions are the sources of the Dvāravatī artefacts depicting the miracles. Later, these artefacts were examined by Brown, who managed to clear up some of the confusion surrounding the identity of the Śrāvastī miracles images as well as to justify its traditional identification, which is based on Gandhāra representations. He concludes that Dvāravatī artists were aware of the various Indian artistic representations of the miracles and must have been directly familiar with the story from the *Divyāvadāna* (Brown 1984, 79–95). Kesra Chatikavanij (2002), while studying Dvāravatī sculptures depicting the life of the Buddha and their links to textual sources, has tentatively identified the parts that depict the Śrāvastī miracles that might have derived from the Pāli scriptures, the *Divyāvadāna*, and even some ideas belonging to the Mahāyāna. The latter identification is due to the occurrence of important artistic elements related to the narrative motifs. [4]

In previous studies, both the Pāli account of Theravāda Buddhism and the Sanskrit version of the *Prātihāryasūtra*, which is the twelfth narrative in the *Divyāvadāna*, have been observed as textual sources of the depiction of the Śrāvastī miracles in Dvāravatī (see Revire 2012, 106; Guy 2014, 217). Apart from these texts, in this research I will consider the narratives of these miracles transmitted within other Buddhist traditions, such as those of Mūlasarvāstivādin preserved in Tibetan, Chinese, and Sanskrit other than those of the *Divyāvadāna* to be my primary sources as well. [5]

In the Theravāda literature, this narrative can be found in the *Yamakapāṭihāriyavattu*, a Buddhaghosa's commentary to the *Dhammapada* (*Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*) [= Dhpa-a].⁴ A shorter retelling is narrated in the Pāli *jātaka* Commentary (*Jātakatṭhakathā*) [= J] as the *Paccuppannavattu* in the first part of the *Sarabhamigajātaka* (the *jātaka* of the deer) no. 483.⁵ Within the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, the story is narrated not only in the *Divyāvadāna* that has usually been referred to in the past, but also in a newly identified manuscript of the *Mahāprātihāryasūtra* found in the Gilgit area [= Gilgit]; in the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the *Vinayakṣudrakavastu* as part of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* [= MSV-T and MSV-C]; and citations from the *Mahāprātihāryasūtra* in the Śamathadeva's *Abhidharmakośopāyikāṭikā* [= *Upāyikā-ṭikā*], which is his essential commentary on the *Abhidhar-* [6]

3 For examples of the discussion around the literary and visual accounts of the Śrāvastī miracles, see Foucher's pioneering essay (1909, 5–78); English translation ([1917] 1972, 147–84, plates xix–xxviii); Waldschmidt (1930, 3–9); Miyaji (1971); Williams (1975, 182–83); Eichenbaum-Karetzky (1990, 71–77); Rhi (1991); Stache-Weiske (1990, 107–22); Bhattacharya (1990, 31–34); Schlingloff (1991, 109–36, 1997, 175–94, 2003, 109–24, 2015) and Bretfeld (2003, 167–205).

4 Edition: Dhpa-a (Norman 1912, 3:199–228); translation: Burlingame (1921, 3:35–47).

5 Edition: Jātaka, no. 483 (Fausbøll 1879, 4:263–67); translation: Cowell (1990, 4:166–169); for more information, see Schlingloff (2013, 2:251).

makośabhāṣya.⁶ Apart from these textual sources, some relevant Buddhist scriptures of the Dharmaguptakas and other schools or affiliations will also be taken in consideration in a comparative study between text and art. These textual narratives, some of which have never been presented in previous studies, will be used as witnesses to verify some of the uncertain points regarding in the depictions of the Dvāravatī Śrāvastī miracles.

Proceeding from and expanding on the above studies, the objective of this study is to re-examine the visual representations of the Śrāvastī miracles in Dvāravatī and their relation to the narrative elements from Buddhist texts. The regional variations of the Dvāravatī Buddhist artefacts in this study, albeit a minor object in the vast repertoire of artistic or religious expressions, are taken into account as elements for understanding the possible adoption or adaptation of iconography and art style from India and neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia. And together with this, the Buddhist practice in the Dvāravatī period is verified through their relationship with the textual tradition. This study of the relationship between text and image will contribute towards a better understanding of the transference of Buddhism from its land of origin to Dvāravatī. [7]

Artefacts Used in the Study

Although some scholars argue that art production in Dvāravatī culture rapidly declined after the eighth century CE (Skilling 2003, 102; Baptiste and Zéphir 2009, 215), the 24 Dvāravatī artefacts used in this study are dated from the seventh to tenth centuries CE. They are characterized by their distinctive formats, including low reliefs made from stone and moulded clay tablets, or *phra phim* (in Thai พระพิมพ์), sacred printed images⁷ found from the Dvāravatī sites. These were urban areas in ancient times and located on the central plain, the northeastern plateau and the peninsular area covering a geographical zone that spreads over most of modern Thailand. They are classified into 9 types according to their essential narrative elements, including:⁸ [8]

1. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha performing the miracle under the mango tree, the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures, the (six) defeated *non-Buddhist ascetics*, the appearance of King Prasenajit, and the appearance of Brahmā and Indra) (Fig. 1), [9]
2. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha performing the miracle under the mango tree, the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures, the presence of the *nāga*, the (six) defeated *non-Buddhist ascetics*, the appearance of King Prasenajit, and the appearance of unspecified deities) (Fig. 2),
3. The Śrāvastī miracles (upper register) (the Buddha meditating beneath an unidentified tree and the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures) (Fig. 3),
4. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha performing the miracle under the mango tree, the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures, the presence of the *nāga**, the (six) defeated *non-Buddhist ascetics**, the appearance of King Prasenajit*, and the appearance of Brahmā and Indra) with the *ye dhammā* formula (Fig. 4),

6 For the edition of each text, see Sirisawad (2019, 17–51).

7 The moulded clay tablets are often called “clay sealings” or “votive” in Western scholarship. For a general introduction, see Revire (2012, 108n54); Ghosh (2017, 36–39).

8 * Means the narrative element is not clearly depicted in the Dvāravatī artefact.

5. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha meditating beneath an unidentified tree, the presence of the *nāga*, the appearance of King Prasenajit, and the appearance of Brahmā and Indra) (Fig. 5),
6. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha meditating beneath an unidentified tree, the presence of the *nāga*, the appearance of King Prasenajit, and the appearance of Brahmā and Indra) with the *ye dhammā* formula (Fig. 6),
7. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha performing the miracle under the mango tree, the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures, and the appearance of King Prasenajit) (Fig. 7),
8. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha meditating beneath an unidentified tree, the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures,* and the appearance of the Bodhisattvas*) (Fig. 8),
9. The Śrāvastī miracles (the Buddha meditating beneath an unidentified tree, the duplicates of the Buddha in various postures,* the presence of the *nāga*, and the appearance of the Bodhisattvas*) (Fig. 9).

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- 9 Revire (2012, 104) assumes that this relief vaguely adopts the form of a large *simā* stone or boundary marker (*sema*, เสดมา in Thai), such as those found in great numbers in the northeastern part of Thailand.
 - 10 For lists of image publication, see Guy (2014, 217).
 - 11 Subhadradis Diskul attempted to compare this relief to an Ajanta mural painting and dated this sculpture around the 7th-8th century (na Songkhla [2531 BE] 1998, 28). While some Thai scholars believed that this piece was possibly made when the Dvāravatī period reached its zenith, around the eighth to tenth centuries, and because of the Khmer influence, this image should be dated to the tenth century (Kluaymai na Ayudhya [2550 BE] 2007, 105).
 - 12 The stone slab is divided into two registers narrating two successive episodes of the life of the Buddha; the lower shows the Buddha performing the miracles at Śrāvastī while the upper shows the Buddha preaching the dharma to the gods and his mother in the Trayastriṃśa heaven. These two scenes are related. After subduing pagans, the Blessed One ascended the Trayastriṃśa heaven to preach to his mother. Three months later, after the Buddhist Lent, he descended from the Heaven to Sāṅkāśya.
 - 13 See Chirapravati (1997, 22), Revire (2012, 111n65).
 - 14 This tablet is a sub-regional type which shared a related iconography with the “Phra Pathom Chedi type” classified by Coëdès but it developed its own local characteristic found only at Thap Chumpon, Nakhon Sawan province (Revire 2012, 109, 111–12).
 - 15 Another fine example of similar clay tablet is presented in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art; see Chirapravati (1997, 54 plate 1).
 - 16 See the confusion of the provenance of this object in Bhumadhon and Phongpanit ([2558 BE] 2015, 453).
 - 17 The register provided by Guy (2014, 218) is U-Thong (No. 64/2511).
 - 18 For lists of image publication, see Guy (2014, 218).
 - 19 There are other closely similar clay tablets found in Khao Nui archaeological site, Trang province. The composition above the main Buddhist triad is slightly different where the three seated Buddhas are replaced with a dharmacakra flanked by two flying figures and two seated figures and bear the similar abbreviated inscription of the Four Noble Truths in Sanskrit, see จารึกพระพิมพ์ดินดิบเขาน้อย 1-3 (Inscription of clay tablets found in Khao Nui 1-3) in Thailand Inscription by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, available at <https://db.sac.or.th/inscriptions/inscribe>, see Skilling (2014, 61, fig. 49).
 - 20 It was dated based on paleography of the Southern Brahmi script inscribed on the inner frame on top of the tablet (Chirapravati 1994, 207n2).
 - 21 The whole picture gives the impression of representing the three spheres of existence: the underground, the worldly and the ethereal spheres (see Revire 2012, 113).

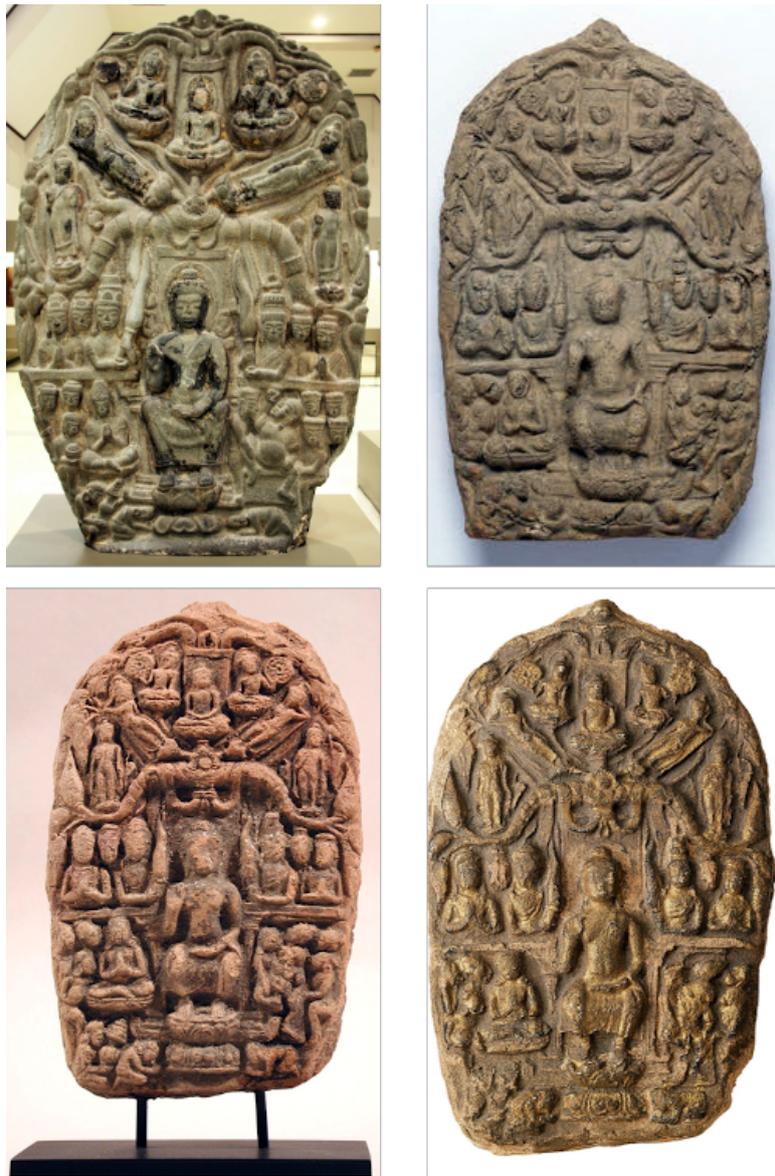


Figure 1 Type 1—*Top Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. late seventh to early eighth centuries CE. Wat Chin, Ayutthaya province (probably came from Nakhon Pathom province). Low relief in limestone with traces of lacquer and painting;⁹ H. 129 cm, W. 85 cm, D. 20 cm. Bangkok National Museum (DV3). Source: author, 2014.¹⁰ *Top Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. eighth to ninth centuries CE. Toni Geber (until 2009). Moulded tablet, clay; H. 13.5 cm, W. 8.5 cm, D. 2 cm. Rietberg Museum, Zurich (TG 88). *Bottom Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. seventh to ninth centuries CE. Michael Phillips and Juliana Maio, Beverly Hills, CA (until 2001; sold to MMA). Moulded tablet, terracotta; H. 14.3 cm, W. 8.9 cm, D. 1.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum, New York (2001.770.3). Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/64118> (Public Domain). *Bottom Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. seventh to ninth centuries CE. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14.9 cm, W. 9 cm. Private Collection, Foundation CL Tibet, Switzerland (Acc. No. CL TS-SL 12232). Courtesy of Gabriele Schocher.



Figure 2 Type 2—The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, multiplied Buddhas, and the *nāga*). Ca. first half of the eighth century CE.¹¹ Nakhon Pathom province. Low relief in limestone with gilding; H. 240 cm, W. ca. 90 cm. The back of Phra Sri Śākyamuni’s base, the main *vihāra* of Wat Suthat Thepwararam, Bangkok. Source: author, 2022.¹²



Figure 3 Type 3¹³—*Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (upper register) and the first sermon at Sarnath (lower register). Ca. seventh to eighth centuries CE. Thap Chumpon, Nakhon Sawan province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 13 cm, W. 9.5 cm. Thai Ceramic Collections, Sirindhorn Anthropological Center, Bangkok. Photo: after Krairiksh (2012, Fig. 1.23).¹⁴ *Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (upper register) and the first sermon at Sarnath (lower register). Ca. seventh to eighth centuries CE. Christie’s, New York, until 1990, sold to MMA. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 13 cm, W. 9.5 cm, D. 1.6 cm. Metropolitan Museum New York (1990.311). Source: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/38479> (Public Domain).¹⁵



Figure 4 Type 4—*Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas) with the *ye dhammā* formula. Ca. eighth to tenth centuries CE. Wat Phra Men, Nakhon Pathom province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm, W. 8 cm. National Museum, Bangkok (DV 6-2). Source: author, 2016. *Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas) with the *ye dhammā* formula. Ca. eighth to tenth centuries CE. Sanamchandra Palace, Nakhon Pathom province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 13 cm. National Museum, Bangkok. Source: author, 2016.



Figure 5 Type 5: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and the *nāga*) Ca. eighth to ninth centuries CE. Moulded tablet, terracotta?. National Museum, Bangkok. Source: author, 2016.



Figure 6 Type 6—*Top Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and the *nāga*) with the *ye dhammā* formula? Ca. seventh to ninth centuries CE. Ratchaburi province? (Donated by Venerable Vinayamuni to Bangkok National Museum on 27 March 1929). Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm, W. 13 cm. National Museum, Bangkok. Source: author, 2016. *Top Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and the *nāga*) with the *ye dhammā* formula. Ca. the first half of the eighth century CE. Ratchaburi province (Krairiksh 2012, 71, it belonged to U-Thong National Museum from the beginning).¹⁶ Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm, W. 11 cm. U-Thong National Museum (No. 64/2510).¹⁷ Source: after Krairiksh (2012, fig. 1.49). *Bottom Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and the *nāga*) with the *ye dhammā* formula. Ca. the second half of the seventh century CE. Khao Ngu, Muang Khu Bua, Ratchaburi province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm, W. 11.5 cm, D. 1.5cm. Ratchaburi National Museum (No. 242/2533). Source: after Guy (2014, CAT. 127).¹⁸ *Bottom Middle*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and the *nāga*) with the *ye dhammā* formula. Ca. tenth century CE or earlier. Nakhon Pathom or Ratchaburi province (Gift of Reginald le May, EAX 170). Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Source: author, 2019. *Bottom Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and the *nāga*) with the *ye dhammā* formula? Ca. seventh to ninth centuries CE. Nakhon Pathom or Ratchaburi province (gift of Reginald le May, EAX 170). Moulded tablet, clay. Songkhla National Museum. Source: after Revire (2014b, 259, fig. 15a).

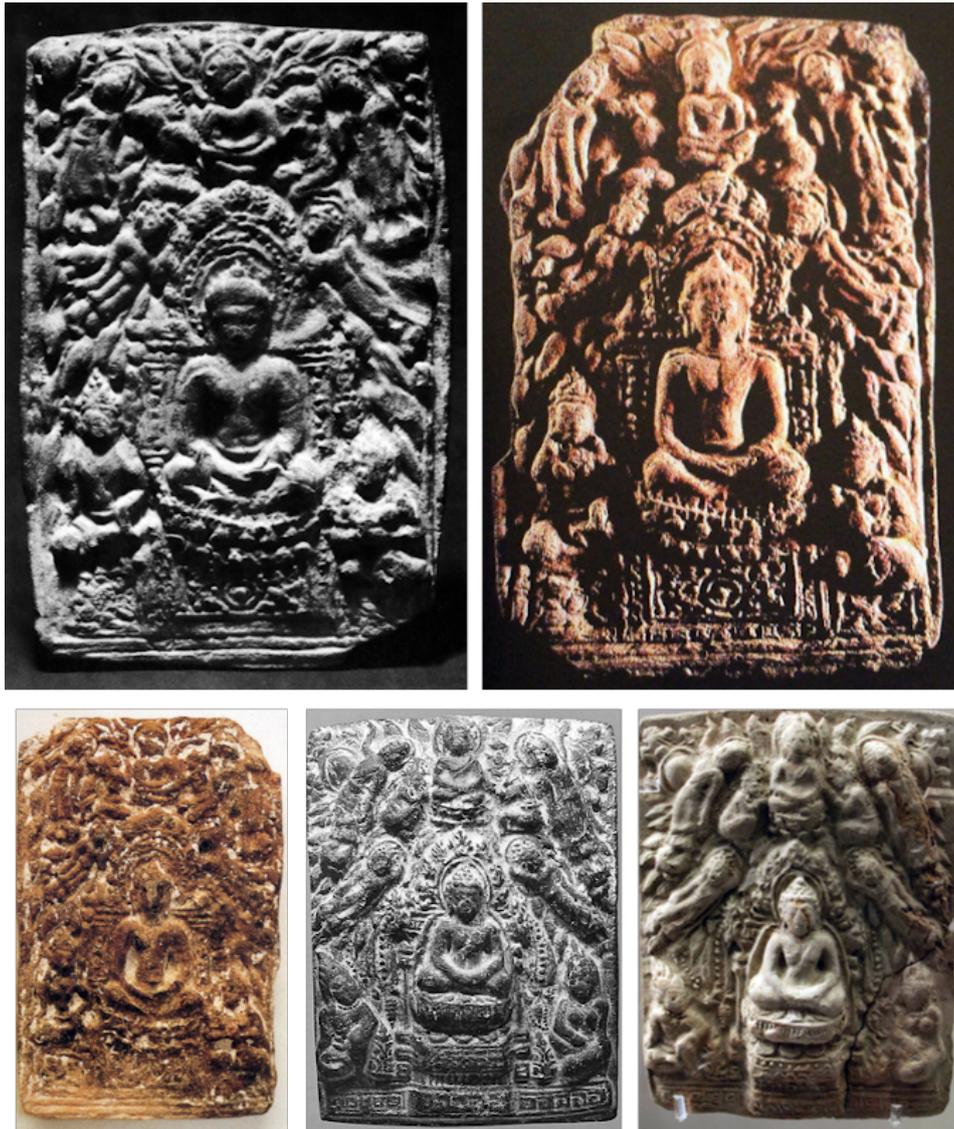


Figure 7 **Type 7**—*Top Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating on the lotus throne, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. the end of the ninth to early tenth centuries CE. Collection of Mr and Mrs Hans Ries, Los Angeles. Moulded tablet, clay?; H. 14 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Source: after Brown (1984, 90). *Top Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating on the lotus throne, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. the end of the ninth to the early tenth centuries CE. Na Dun district, Maha Sarakam province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm. Khon Kaen National Museum. Source: after Krairiksh (2012, fig. 2.339). *Bottom Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating on the lotus throne, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. the end of the ninth to the early tenth centuries CE. Na Dun district, Maha Sarakam province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 7 cm. Khon Kaen National Museum. Source: after Chirapavati (1997, 56). *Bottom Middle*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating on the lotus throne, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas) with an ancient Mon with Khmer loan words inscription (Southern Brahmi script). Ca. the end of the ninth to the early tenth centuries CE. Wat Non Sila Chumpae District; Khon kaen province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 14 cm. Na Dun, Maha Sarakham prov. (Personal belonging). Source: after Dhamrungrueng ([2558 BE] 2015, fig. 14). *Bottom Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles (Buddha meditating on the lotus throne, mango tree, and multiplied Buddhas). Ca. the end of the ninth to the early tenth centuries CE. Ban Na Dun, Na Dun district, Maha Sarakham province (discovered in the land of Mr. Thongdin Pavabhuta). Moulded tablet, clay; H. 15cm, W. 7.5 cm. Khon Kaen National Museum. Source: author, 2021.



Figure 8 Type 8—*Left*: The Śrāvastī miracles? (enthroned Buddha flanked by two standing figures). Ca. early tenth century CE. Wat Kampaengthom, Nakhon Si Thammarat province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 6.2 cm, W. 4.1 cm. Nakhon Si Thammarat National Museum. Source: after Bhumadhon, Singban, and Phongpanit ([2557 BE] 2014, fig. 23). *Top Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles? (enthroned Buddha flanked by two standing figures with the *ye dharmā* formula; Southern Brahmi script). Ca. ninth to early tenth centuries CE. Wat Kuhaswan cave, Phattalung province. Moulded tablet, clay. Nakhon Si Thammarat National Museum. Source: author, 2021. *Bottom Right*: The Śrāvastī miracles? (enthroned Buddha flanked by two standing figures). Ca. seventh to eighth centuries CE. Khao Nui cave, Trang province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 7.1 cm, W. 4.5 cm. Thalang National Museum, Phuket. Source: author, 2021.¹⁹



Figure 9 Type 9: The Śrāvastī miracles (enthroned Buddha flanked by standing figures and the *nāga*) with the *ye dharmā* formula (Southern Brahmi script). Ca. seventh to eighth centuries CE.²⁰ Khao Ok Talu cave, Phattalung province. Moulded tablet, clay; H. 9.2 cm. National Museum, Bangkok (SV 49). Source: After Bhumadhon, Singban, and Phongpanit ([2557 BE] 2014, fig. 24).²¹

The Relationship between Literary Sources and Visual Representations of the Śrāvastī Miracles in Dvāravatī

In this part, a detailed study is undertaken through the analysis of the visual representations of the Śrāvastī miracles in Dvāravatī and their correlation found in textual sources, mainly of the Theravādins and Mūlasarvāstivādins together with other school affiliations. [10]

Posture and Gesture of the Buddha in Artefacts

I have discussed some postures and gestures of the Buddha depicted in Dvāravatī artefacts elsewhere (Sirisawad 2022a, 366–72), but I think it is necessary to reproduce some of the key points here in order to set the base for further discussion and link them to their literary sources. In general, there are two types of sitting postures (*āsana*) and gestures (*mudrā*): (1) the Buddha seated in *bhadrāsana*,²² with both legs pendant, feet firmly placed on a lotus pedestal, and hands in a teaching gesture (*vitarkamudrā*), and (2) the Buddha seated in *virāsana*, his legs crossed in the meditation gesture (*dhyānamudrā*). Type 1 is depicted on a stone panel from Ayutthaya province (Fig. 1 Top Left), as well as on some moulded clay tablets with similar patterns (Fig. 1 Top Right, Bottom Left, Bottom Right).²³ Type 2 is depicted on the stele of Wat Suthat Thepwararam, which shows the Buddha enthroned in the centre and seated in *bhadrāsana* with his knees wide apart and feet joined at the ankles, resting on a lotus pedestal. [11]

²² For further discussion on the terminology referred to this seated posture, see Revire (2011, 45).

²³ Revire (2012, 105n44) states that a certain number of moulded clay tablets located in foreign museums are very likely modern forgeries based on the fact that they are exact replicas in miniature of this iconography.



Figure 10 Buddha seated in *dharmacakramudrā*. Ca. fifth century CE. Ajanta Cave 6, Maharashtra. Source: author, 2016.

His left arm rests on his lap with the palm up, and his right hand performs either the assurance hand gesture (*abhayamudrā*) or *vitarkamudrā*,²⁴ but likely the latter (Type 1) (see Revire 2012, 105n42). It is clear from Type 2 that his right hand is in *vitarkamudrā*. A similar iconography is also depicted on the clay tablets from the southern region, Types 8 and 9, and is common in other sculptures, low-reliefs, and clay tablets in Dvāravatī art as well (see Revire 2011, 2012, 2014b).

In Indian sculptures from the Gupta to Pāla period, dated from the early fourth century CE to the tenth century CE, the pendant-legged Buddha is normally displayed with the gesture of “Turning the Wheel of the Law” with both hands (*dharmacakramudrā* or *dharmachakrapravartanamudrā*) (see Tingsanchali [2554 BE] 2011, figs. 60, 110, 118–22; Revire 2011, fig. 4 & 14). This gesture emphasizes the idea that the Buddha is a universal monarch (*cakravartin*) or the ruler of the Dharma-wheel (*dharmacakravartin*) who turns the wheel of law in the first sermon at Sarnath (Liebert 1976, 255). It is not, however, exclusively associated with royalty because other non-royal divinities such as Kubera and Hārītī are represented in this posture as well. As such, this posture may have multiple meanings, indicating royalty, divinity, or feminine powers, among others. Similarly, when it is used in a Buddhist context, it “was not associated with any single event in particular, but with a large variety of occasions, including the First Sermon or the Great Miracle” (Revire 2012, 108). In Dvāravatī iconography, the *dharmacakramudrā* is little known, but it is regularly found in Javanese Buddhist art (Revire 2014a, 70). With reference to this iconography, it may be difficult to assume any direct influence from India to Dvāravatī. Revire (2011, 38) suggests that a seated Buddha type from Longmen caves in early Tang China, or the so-called “Udayana type” with legs hanging down and seemingly displaying the same teaching gesture (*vitarkamudrā*) as the Dvāravatī ones, is a possible prototype of *bhadrāsana* Buddhas in Dvāravatī (see Revire 2012, fig. 8). But this observation will require further studies.

The *dharmacakramudrā* was also found in a group of Gandhāran reliefs discovered at the Mohammed Nari, Sahri Bahlol, and Takht-i-Bahi sites. Its identification is now much debated; Foucher considered these reliefs as a representation of the Śrāvastī miracles in relation to early

24 The terms *vitarkamudrā* or *abhayamudhrā* in this article are used to describe the types of gestures depicted in these images. We do not have a record that these terms appear in the time when these artefacts were made.



Figure 11 The Śrāvastī miracles. Ca. sixth century CE. Karle Cave, Maharashtra. Source: author, 2016.

Buddhist sectarian schools,²⁵ but recent research has determined that these steles depict a Buddhist paradise, possibly that of Amitābha Buddha.²⁶ Furthermore, in the Gupta period, this gesture is used to represent both the Buddha's First Sermon and the Śrāvastī miracles (see Williams 1975, figs. 3, 8; Schlingloff 1991, fig. 16, drawing). Likewise, this gesture is depicted in the mural painting of Ajanta Cave 6 (Fig. 10) (see Schlingloff 2013, No. 90/VI,18,1, drawing), in the low relief from Kanheri Cave 90, Maharashtra (see Schlingloff 1991, fig. 19, drawing) and in certain Pāla period Buddhist art (see Bhattacharya 1990, fig. 1).

A relief from Karle (Fig. 11), Maharashtra, dated around the sixth century CE, might depict the iconographies of both the Śrāvastī miracles (the *nāgas*) and the First Sermon (the kneeling deers) on a same panel. However, the gesture of the Buddha in this relief is unclear (the left hand is broken). With a *dharmacakra* (wheel of law) and a kneeling deer beneath him, they point to the episode of the first sermon, and thus the conventional gesture should be *dharmacakramudrā* and not *vitarkamudrā* (gesture of teaching), which is contrary to Brown's opinion that "the use of the teaching mudra led to a comparison and blending with the Buddha's First Sermon at Sarnath" (1984, 86–87). [14]

In contrast, the votive tablets found in Nakhon Sawan province, Thailand, display the two events in the same tablet but separated by two registers. The upper register depicts the Śrāvastī miracles, the lower register the First Sermon (Type 3). The lower register of each tablet shows the Buddha seated in *bhadrāsana*; his right hand is most likely performing the *vitarkamudrā*; his left-hand rests in his lap with the palm upwards, as found in other tablets depicting the Śrāvastī miracles. However, the presence of a *dharmacakra* and a kneeling deer are the [15]

25 For early studies on the textual sources and art of the Śrāvastī miracles, see Foucher's pioneering essay of 1909, 5–78 (Foucher 1909); English translation Foucher ([1917] 1972, 147–84, plates. xix–xxviii).

26 For examples of the complex steles, see Harrison and Luczanits (2012, figs. 1, 7) and discussion on these reliefs, see Brown (1984, 81–82), Harrison and Luczanits (2012, 69–127), Zin (2018, 109–13). A new important contribution to the iconographical study of these Gandhāra steles as Mahāyāna representations is presented by Miyaji (2022, 267–80).

symbols of his first sermon. The upper register shows three Buddhas: a seated Buddha flanked by two Buddhas. This composition suggests that the scene is perhaps that of the Śrāvastī miracles. Similar iconography is also found in certain small tablets discovered in the Thai/Malay peninsula (Type 8 Top Right, Bottom Right), where the upper register shows three Buddhas sitting with legs crossed and hands in the meditation gesture (*dhyānamudrā*) above an enthroned Buddha. The three Buddhas might depict the Śrāvastī miracles as in Type 3. The identities of the two standing figures beside the enthroned Buddha at the lower register will be discussed below.

The Buddha sitting with his hands in *dhyānamudrā* was found in central and north-eastern Thailand (Types 4–7). Gautama Buddha is seated in the centre of the tablet with his legs crossed in *virāsana*. His right hand performs an indistinguishable *mudrā*, possibly either *vitarkamudrā* (gesture of teaching) or the half-lotus meditation posture which would have been a standard iconographic presentation of this theme (Type 4) (Chirapravati 1997, 21). But scholars are unequivocal as to the scene of the Śrāvastī miracles in Type 4. The clay sealings (Types 5 and 6) are one of several known examples depicting this subject, with the Buddha meditating beneath a blooming tree and seated on a lotus throne. However, Skilling (2008, 256) does not identify these tablets (Types 5 and 6) as depicting the Twin or Śrāvastī Miracle. He considers the depiction as an unidentified scene. [16]

According to the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda textual traditions, the performance of the miracles and the preaching of the *dharma* are kept as separate events occurring one after another (Brown 1984, 87). The Buddha first performed the miracle by going into meditation, thus the appropriateness of the *dhyānamudrā*. Following the miracle, the Buddha then preached the law, thus correspondingly the display of the *vitarkamudrā*. In the *Divyāvadāna*, the position and the gesture of the Buddha and the miraculously created Buddhas while performing the Great Miracle are mentioned in the text. According to the *Prātihāryasūtra*, the Buddha, sitting in the *paryāṅka* position,²⁷ conjured an array of illusory Buddhas (*buddhapīṇḍī nirmitā*), which fill the universe up to the *Akaṅkṣṭha* Heaven: “Then, crossing his legs and holding his body upright, he made his mindfulness fully present and magically created above that lotus another lotus on which the Blessed One also sat with his legs crossed* (*paryāṅkaniṣaṅṅha*) [...]”²⁸ [17]

However, it is not clearly stated in the Theravāda tradition that the Buddha entered *samādhi* (concentration) while he was performing the Twin Miracle, but we can assume from the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions that before the Buddha displayed the Twin Miracle, he entered the state of meditative equipoise: “Then the Blessed One entered the state of meditative equipoise such that, as soon as he composed the mind for meditation, [...]”²⁹ Moreover, the term *paryāṅkāśana*, for crossed-legged posture, is often mistakenly identified in a certain number of modern iconographic manuals with pendant legs, *bhadrāsana* (Revire 2011, 44, 2012, 107). [18]

As to the posture, it is clearly stated, at least in the *Divyāvadāna*, that the Buddha should be seated on the lotus with crossed legs. Therefore, the *bhadrāsana* posture in *Dvāravatī* art cannot be likened to a specific textual tradition or even exclusively to a particular episode of the Buddha’s life. Neither the Pāli nor the Sanskrit account of the Śrāvastī miracles refer to the Buddha seated with his legs extended and firmly grounded on a pedestal as he is depicted [19]

27 The Sanskrit term *paryāṅka* means “mode of sitting on the ground, a squatting position assumed by ascetics and Buddhists in meditation” (Monier-Williams 1899, 607).

28 PrS(Divy) 162.12–17; translation Rotman (2008, 279).

29 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 158 § 14.2).

in the Dvāravatī art (Revire 2012, 108). As for the gesture, it is common to depict the Buddha in both *dhyānamudrā* and a gesture symbolizing teaching or exposition (*vitarkamudrā*), which can be linked to the narrative elements of both the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda sources (see Sirisawad 2019, 265). As the preaching of Dharma is considered an important action in the spread of Buddhism, it is perhaps not surprising that the teaching gesture appears so consistently in the illustrations of the Śrāvastī miracles.

The Miraculous Demonstration

The Buddha did not perform just one miracle at Śrāvastī but a series of miracles varying in number and nature according to different textual sources. However, most visual representations centred around two major events: (1) the miracle tree and (2) the multiplication of the Buddha, which can be identified as the “Twin Miracle,” the “Great Miracle,” the creation of the duplicate Buddha, and performing a miracle akin to experience in the fourth absorption. Seven types of this complex iconographic scheme are known in a Dvāravatī context as follows: a stone slab preserved at the Bangkok National Museum and a related style (Type 1), a panel now preserved at Wat Suthat Thepwararam, Bangkok (Type 2), several miniature versions in the form of clay sealings (Types 4–7 and 9). These depict the complex narrative elements of the miracle tree and the multiplication of the Buddha.

[20]

(1) The Miracle Tree

The miracle tree is depicted in every type of the selected visual representations, but to specifically indicate that it is a mango tree is represented only in four types (Types 1, 2, 4, 7). The Pāli texts narrate that the mango tree grows instantaneously. The story has it that the Buddha, while in Rājagṛha, met a challenge directed at him by a group of *non-Buddhist ascetics*. He then declared that he would perform a miracle under a mango tree at Śrāvastī. In order to thwart his plans, the *non-Buddhist ascetics* destroyed all the mango trees in the area. Meanwhile, Gaṇḍa, a gardener of the King of Śrāvastī, offered the Buddha a ripe mango. The Buddha ate the fruit and then ordered Gaṇḍa to plant the mango seed, after which it miraculously sprouted and grew into a huge mango tree; thus the name Gaṇḍa’s mango tree.³⁰

[21]

In Type 1 (Fig. 1), the trunk appears behind the Buddha’s head as an extension of his throne. The tree and its characteristic branches are decorated with garlands, festoons, and jeweled bands. In terms of size and elaborateness, the tree depicted in this sculpture far exceeds anything found in Indian versions of the scene. Yet, this depiction corresponds with the size of the tree mentioned in the Pāli account: “[...] a mango tree of a hundred cubits, with a trunk of fifty cubits and branches of fifty cubits in height; at the same time flowers bloomed, fruit ripened; the tree stood filling the sky, covered with bees, loaden with golden fruit [...]”³¹ Type 2 (Fig. 2) shows the enthroned Buddha seated under a full-grown, bountiful mango tree which rises up behind him. The radiating branches of the newly grown mango tree support the miraculous demonstration of the Buddha. In Type 4 (Fig. 4), the scene depicted on clay tablets, currently housed in the National Museum, Bangkok, is generally identified as the Great Miracle of Śrāvastī. The Buddha at the centre is sitting under a mango tree with thick branches laden with fruit. However, Skilling refuses to acknowledge this type as depicting the Śrāvastī miracles scene and calls it an unidentified scene (Ghosh 2017, 47), while Woodward

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30 Dhp-a iii 207; J iv 264–265.

31 J iv 264–265; translation Cowell (1990, 4:167–168).

prefers to identify the subject as “Under the Rājāyatana tree, the Buddha visits the Kingdom of the Nāgas, Awaited by Bodhisvattas on the Bordering Mountain” (Woodward 2009, 63–65). The clay tablets found in the northeastern part of Thailand (Type 7) depict a mango fruit above the Buddha.

The mango tree not only plays an important role in the Pāli account but also in the Tibetan translation of the MSV, wherein Gaṇḍaka (*dum bu'i kun dga'*) brought a mango tree from Mount Gandhamādāna and placed it on the northern side of the pavilion for the Great Miracle. While the species of the tree is absent from the Sanskrit version of the Gilgit manuscript, the Tibetan translation of the MSV specifies “*a mra*,” equivalent to the Sanskrit *āmra*, *āmrāphala*, “the mango tree.” It is described as follows: “[...] whose bough extended with numerous branches, was adorned with yellow fruits, and in which many flocks of birds were singing.”³² However, other trees are mentioned too; for example, the head of the household Lūhasudatta is said to have brought a wish-fulfilling tree (*dpag bsam gyi shing* = *kalpavṛkṣa*) from Trayastriṃśa heaven and placed it on the southern side of the pavilion (Sirisawad 2019, 233). Thus, it is probably the motif of the offering of the mango tree as narrated in the Tibetan version of the MSV that has been visually translated into the depictions as in Types 1, 2, 4, 7.

Similarly, various kinds of trees are mentioned as part of the offering of the tree motif in other Mūlasarvāstivāda versions. For example, in the Chinese translation of the *Vinayakṣudrakavastu* it has various beautiful trees (種種奇妙林樹) and a wish-fulfilling tree (如意樹); in the *Prātihāryasūtra* of the *Divyāvādāna* it is a *karṇikāra* tree and an *aśoka* tree; and in the *Bodhisattvāvādānakalpalatā* [= Av-klp],³³ a *kalpavṛkṣa* (Sirisawad 2019, 233–35). At least one version of the Mūlasarvāstivāda corpus stipulates that it was a mango tree. The upper register of Type 3 illustrates a Buddha in *dhyānamudrā* under either a bodhi or mango tree which is floating in the air. In Types 5 and 6, he meditates beneath a blooming tree. Above the enthroned Buddha, a kind of (miracle) tree seems to shelter the Blessed One (Types 8 and 9). These clay tablets may reflect the episode of the offering of the (miracle) tree according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition or the instantaneous growth of a tree found in the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* and the related versions, in which the Buddha performed the miracles over the course of several days. He did not eat a mango but instead chewed a willow twig as a toothpick. Later, when he threw that stick away, a big tree grew from it.³⁴

(2) The Multiplication of the Buddha

Almost every type of the Dvāravatī artefacts, except Types 5 and 6, depict the element of the multiplication of the Buddha in different positions. In Type 1 (Fig. 1 Top Left), the stalks of the lotuses on which the multiplied Buddhas are placed in different attitudes appear from under the mango tree. There are seven Buddhas in number. A Buddha in *dhyānamudrā* sits on the central lotus, and three pairs of Buddhas are symmetrically arranged in the standing, reclining, and seated postures, respectively. The two standing Buddhas display different gestures, the left one demonstrating *vitarkamudrā* with the right hand and *varadamudrā* with the left hand, while the right one raising both hands at chest level. The reclining Buddha with his arm supporting his head was perhaps inspired by Pāla art (Chatikavanij 2002, 33).

In Type 2 (Fig. 2), the Buddha is depicted multiplied in various postures in the sky, in the uppermost part among the branches weighed down by clusters of mangoes. The Buddha is

32 Gilgit; MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 137–38 § 11.4).

33 For the edition of text, see Sirisawad (2019, 192n2).

34 T. 1428: 949a5–26; T 202: 362b8–19; T 160: 335c20–28 (see Sirisawad 2019, 236).

seated in *dhyānamudrā* in the centre, and four pairs of duplicate Buddhas, each displaying the *vitarkamudrā* with one hand and the other hand in other gestures, are displayed in artistic symmetry in seated (*vīrāsana* and *bhadrāsana*), standing, and reclining postures. All the multiplied Buddhas are placed on the upper petalled-lotuses, the stalks of which originate from the same stem. While in Type 4, five multiplied forms of the Buddha are depicted: three seated with their hands in *dhyānamudrā* on the upper level and two in standing posture, all on lotuses branching out from the same stem. Even though this votive tablet is very small, the story is illustrated in minute detail like a large relief. In Type 3, at the top register, the Buddha is meditating and he appears to be floating in the air. The two other haloed Buddhas, one on each side of the meditating Buddha, are paired with a *stūpa* each, thus adding complexity to the picture (Krairiksh 2012, 53–54; Revire 2012, 112). A related iconography is represented in Type 8, which shows multiplied Buddhas resting in the air above the central scene in different numbers: the standard three Buddhas (unclear but most likely) seated with legs crossed and hands in meditation gesture (Fig. 8 Top Right, Bottom Right) or five celestial Buddhas (three of them probably in meditation posture in the top centre and two in *bhadrāsana* with both hands raised, possibly in *vitarkamudrā*, at the upper left and right corners of the enthroned Buddha) (Fig. 8 Left).

In another quadrangular type of votive tablet (Type 9), above the enthroned Buddha floats another Buddha in meditation that Revire describes as a figure of one who has “reached *nirvāṇa* or discovered the eternal principle,” surrounded by several flying figures which might be interpreted as celestial figures (*vidyādhara*s?) (2012, 112). However, another possibility is that these figures represent the multiplied Buddhas in the Śrāvastī miracles. In Type 7, five multiplied Buddhas are portrayed, one seated, two reclining, and two standing, and, thus, seemingly in similar fashion to the depiction on the large stone relief from the central region (Type 1, Fig. 1 Top Left). The narrative elements associated with the multiplication of the Buddha, in which the Buddha and his duplicates display various postures, are the Twin Miracle, the Great Miracle, and the creation of the duplicate Buddha. All these elements can be found in both the Theravāda and the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts but with varying details.

According to the Theravāda versions, the multiplication of the Buddha occurred as part of the “Twin Miracle” (*yamakapātihārya*).³⁵ In the traditional definition, this signifies the simultaneous magical production of fire and water from the lower and upper parts of the body. In the *jātaka*, it probably quite simply means the emission of fire and water,³⁶ while in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* and its parallel in the *Paṭisaṃbhidhamagga* more elaborate descriptions are given.³⁷ It comprises three different kinds of miracles which correspond to the preliminary miracles in the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts.³⁸ The ordering is, however, different: (c) “emission of fire and water from every part of the body,” (b) “emission of light,” and (a) “the Buddha and his duplicate or counterpart displaying the four positions of the body in the sky.”

35 For references on the *yamakapātihārya*, see Sirisawad (2019, 244n328).

36 J iv 265.

37 Dh-p-a iii 213–214; Paṭi i 125–126.

38 In works of the Mūlasarvāstivādins, the Buddha performs various miraculous demonstrations of supernatural power in the four directions. These include (a) displaying the four positions of the body in the sky, (b) the emission of the great light, and (c) the emission of fire and water from the body which the Tibetan translation of the MSV names the “Twin Miracle” (*zung gi cho 'phrul*) (MSV-T: Sirisawad 2019, 160 § 14.6). This identification is not to be found in the Chinese translation and the *Divyāvadāna* (Sirisawad 2019, 244–45). The Twin Miracle follows this original meaning, which is associated with the simple emission of fire and water, accompanied by the display of the four postures in the sky and the emission of the light. Apart from the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, the Twin Miracle appears in some Chinese versions (T. 211: 598c24–a2; T. 193: 86a21–25, 86b18–19), but it is not clearly mentioned in the Dharmaguptaka and related versions.

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From the context, the three compositions of the Twin Miracle in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* and the *Paṭisambhidhamagga* are akin to the performance of the miracle in the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions.³⁹ Yet in the case of “displaying the four positions of the body in the sky,” the former assigns the performance to both the Buddha and the duplicate Buddha (Sirisawad 2019, 246–47, 249). The account of the creation of the duplicate Buddha or his counterpart is unquestionably part of the definition of the *yamakapāṭihāriya* in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*.

In the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, the multiplication of the Buddha occurred as part of the “Great Miracle” (*mahāprātihārya*), which represents a more advanced stage than the Theravāda versions. The important elements which appear only in the textual tradition of this school include (a) the thousand-petalled lotus throne supported by *nāga(s)*, (b) the exponential creation and projection of multiple Buddha images upwards through to space and (c) the magically created forms of the Buddhas performing various miracles (Sirisawad 2019, 251–55).⁴⁰ The multiplication of the Buddha depicted in Dvāravatī art may represent the situation when, as in (b), the Buddha, seated atop a thousand-petalled lotus throne, created multiple images of Buddhas on lotuses from his right and left sides. The multiple Buddha images rose up and filled the sky as far as Akaniṣṭha, the highest heaven in the *rūpadhātu*, such that there was an entire assembly of Lord Buddhas. Then, as in (c), the magically created forms of the Buddhas performed various kinds of miracles, including the emission of blaze, heat, rain, and lighting, as well as making predictions, asking questions, giving answers, walking, staying, standing up, sitting, lying down, and entering into the state of mastery over the element of fire. Notably, the Buddha displaying the four different bodily positions was part of performing this miracle.

Moreover, Types 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 demonstrate an anthropomorphic *nāga* holding a lotus in support of the Blessed One. This kind of depiction seems to relate to the narrative element found in the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the MSV—when the Buddha touched the ground as well as the arising of the worldly thought that the *nāga(s)* would come and bring a lotus—although it is presented differently in the *Divyāvadāna*. When the *nāgas* sensed the thought of the Buddha, they brought and presented the lotus to the Buddha before he demonstrated the Great Miracle.⁴¹ While in the *Divyāvadāna*, the two *nāga* kings named Nanda and Upananda magically created the lotus.⁴² Only the *Divyāvadāna* names the two *nāgas*, while the Tibetan translation only uses a plural pronoun to refer to the *nāgas* (*de dag*). The Chinese translation seems to refer only to one *nāga* (Sirisawad 2019, 251). In the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, the assembly of *nāga* chiefs beheld the Buddha with pleasure, and the lotuses sprung up from the ground where the Buddha was seated.⁴³ However, different numbers of *nāga* are depicted in Dvāravatī art. Some clay tablets portray only one (Types 2, 5, 6, 9), while some depict two (Type 4). The appearance of a *nāgarāja* (a serpent king) who emerges from the waters below to support the lotus on which the Buddha meditates beneath a blooming tree in Types 5 and 6 “tends to identify the scene as Sravastī” (Brown 1984, 90). Whether the scene in question actually represents this theme is still disputed (see Skilling 2008, 256). In Type 9 the *nāga* supporting the lotus stem on which the Buddha’s feet rest is depicted. In Type 4, there are two pairs of small figures located beneath the Buddha at the very bottom of the tablets. In

39 See MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 160 § 14.2).

40 The account of the multiplication of the Buddha features in the conventional descriptions of miraculous feats in many textual transmissions; see Sirisawad (2019, 256–57).

41 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 162 § 15.1). MSV-C: T. 1451: 332b3–7.

42 PrS(Divy) 162.9–11.

43 Av-klp 13.46–50.

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front of them is a tray with offerings covered by conical tops and a kneeling and standing figure on either side. Krairiksh (2012, 334) identified the kneeling figures as the two *nāgas* Nanda and Upananda. However, without the depiction of the lotus, it is difficult to identify these four figures underneath the Buddha; the two figures on the left may also represent some of the *non-Buddhist ascetics*, while the two on the right may be King Prasenajit with his retinue. In Indian art, the two *nāgas* are usually depicted holding the lotus stalk in accordance with Sanskrit scripture (see Schlingloff 1991, fig. 19 (drawing)). The depiction of one *nāga* in some representations probably implies that either the local artists may not have considered the narrative element from the texts narrating the two *nāgas* holding the lotus, or they were familiar with the text but chose to express their own artistic preference while combining with those inherited from India.

The visual representations in the art of Dvāravatī show the Buddha seated in *bhadrāsana* on a throne with a lotus pedestal and in *vīrāsana* on a double lotus-petalled throne. Based on the iconography of the Great Miracle scene on a Gupta Sarnath relief (see Williams 1975, figs. 3, 8; Schlingloff 1991, fig. 16 (drawing)), the defining characteristic of the representation of the Śrāvastī miracles is regarded as a lotus throne, and thus virtually every relief with the scene of a preaching Buddha on a lotus throne is considered as depicting the Śrāvastī miracles.⁴⁴ The depiction here in the Dvāravatī examples is probably related to the miraculous demonstration of the Great Miracle during which the Buddha and his magical forms were seated on each of the lotuses. All texts of the Mūlasarvāstivādins describe the lotus seat in similar fashion: It was a thousand-petalled lotus as large as a chariot, made entirely of gold with a stem made of jewels. When the lotus rose from the ground, the Blessed One sat at its heart (Sirisawad 2019, 251).

Another possibility for the inspiration of the visual motif of the multiplication of the Buddha is the episode of the “creation of the duplicate Buddha”⁴⁵ (*nimmitabuddha, buddhanirmāṇa*) found at the end of the accounts of both the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. In the *Prātihāryasūtra*, the Buddha duplicated himself only for the purpose of having a companion with whom he could converse.⁴⁶ In the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, this episode of duplication appears again after the Buddha preached the dhamma to the assembly. The Buddha used his supernatural power to create a double for the purpose of having a companion with whom he dialogued on matters of the dharma, and this pair of Buddhas then assumed in sequence various postures associated with displaying the four bodily positions.⁴⁷ Interestingly, some of the miracles performed that created forms of the Buddhas in the Great Miracle correspond to those displayed by the duplication of Buddha in the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*.

If we look at the multiplied Buddhas at the top of each visual representation (Types 1, 2, 4, 7), we notice the peculiar characteristic that he touches the circles with his hand on each side of the depiction. At the top corner of the stele and clay tablets are two lotus-seated Buddhas. One hand of each Buddha is raised in front of the shoulder and is probably in *vitarkamudrā*. The other hand reaches up to touch a circular form (Type 1). At the top corner of Type 2, the magically created Buddhas are standing rather than seated, but otherwise they perform the same gestures as in Type 1: One hand is in *vitarkamudrā*, while the other touches a circular form (in this case the circles are partially cut off by the edge of the relief) (Krairiksh 2012,

44 See Foucher (1909, 5–78), English translation ([1917] 1972, 147–84 and plates xix–xxviii).

45 This miracle led to a confusion regarding the meaning of the Twin Miracle in previous studies; see Foucher ([1917] 1972, 156–57); Brown (1984, 85); Rhi (1991, 53n8).

46 PrS(Divy) 166.3–16; See also Brown (1984, 85).

47 DhP-a iii 216.

[31]

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[33]

61–62). In Type 4, the Buddhas in question are also standing, but their right hands, instead of displaying the *vitarkamudrā*, are outstretched. The other hand of each touches a large circle in which figures are clearly depicted. In Type 7, the standing Buddhas in the upper corners reach up to touch circular forms which have irregular aureoles and appear to be flower- or flame-like. If the scene depicted in Types 5 and 6 indeed shows one of the miracles performed by the Buddha at Śrāvastī—namely either the offering of the (mango) tree or the instantaneous growth of the (mango) tree presumably above him—the two circles inscribed with figures in the upper corners could be identified as the solar deity or Sūrya (Guy 2014, 218; see also Brown 1984, 90).

Brown (1984, 89) interpreted these two celestial bodies in the circles as the Brahmanical sun god Sūrya's homage to the Buddha. The sun god is depicted in duplicates here because "the miracle scenes on the Dvaravati reliefs of the Buddhas in each pair are intended to be symmetrical duplicates of each other." The Buddha places his hand on the rim of the sun, as one would turn it in the sky like a rotating wheel instead of holding or supporting it, as seen on several Gandhāran reliefs depicting the First Sermon (Brown 1984, 91). Several Buddhist symbols are essential elements of religious expression, and the *cakra* is an important sun symbol in Dvāravatī art. The wheel represents the sun and the heat, which are symbols associated with meditation. In other words, these depictions are illustrative attempts at rendering an abstract concept in concrete form (see Anālayo 2015, 27–30). The Buddha performed the Twin Miracle of producing fire and water in both the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Theravāda traditions, while the multiplied Buddhas also performed the miracle with flames and lightning in the Great Miracle of the Mūlasarvāstivāda version. Thus, according to Brown, the sun is the symbol of the Buddhas performing the Twin Miracle of producing fire and water, but "the Dvāravatī artists apparently interpreted the idea differently, presumably in part because they had never seen the fire and water miracle (Twin Miracle) represented. It is the creation of light as represented by the sun that appears to be shown on the Dvāravatī examples" (1984, 91).⁴⁸ This identification now appears substantiated, although the reason for the double sun symbols in these contexts is not known.

Another possibility is that the dual circles represent the sun and the moon. Neither the text of the Mūlasarvāstivādins nor the Pāli account of this narrative mentions the Buddha stretching his hand to touch the moon and the sun. However, it is described in the Siamese version of the *Paṭhamasambodhi* or "ปฐมสมโพธิ" (*Pathommasomphot*, *Pathomsomphot*):⁴⁹

Then, he conjured another Buddha Image that looked like himself. While the Lord Buddha walked up and down the terrace, the conjured Buddha Image was in a reclining posture. Sometimes, the Lord Buddha asked questions and the conjured Buddha Image answered and gave explanations. Sometime, the Omniscient One

48 The Buddha radiating fire and water from his body as part of the Twin Miracle is depicted in numerous sculptures found in the Greater Gandhāra region. The twin miracle is unquestionably presented with the Buddha standing with his right hand in *abhayamudrā*, with flames emerging from his shoulders and water flowing from his feet in the style of the northwestern regions, which do not appear in the works of other Indian or Southeast Asian artists (see Brown 1984, fig. 3; Klimburg-Salter 1995, figs. 176–77). This style of representation from the northwestern regions did not appear in other Indian or Southeast Asian visual representations, including Dvāravatī.

49 The *Paṭhamasambodhi* was written in the Thai script and Pāli language, and composed by Somdech Phra Maha Samanachao Krom Phra Paramanujitjinoros, a key patriarch in the nineteenth Buddhist century.

stretched his hands to touch the Moon and the Sun and the conjured Buddha Image delivered a sermon.⁵⁰

In the miracle of the eleventh day described in the Chinese translation of the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, we find an account of the miracle that is associated with the Dvāravatī examples as follows: “The Bhagavat performed a miracle with his supernatural power in the middle of the assembly. His body turned into many bodies. And many bodies turned back into one ... He touched the sun and moon with his hands. His body reached the Brahmā heaven.”⁵¹ This account of the multiplication miracle is similar to the “performing of a miracle akin to experience in the fourth absorption.” Similar accounts appear in other scriptures of the Dharmaguptaka school and many other early texts which describe the psychic experiences that arise in this fourth state of consciousness, regarded as being free of any external influence (see Sirisawad 2019, 260–61). In the *Pathomsomphot*, the Buddha approaches the state of the fourth trance before he creates the magical image (*nimmitabuddho*) and displays the *yamakapāṭihāriya*: “The Great Teacher underwent the Fourth Jhāna or the Fourth Absorption, which is the base of the Supernormal Powers, and performed a miracle by flying into the air. He then walked up and down on the terrace, reciting as a way of meditation, and focusing on the elemental earth.”⁵² This description of the miracles and meditative experiences is relevant. Miraculous demonstrations of superhuman powers seem “to involve an extension of certain principles of meditation, that is, of mind over matter” (Fiordalis 2008, 4). And coming back to the circular depictions, there are, in fact, several other similar circular forms that appear on Dvāravatī reliefs or votive tablets which remain unexplained to date (see Brown 1984, fig. 17), especially the Dvāravatī votive tablets in northeastern and central Thailand. The circular forms symbolizing the sun and the moon are placed on the upper edge of the votive tablets without the Buddha touching them.⁵³

In the fifth century CE, the multiplication miracle was depicted at Sarnath (see Williams 1975, fig. 6). Meanwhile, it was also shown at Ajanta, but with the Buddhas arranged in rows and not in pairs as at Sarnath (see Schlingloff 2013, No. 88/I,5,1 (drawing)). The style of the depictions of the multiplication at Ajanta is related to the Thousand-Buddha theme. The two major themes of the multiplication of the Buddha and the miracle of the mango tree are brought together in a wall painting as seen in Cave 2, in which a Buddha is shown performing the multiplication miracle while seated under a mango tree (see Schlingloff 2013, No. 89/II, 9, 2 (drawing)). It is this hybrid form that appears in the art of Dvāravatī. Two possible explanations for the combination of these narrative elements were given by Brown (1984, 83). One is that the themes were first combined in texts that have either been lost or have not yet come to light. The second possibility is that the artists and monks of Ajanta were responsible for the new iconography, one that existed only in the visual but not the literary tradition. However, the mango tree does continue to appear, usually in a much more

50 *Paṭhamasambodhi*, translation (2016, 479); Thai: แล่วนฤมิตพุทธนฤมิต (*nimmitabuddha*) เหมือนพระพุทธองค์ฯ เสด็จจงกรมไปมา พุทธนิมิตแสดงอาการไสยาสน์ ปางที่พระมุนีนารถรัสถามปัญหา พุทธนิมิตวิสิขนาในอธิบาย ปางคาบพระสัพพัญญูเหยียดพระหัตถ์ไปปรางมาสดวงพระจันทร์พระอาทิตย์ พระพุทธรูปนิมิตสำแดงพระสัทธรรมเทศนา แลสมเด็จพระศาสดาสำแดงซึ่งวิภูพานอิทธิปาฏิหาริย์โดยอเนกประการต่างๆ โดยพรรณนามาเป็นอาทิดังนี้ (*Pathomsomphot* 2008, 236).

51 T. 1428: 949c23–29.

52 *Paṭhamasambodhi*, translation (2016, 479); Thai: แล้วพระบรมครูก็เข้าสู่จตุตถฌานสมาบัติอันเป็นตั้งแห่งอภิปัญญา กระทำพระอิทธิปาฏิหาริย์เหาะขึ้นไปบนอากาศ เสด็จพระพุทธลีลาตไปมาบนพื้นพระรัตนจงกรมด้วยปฐมฤทธิกลินบริกรรม (*Pathomsomphot* 2008, 236).

53 See the depiction of the sun and moon in northeastern Dvāravatī art in Dhamrungrueng ([2558 BE] 2015, figs. 13, 63, 64 (besides the *stūpa*), 74 (besides the *dharmacakra*)).

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abbreviated form, as in Pāla depictions (see Bhattacharya 1990, figs. 1–3; Brown 1984, fig. 10). The intermingling is found in the Śrāvastī miracles scenes in the later art of western India as well as, for example, at Kanheri (see Parimoo 2010, fig. 117 (Wall A)). However, while representations of the multiplication miracle with the mango tree can be found, their appearance in South Asia throughout all periods and locations is infrequent.

The Appearance of the (Six) Defeated Non-Buddhist Ascetics

The event of the Buddha overpowering one of his rivals, the naked ascetic Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, supported by his followers as he collapses in defeat, is presented in the largest and most impressive Dvāravatī stone relief. At the bottom of the stele (Type 1, Fig. 1 Top Left), on each side of the Buddha, are the two groups of earthly participants. In the lower right corner, the six defeated *non-Buddhist ascetics* are depicted with their plump leader, Pūraṇa Kāśyapa. He raises his right arm, bent at the elbow above his head. The Kāśyapa figure in Type 2 also holds his arm in this gesture, a gesture found only in these two depictions in Dvāravatī art. It is interesting to note that the appearances and costumes of the six *non-Buddhist ascetics* are like those of the Indian figures. [39]

Interpreting this relatively rare Pūraṇa Kāśyapa's posture from Ingholt's study, Brown (1984, 91–92) surmised that “it is evidently a gesture of fear, but it must also imply awe and surprise.” However, Zin (2018, 112–13) points out that in Indian culture, this gesture is perceived as “a sign of desperation and it is repeated many times in exactly the same context by defeated heretics watching the Great Miracles,” as evidenced in the mural painting from Ajanta, Cave 17 and some Gandhāran examples (see Zin 2018, fig. 8 and 9). This raised arm gesture is also found in an eleventh-century Nepali manuscript painting depicting the Śrāvastī miracles (Brown 1984, fig. 19). Spanning over a thousand years from the Gandhāran art to the Nepali manuscripts, including the Dvāravatī artefacts, this raised arm gesture has been consistent in its appearance in the depiction of the Śrāvastī miracles. As such, the raised arm gesture of the *non-Buddhist ascetics* is “securely, although not exclusively, related to the Śrāvastī miracles, and its specific use in the scene in Dvāravatī art argues that the Dvāravatī artist knew it in the context of the miracles in the Indian model as well” (Brown 1984, 91–92). This posture corresponds with the situation mentioned in the narratives in which, after the Buddha performed various miracles, the *non-Buddhist ascetics'* pavilion was destroyed and they fled. This event is narrated in various ways;⁵⁴ In the Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, the six teachers showed up to compete with the Buddha's supernatural power. On the other hand, in the Dhamaguptaka *Vinaya* they were not apparently present in the assembly. The sequence of the story in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* is strange in that it places the defeat of the *non-Buddhist ascetics* and Pūraṇa committing suicide before the Buddha performs the Twin Miracle to confound them. [40]

The Appearance of King Prasenañjit

King Prasenañjit played an important role in this narrative. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda, the Dhamaguptaka, and its related versions, and T. 211, the king asked the Buddha to perform a [41]

54 Regarding the agent who sends a heavy wind and rain in order that the miracle pavilions of the *non-Buddhist ascetics* be destroyed, see Sirisawad (2019, 263–69).

miraculous demonstration⁵⁵ and for a permission to build the miracle pavilion.⁵⁶ In the Theravāda versions, the king visited the Buddha and asked for permission to erect a miracle pavilion, as the *non-Buddhist ascetics* had already erected their own; but instead, it was Śakra who constructed a pavilion for the Buddha.⁵⁷

In Type 1 (Fig. 1 Top Left), King Prasenajit is at the lower left, with his hands in *añjalimudrā* leading a group of devotees together with his retinue worshipping the Buddha. There are five people including King Prasenajit on the left side. One of them is a kneeling devotee wearing large elliptical earrings pouring water from a ritual vessel before the Buddha's feet. There are also two more figures paying respect to the Buddha beneath his throne. In Type 2, the nine human figures to the right of the Buddha must be King Prasenajit and his relatives because they are adorned with headgears, a symbol of royalty. According to the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the MSV, while the Buddha was performing the miracle of the burning of the miracle pavilion, the king and his companions are mentioned, including Queen Mālikā, Princess *Varṣākārā, the fortune-teller Ṛṣidatta, Pūraṇa, the head of the householder Anāthapiṇḍada, and Viśākhā the mother of Mṛgāra.⁵⁸ They may represent some of these figures. In Type 7, King Prasenajit pays his respects on the Buddha's right, and Pūraṇa Kāśyapa is shown kneeling with his hands in prayer paying homage to the Buddha on his left. However, Rungrote Dhamrungrueng ([2558 BE] 2015, 125) points out that the figure depicted on the Buddha's left must be female because the figure has breasts. Taking into account his suggestion, it can be postulated that this figure is perhaps Queen Mālikā, the consort of King Prasenajit. In Types 5 and 6, besides the *nāga*, there are two other figures next to the Buddha, which may be assumed to be King Prasenajit and Pūraṇa Kāśyapa. In Type 4, at the very bottom of the tablet there are two pairs of figures, one kneeling and the other standing on either side. The standing figures are presumed to be King Prasenajit and Pūraṇa Kāśyapa. [42]

The Appearance of Brahmā and Indra, unspecified deities or the Bodhisattvas

In Type 1 (Fig. 1 Top Left), a horizontal wall separates the earthly and heavenly realms. Above the earthly participants are a row of devas worshipping the Buddha; the heavenly contingent is headed by Brahmā and Indra. These earthly and heavenly viewers are separated in the relief by a plain band in which the celestial participants appear as half figures. Because of their size and proximity to the Buddha, we may assume that the two figures holding fly whisks may represent Brahmā with his contingent on his left, recognizable because of their matted hair, and Indra with his retinue on his right, identifiable by their crowns (Brown 1984, 87). In the *Prātihāryasūtra* it is recorded that these two deities, along with others, descended into the assembly and stood beside the Buddha, with Brahmā on his right and Indra on his left, before the two *nāga* kings magically created a lotus for the Buddha in the performing of the Great Miracle.⁵⁹ [43]

Brahmā and Śakra also appear in other versions. In the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, Brahmā, Śakra and various disciples, namely King Udayana, King Brahmadata, King Prasenajit, Queen Mallika, and the rich householders Ṛṣidatta and Pūraṇa, asked the Buddha for a permission [44]

55 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 102–6 § 7.1–3), MSV-C: T. 1451 329c16–26; PrS(Divy)-CN 149.16–150.15; T. 1428: 948c15–20; T 202: 362b4–8; T 160: 335c16–c20; T 211: 598c11–13.

56 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 128–29 § 10.1); MSV-C: T. 1451: 331a2–5; PrS(Divy)-CN 151.1–2.

57 J iv 264; Dhp-a iii 206.

58 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 140–42 § 11.7).

59 PrS(Divy) 161.23–162.9.

to build a high throne (高座), but nobody was allowed to do so.⁶⁰ The Chinese version of the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya* narrated this event as part of the miracle enacted on the fourteenth day, where Śakra and Brahmā, with their hands placed together in veneration, also stand to the left and right of the multiple Buddha images that were created by the Buddha out of scattered flowers (T. 1428: 950a17–21). In the related versions of the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*, it is said that the Buddha sat on this throne with Śakra on the left and Brahmā on the right (T. 202). In T. 160 Śakra, Brahma and other devas stood attending to him on both sides (Sirisawad 2019, 228–29).

In other Mūlasarvāstivāda versions, however absent in the *Divyāvadāna* and *Upāyikā-ṭikā*,^[45] the elaborate account of King Prasenajit is mentioned, who, along with his attendants and deities, is gazing upon the Buddha's Great Miracle. The episode in which deities and other living beings rejoice in the Buddha's Great Miracle are also mentioned. However, in this account, Brahmā and Śakra do not appear.⁶¹ Instead of being Brahmā and Indra, it is possible the two deities are ordinary deities as mentioned in the MSV. In Type 2, the Buddha is flanked by two figures holding fly whisks. The figures with both hands joined must be the divinities listening to the Buddha's sermon. The divinities on the right side are male, while those on the left are female. In Type 4, the Buddha is also flanked by two figures. Based on the depiction, we may assume that the left one, wearing a short loincloth, is Indra, together with the *stūpas*, and the right one, wearing a long loincloth and a *dharmacakra* seen sideways, is Brahmā. The two small figures beside the lotus throne may be interpreted as his disciples, namely the venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana (Pāli: Mahāmoggallāna Thera) and the nun Utpalavaṇṇā (Pāli: Utpalavaṇṇā Therī). In the MSV, they ask the Buddha to allow them to perform a miracle instead, while in the Theravāda account, these two disciples show their intention to perform different kinds of miracles in place of their teacher (Sirisawad 2019, 242–43).

In Types 5 and 6 the Buddha is attended by two crowned figures on the shore, each holding a long-stemmed lotus bud. These princely attendants honoring him can be identified as Indra on his right and Brahmā on his left. A multitude of celestial beings (*deva*) with hands raised in reverence (*añjalimudrā*) occupy the sky above, accompanied by celestial musicians (*gandharva*). There is a peculiar rounded form in the centre of this tablet between the two Sūryas. This is a drum, probably being beaten by the two small figures on each side of it. The depictions on these votive tablets correspond with the narrative of the MSV: "Some of the deities who dwelled in the sky beat drums and those who dwelled in the ground beat large drums, blew conches, and drew the various kinds of sounds from musical instruments [...]."⁶² In Brown's opinion (1984, 90), the presence of the drum in the Dvāravatī tablets implies some possible link between Dvāravatī and Sañcī, because two such drums are also present in the Sañcī depiction of the miracle (Fig. 12). However, there is no other evidence of links or parallels to prove the relationship between these two places, and it can hardly be conclusive based on a single motif. On a Pāla piece (Fig. 13), a drum and cymbals are pictured at the top, above the head and feet of a recumbent Buddha as part of the depiction of the eight great events of his life. These objects symbolize "the universal rhythm (pulse of creation) and sound (the vehicle of speech). Together they can be interpreted as the divine truth of law which is personified by the Buddha" (Craven 2006, 174).

A collection of clay tablets found in the Peninsula (Type 8) all depict a seated Buddha in ^[47]

60 T. 1428: 948c20–949a.

61 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 167 § 15.8); MSV-C: T. 1451: 332b21–c4; Av-klp 13.51.

62 MSV-T: Sirisawad (2019, 168–69 § 15.9).



Figure 12 The The Śrāvastī Miracles. Ca. 50 BCE. Northern Gateway, Front Face of East Pillar, Stūpa I, Sañci. Source: author, 2016.



Figure 13 The eight great events of Buddha's life. Ca. tenth to eleventh centuries CE. Berlin Museum für Asiatische Kunst. Source: author, 2014.

bhadrāsana flanked by two standing assistants in triple flexion. They are most likely identified as Bodhisattvas. However, there is no consensus as to the identity of the two standing figures, though the gods Brahmā and Indra or the Bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya are the most common designations (Revire 2012, 109n57). The composition of the scene in Type 9 is similar to that of the preceding type but a bit more elaborate. The central Buddha is flanked by two or three standing Bodhisattvas on each side instead of only one, as in Type 8. The triad composition consisting of a seated Buddha in *bhadrāsana* flanked by two standing Bodhisattvas is a common iconographic formula shared by India as well as Central and Peninsular Thailand (Ghosh 2017, 43). This motif was popular in the Mahāyāna caves in Maharashtra (Revire 2011, 37–49). Among the depiction of the Bodhisattvas stemming from the Peninsula, Avalokiteśvara was extremely popular and was depicted on the tablets individually or together with other Bodhisattvas. Most of them are dated to the ninth or tenth century CE and are largely stylistically influenced by Eastern India, where Nalanda is a possible source of diffusion (Ghosh 2017, 39–43). These are indicators of interactions between Nalanda and the Thai-Malay Peninsula, which is consistent with Pattaratorn Chirapravati’s statement that “the appearance of the Bodhisattva on votive tablets confirms the Mahāyana Buddhism in the Central Plain and in the Peninsula” (1997, 22).⁶³

Conclusion and Discussion

The examination of the Dvāravatī artefacts depicting the Śrāvastī miracles from the three regions of Thailand suggests that they are stylistic composites. It is difficult to assume any direct Indian linkage to Dvāravatī art. The Śrāvastī miracles appear in various combinations from the beginnings of Buddhist narrative art in India, and the prototypes of the depiction are stylistically similar to the art of the Gupta or Post-Gupta periods. Some of the tablets from the Thailand central plain and northeastern plateau, mostly limited to those from the period up until the eighth century CE (Type 1, 2, 4, 7), show influence from the Gupta style, where it is the buds of a climbing lotus, rather than a tree (as in Dvāravatī), that support the multiplied Buddhas as depicted on steles showing the miraculous apparitions from Sarnath of the Gupta period. These reliefs represent the multiplication miracle as described in the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts. The depiction of the throne of the Buddha, which has a crossbar at shoulder height with *makara* finials (Type 1, Fig. 1 Top Left, and Type 2, Fig. 2), is consistent with the *makara* throne from the post-Gupta period. Ghosh suggested that some clay tablets of central Thailand, dated around the seventh century CE and beyond (Type 4), were influenced by Pallava due to their artistic elements which connect them to the Pallava art of Mahabalipuram, as seen in the Varāha cave in the southern part of India (2017, 47). As for the Peninsular tablets from around the eighth and ninth centuries CE and later on, Eastern Indian art style was a dominant factor (Chirapravati 2000, 172–93; Ghosh 2017, 48). We see that in some tablets (Type 8, Fig. 8 Top Right) the pendant-legged Buddha has “a roll of fat under his abdomen, a characteristic of the mature phase of the Dvāravatī period art in the central plain (eighth–ninth centuries CE) and a characteristic of the Nalanda Buddha image of the eighth century CE” (Ghosh 2017, 43). Scheurleer and Klokke (1988) state that the styles and iconography depicted on the votive tablets from the Peninsula may have been derived from India and

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63 Apart from the practice of Mahāyana Buddhism, there are more complex iconographies depicted in the votive tablets found in the Peninsula showing the trace of Vajrayāna Buddhism practiced during the ninth century CE (see Ghosh 2017, 39).



Figure 14 Detail of Fig. 2.

Java, but each atelier established its own style (as cited in Ghosh 2017, 49). Moreover, the same style and iconography were also found on simple moulded tablets from northeastern Thailand dating from between the ninth and tenth centuries CE (Type 7). In this type, the depiction of the Śrāvastī miracles is characterized by the seated Buddha in meditation and multiplied Buddha in different postures without any complex iconography. Undeniably, some of the Dvāravatī examples are related to the same artistic tradition, as the preceding ones are close in date.

Some artefacts also provide clear evidence of an artistic continuum and contact between various neighbouring regions other than that of India. For example, a cloud pattern is used to separate celestial attendees represented on the back of the relief from the main earthly figures (Fig. 14), a detail hitherto unknown in Indian Gupta-Vākāṭaka art. A similar cloud pattern can be seen on the grey limestone relief of an enthroned Buddha preaching the First Sermon found in Nakhon Pathom (Fig. 15). Revire (2012, 102) suggested that “this might have been inspired in one way or another by a Chinese painting on embroidery or silk largely in favour during the Tang dynasty and perhaps circulating in the southern seas.” In some of the Dvāravatī depictions, it is often difficult to say whether one of the Buddha’s shoulders or both are covered by a robe. However, the low relief from Wat Chin, Ayutthaya (Type 1, Fig. 1 Top Left) shows the characteristic Gupta-Sarnath robe style, in which the edge of the monastic robe hanging between the legs in a curve is presented with the edge of *antaravāsaka*. The existence of the outer robe (*saṅghāṭī*) in Type 1 (Fig. 1 Top Left) reflects the post-Gupta style (see Tingsanchali [2554 BE] 2011, fig. 117), but the one with a straight end in Type 2 reflects influence from Khmer art (Kluaymai na Ayudhya [2550 BE] 2007, 105).

Moreover, in congruence with the phenomenon of interaction within Southeast Asia during the seventh to eighth centuries CE, Buddha images are presented with unique postures and gestures. The Buddha in the *bhadrāsana posture* with the right hand raised in a preaching gesture and the left hand on the lap was virtually absent from India and, thus, was probably

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Figure 15 Relief depicting the enthroned Buddha preaching the first sermon. Ca. seventh to eighth century CE. Phra Pathom Chedi National Museum (19/635). Photograph: Thierry Ollivier. Source: Revire (2014a), fig. 4.

innovated in the *Dvāravatī* found in almost equal numbers in Central and Peninsular Thailand. This iconographic feature, *vitarkamudrā* or *abhayamudrā* associated with the pendant-legged sitting posture, seemed to belong to a Southeast Asian “regional type” (Skilling 2011, 378) because there are no examples known to date from India, but this feature has been more prevalent in Central and Southern Thailand, Burma, West Java, and Campā (Ghosh 2017, 44). In the miracle scenes on the *Dvāravatī* reliefs, the paired Buddhas are intended to be symmetrical duplicates of each other. Unlike the Indian portrayals of the multiplication miracle where the Buddha figures are identical, each performing the *mudras* with the same hand, the *Dvāravatī* examples show each pair of Buddhas as mirror images. These examples support Griswold’s finding (1966) that “the process that created the *Dvāravatī* Buddhas is different from copying, as these are unique objects that relate to but are not identical to other works” (as cited in Brown 2014, 190). The *Dvāravatī* artists thus combine the artistic elements inherited from India and neighboring countries with local preferences and beliefs in creating these visual representations. The analysis of *Dvāravatī* art styles and iconography has helped us date these visual representations more conveniently.

The importance of these visual representations of the Śrāvastī miracles in *Dvāravatī* art resides specifically in the details. Upon a closer examination of the artefacts, one observes a mixture of inspirations from a variety of different sources. Most of the examples are of mixed types of narrative elements associated with the Theravāda school, principally in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā* and the *Jātakas* commentary, and other texts of the Mūlasarvāstivādins apart from the *Divyāvadāna* in Sanskrit. But they frequently exceeded their Indian prototypes in specificity and elaboration of textual details. Some examples depict the narrative elements found in the Dharmaguptakas scriptures and other school affiliations. These narrative elements are tabulated in a table depicted in figure 16.

64 In this table Mūlasarvāstivāda Versions are represented by A = The *Mahāpratihāryasūtra* in the Gilgit Manuscripts, B = MSV-T, C = MSV-C, D = PrS(Divy), E = *Upāyikā-tīkā*, F = Av-klp; Theravāda Versions

Narrative elements/ Texts	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
1. Miraculous Demonstration													
1.1 The miracle tree													
(a) Offering of the full-grown (mango) tree	x	x	x	x		x							x
(b) Instantaneous growth of the mango tree (GH) or unspecified tree (IJK)							x	x	x	x	x		
1.2 The Twin Miracle													
(a) Display of the four positions of the body in the sky by the Buddha (BCD) and the duplicate Buddhas (G)		x	x	x			x						
1.3 The Great Miracle													
(a) The thousand-petalled lotus throne supported by <i>nāga(s)</i>		x	x	x		i							x
(b) The exponential creation and projection of multiple Buddha images upwards through space		x	x	x	x				i	i	i		x
(c) The magically created forms of the Buddhas performing various miracles		x	x	x	x								
1.4 The creation of the duplicate Buddha				x			x						
1.5 Performing a miracle akin to experience in the fourth absorption									x				
2. The appearance of the (six) defeated non-Buddhist ascetics		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	
3. The appearance of King Prasenajit		x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
4. The appearance of Brahmā and Indra (DIJKL), unspecified deities (BCF), or the Bodhisattvas		x	x	x		x			x	x	x		

Figure 16 The narrative elements of the Śrāvastī miracles in various textual sources depicted in Dvāravatī art*.⁶⁴

The considerable variations among the different types, and even within each type, as well as the many dissimilar motifs that they share with one another, including the various textual sources, indicate that we cannot expect a close text-image relationship with a one-to-one correspondence. On the one hand, the artefacts showing the Buddha performing the miracle under a mango tree (Types 1, 2, 4, 7), for example, are related to the narrative element of the miracle tree found in either the Pāli account (instantaneous growth of the mango tree) or the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts (offering of the tree). Some artefacts show the Buddha seated under an unspecified tree (Types 3, 5, 6, 8, 9), a composition which suggests a connection with either the narrative element of the offering of the tree according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition or the instantaneous growth of an unspecified tree narrated in the Dhammaguptaka and other related versions. The depiction of the multiplication of the Buddha taking various postures (Types 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8?, 9?) might be derived from the literary motifs of the magically created forms of the Buddhas performing various miracles as part of the Great Miracle according to the Mūlasarvāstivāda texts. However, this arrangement particularly suits the Pāli version of the duplicate Buddhas displaying the four positions of the body in the sky as part of the Twin Miracle. It may even correspond with the element of the creation of the duplicate Buddha found only in the *Divyāvadāna* and the Pāli *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. Only three types (Types 2, 4?, 9) depict the element of the thousand-petalled lotus throne supported by *nāga*(s) with the multiplied Buddhas performing various miracles. These two elements, which are found only in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition but missing in the Pāli text, are essential elements of the Buddha performing the Great Miracle. Some types (Types 4, 5, 6, 9) represent the element of the *nāga* together with the miracle tree. Some narrative elements depicted in the artefacts are also found in the Chinese translation of the Dharmaguptaka *Vinaya*. One such element is the performing of a miracle akin to experience in the fourth absorption as depicted by the appearance of the Buddha figures touching the circles (Types 1, 2, 4, 7). [52]

The (six) defeated *non-Buddhist ascetics* depicted in the Dvāravatī (Types 1, 2, 4?) is a common narrative element found in almost every version. The appearance of King Prasenajit, who plays an important role in the narrative, is an element found in the Dvāravatī art from the central and northeastern regions of Thailand (Types 1, 2, 4?, 5, 6, 7). The last narrative element is the appearance of Brahmā and Indra, which is found in the *Divyāvadāna*, the Dhammaguptaka, and other related versions. The two figures standing beside the Buddha in some depictions (Types 1, 4, 5, 6) are identified with these two gods, while on some reliefs they might be interpreted as ordinary deities (Type 2). Whether the clay tablets from the southern region (Types 8 and 9) depict either these two gods or the Bodhisattvas is uncertain. However, the latter is possible due to the fact that the Buddha is normally shown in the *Dharmachakrapravartana mudrā* in Indian art, flanked by the usual pair of bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya (Ghosh 2017, 43). The Dvāravatī pieces from the central region as well as the sealings from northeastern Thailand depict the Śrāvastī miracles in a more complex composition, which is different from that of Indian art. It should be emphasized that the Dvāravatī culture located in the central plain and Chi Valley was not a mere passive recipient of Indian culture, as evidenced by the fact that the artefacts produced in those area do not represent passive copies of Indian types. They were “distinctive and refined in conception and design. Although most [53]

are represented by G = Dhp-a, H = the *Sarabhamigajāta*; The Dharmaguptaka and Related Versions are represented by I = T. 1428, J = T. 202, K = T. 160; Other Versions of Unidentified School-Affiliation are represented by L = T. 211, M = T. 193. “x” means “included” and “i” means “implied” or presented somewhat differently. This table is adapted from Sirisawad (2019, 304–6).

Narrative elements/ Artefact's types	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Miraculous Demonstration									
1.1 The miracle tree									
(a) Offering of the full-grown (mango) tree	i	i	x	i	x	x	i	x	x
(b) Instantaneous growth of the (mango) tree	x	x	i	x	i	i	x	i	i
1.2 The Twin Miracle									
(a) Display of the four positions of the body in the sky by the Buddha and the duplicate Buddhas	i	i	i	i			i	i	i
1.3 The Great Miracle									
(a) The thousand-petalled lotus throne supported by <i>nāga(s)</i>		x		i	x	x			x
(b) The exponential creation and projection of multiple Buddha images upwards through space	i	i	i	i			i	i	i
(c) The magically created forms of the Buddhas performing various miracles	i	i	i	i			i	i	i
1.4 The creation of the duplicate Buddha	i	i	i	i			i	i	i
1.5 Performing a miracle akin to experience in the fourth absorption?	i	i		i			i		
2. The appearance of the (six) defeated non-Buddhist ascetics	x	x		i					
3. The appearance of King Prasenajit	x	x		i	x	x	x		
4. The appearance of Brahmā and Indra, unspecified deities or the Bodhisattvas	x	x		x	x	x		i	i

Figure 17 *The relationship between narrative elements of the Śrāvastī miracles and their visual representations in Dvāravatī.*⁶⁵

of the themes are common to those of India, the design and iconography are quite unique” (Skilling 2008, 257) (see table in figure 17).

The Dvāravatī visual representations of the Śrāvastī miracles clearly draw their inspiration from various textual sources. The stylistic features of the Dvāravatī artefacts suggest that the artists were inspired primarily by the texts of the Theravādins or the Mūlasarvāstivādins, which differ in some details. Without any one-to-one correspondence between text and art, the artefacts were also possibly made based on the scripture of that time, which resulted from the mixture of the texts of the Theravāda, Mūlasarvāstivāda, and other unrevealed texts. Furthermore, what is shown in a visual representation may not be reflected as such in any text, and vice versa: Textual and visual tropes differ considerably from each other, since much of what a text describes may be impossible to depict, and depictions follow their own conventions. Brown (1984, 83) explains that “the artists or the monks were responsible for the new iconography, one that existed only in the visual, and not in the literary, tradition.” Likewise, Zin (2018, 113) opines that some representations “are probably utilizing the visual phenomena and not the literary descriptions, giving them new meaning.” It appears, therefore, that Dvāravatī artists drew from a remarkably wide range of both Indian visualizations and textual sources for their depiction of the Śrāvastī miracles. They chose some narrative elements from these various sources, changing them through a process involving, at times, an apparently purposeful reinterpretation. It is therefore difficult to assume a connection between any direct

⁶⁵ In this table, “x” means “included” and “i” means “implied” or presented somewhat differently.

narrative element from a specific school and the depiction of this theme in Dvāravatī. This confirms Revire's (2012, 108) statement that we are unable to attach the hybrid iconography found in the Dvāravatī reliefs to a particular Buddhist tradition and even less so to a specific "school" or *nikāya*.

However, putting the relationship between the literary sources and visual representations aside, the development of religious practices in Dvāravatī culture can also be assumed from the use of the languages inscribed on these key tablets. Many clay tablets inscribed with the "ye dhammā" stanza, referred to as the Buddhist creed, were produced in different regions of Thailand during the Dvāravatī cultural period (Ghosh 2017, 39). In Central Thailand, the Buddhist formula was often written in Pāli (Type 6); in the Peninsula, we often find the use of hybrid Sanskrit or Sanskrit (Type 8, Top Right, and Type 9). It was stamped on either the front or the reverse side of the clay tablets. The presence of the Buddhist creed, written as "ye dhammā" suggests that the tablet circulated in a community that was familiar with the Pāli tradition, whereas the presence of a Mahāyāna type of the Bodhisattva stemming from the Peninsula suggests its encroachment upon a Theravada Dvāravatī milieu (Chutiwongs 2002 as cited in Ghosh 2017, 48). The trace of Mahayanic element shows that the dissemination of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Thailand goes back to the period of the Dvāravatī culture. Besides the use of these sacred languages, an inscription in ancient Mon with Khmer loan words written in Southern Brahmi script also appears on the reverse of a baked clay votive tablet depicting the Śrāvastī miracles from Maha Sarakham province.

As discussed in detail elsewhere (Sirisawad 2022b, 1201), these miracles are presented in an attempt to position the Buddha as supreme to leaders of non-Buddhist religious sects and as one of the necessary actions of the Buddha to inspire his audience with awe and to subdue his opponent, perhaps as a prelude to the extraordinary expositions of the Buddha that comes later to convert them to Buddhism. The narrative of these miracles may be relevant and important in establishing Buddhism in Dvāravatī by using votive tablets as a means. The depictions of these miracles in tablet forms tell us that Buddhism, viewed as a foreign religion and also in competition with other religions, was in a process of constant integration into the Dvāravatī community during that period.

Moreover, these depictions of the Śrāvastī miracles reflect a broad set of such cultural traits adopted in Dvāravatī, and both intra-regional and inter-regional exchanges of ideas. The Śrāvastī miracles episode is a common theme shared by India and Dvāravatī culture, but artistic affiliations differed. The key elements of the miracle narrative from literary sources were transferred to the visual representations, and these artefacts, which extend across political or cultural borders, also show their adoption or adaptation from India and neighbouring regions with local innovation as well. The unique art style of Dvāravatī was a result of the interaction between Buddhism and local beliefs which had been accumulated, intermixed, and selected over a long period of time. As such, the Buddhist art practice in this culture reinterpreted and transformed what it received and modified it to make it accessible to local people. This study affirms Dhida Saraya's finding in that Dvāravatī was a centre of "a political unit of indigeneous people who integrated Indian culture into the make-up of their own distinctive identity" (1999, 50).

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Abbreviation

- Av-klp Das, S. C. and Hari Mohan Vidyābhūṣaṇa, edd. 1887. *Avadāna Kalpalatā with its Tibetan Version*. (Bibliotheca Indica, 123). Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press.
- cf. confer
- Dhp-a Norman, H. C., ed. 1906–1914. *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society.
- Divy Cowell, E. B., and Robert A. Neil, edd. 1987 [1866]. *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends. Sanskrit Text in Transcription, Edited from Nepalese Sanskrit Manuscripts in Cambridge and Paris*. Delhi: Indological Book House.
- ed. edited (pl. edd.)
- Fig. Figure (pl. Figs.)
- Gilgit the Gilgit manuscript of the *Mahāprātihāryasūtra*; Ed. and transl. in Sirisawad (2019)
- J Fausbøll, M. V., ed. 1877–1896. *Jātaka, Together with Its Commentary Being Tales of the Anterior Births of Gotama Buddha*. 7 vols. London: Trübner & Co.
- MSV the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*
- MSV-C The parallel versions of the *Mahāprātihāryasūtra* from the Chinese Translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (*Gēnběn shuōyíqìyěyòubù Pínàiyē Zāshì* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 (translated by Yijing 義淨, 710 CE), T. 1451 vol. 24, 207a–414b.
- MSV-T The parallel versions of the *Mahāprātihāryasūtra* from the Tibetan Translation of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya* (*’Dul ba phran tshogs kyi gzhi*) (translated by Vidyākara-prabha, Dharmaśrī-prabha and dPal ’byor, 9th century CE); Ed. and transl. in Sirisawad 2019
- Paṭis Taylor, A. C., ed. 1905–1907. *Paṭisambhidāmagga*. 2 vols. London: Pali Text Society.
- Pathomsomphot Paramanujitjinoros, Somdech Phra Maha Samanachao Krom Phra. (2008). พระปฐมสมโพธิ [Phra Pathomsomphot]. Bangkok: Wat Phrachetuphon (Wat Pho) [In Thai].
- PrS(Divy) the *Prātihāryasūtra* of the *Divyāvadāna*, ed. E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil → Divy.
- SBV Gnoli, Raniero. ed. 1977–1978. *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu. Being the 17th and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*. 2 vols. (Serie Orientale Roma 49/1–2). Roma.
- T. Junjirō Takakusu 高楠順次郎, Kaigyoku Watanabe 渡邊海旭, and Genmyō Ono 小野玄妙, edd. 1924–1932. *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經 [Taishō Edition Tripiṭaka]. 100 vols. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. Online version available in: CBETA (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association), <http://www.cbeta.org/>.
- T. 160 *Púsà běnshēngmán lùn* 菩薩本生鬘論 (written by Āryasūra 聖勇, translated by Probationary Assistant Minister of Court of State Ceremonial 試鴻臚少卿 during the 12th century CE), vol. 3, 331c–385c.
- T. 202 *Xianyu jing* 賢愚經, (compiled by Huijue 慧覺, 445 CE), vol. 4, 349a–445a.

- T. 211 *Fājū pìyù jīng* 法句譬喻經, *Dharmapadāvādānasūtra* (translated by Faju 法炬 and Fali 法立, 3rd to the 4th centuries CE), vol. 4, 575b–609b.
- T. 1428 *Sifēn lǐ* 四分律, *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya* (translated by Buddhayaśas 佛陀耶舍 and Zhu Fonian 竺佛念, 408–413 CE), vol. 22, 567a–1014b.
- Transl. Translation
- Upāyikā-ṭīkā Śamathadeva's the *Abhidharmakośopāyikā-ṭīkā* (*Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi 'grel bshad nye bar mkho ba zhes bya ba*); Ed. and transl. in Sirisawad (2019)

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