

THE MULTIFACETED IMAGES OF AVALOKITEŚVARA AND THEIR ORIGINS IN DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE DĪPAṆKARA BUDDHA STORY

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Abstract

This study presents nine versions of the Dīpaṅkara Buddha story to map the symbolism systematically, including the symbols and symbolic actions that are associated with the young man in the story, who is the Buddha-to-be. Ancient stone and bronze images of Avalokiteśvara are then compared with Sumedha's images in the stories. Analysis shows that variation of the symbolism in the stories closely matches the variation of Avalokiteśvara images, demonstrating that different Avalokiteśvara images were based on different versions of the Dīpaṅkara Buddha story and the probable artistic syncretism among them.

Keywords: Dīpaṅkara Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Sumedha, Buddhism

In his review of Gérard Fussman and Anna Maria Quagliotti's book *"L'Iconographie ancienne d'Avalokiteśvara,"* Daniel Boucher (2014, p. 307) observed, "The fundamental problem in identifying Gandhāran and Mathuran cult images as Mahāyāna bodhisattvas is that it appears to present us with a stark inconsistency. On the one

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hand, art historians have, for some time, identified several Gandhāran images as Avalokiteśvara based on certain key iconographic features, particularly the small Buddha figure in the headdress. However, our earliest literary sources for the Mahāyāna, consisting principally of those Indic texts translated into Chinese during the second and third centuries c.e., show very little evidence for the category of ‘celestial bodhisattvas.’” In this research, the author demonstrates that the “stark inconsistency” in the images of Avalokiteśvara that are collected in the world museums originated from different images of Sumedha, or the Buddha-to-be, as depicted in the different versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story. The stone and bronze images of Avalokiteśvara that exactly match the different images of Sumedha will be shown in these stories.

Earlier research suggests that Avalokiteśvara is a composite character created by early Mahāyāna Buddhists to represent the entire Bodhisattva aspect of the Buddha (Zhang, 2017). His iconography is based on Sumedha in the Dīpaṃkara Buddha; his title is based on the narrative within which the Buddha recounts how he surveyed the world upon awakening; and they are respectively the starting and ending points of the Bodhisattva Path. This study also argues that eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara represents the eleven benefits of and eleven directions in practicing loving kindness of the *Brahmā-viharas*, the most important practice of the Bodhisattva Path (Zhang, 2017)¹. In terms of research methods, the above study mainly relied on analysis of symbols and symbolic actions associated with Avalokiteśvara’s iconography: 1. princely image, 2. pensive gesture, 3. deerskin, 4. blue lotus flower, 5. matted hair, 6. water bottle, 7. the prophecy of becoming a Buddha (represented by the Buddha image in the headdress or in the matted hair), 8. the vow to renounce

(represented by either the *abhayamudrā* or the *varadamudra*)² 9. resemblance to gods, or rebirth into gods such as Brahmā and Śakra (represented by multiple arms),³ and 10. The narrative on practicing loving kindness of the *Brahmā-viharas* (their eleven benefits and represented by eleven heads).⁴ The above explanation is partially corroborated by the author's recent study that mapped the congruence between the symbolism in the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story as recorded in the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā* and three types of images of Avalokiteśvara found in the regions of Gandhara, Sri Lanka, and ancient India. The analysis shows that the symbolism associated with Sumedha in this version of the story matches the traits of the three types of Avalokiteśvara images. In the same study, it was argued that the starkly different types of images of Avalokiteśvara found in ancient India and its surrounding regions were based on the different images of Sumedha in various versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story (Zhang, 2023, p. 80).

A drawback of the above studies is that they only used two versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story and a very limited number of Avalokiteśvara images as examples. To fully corroborate the conclusion that Avalokiteśvara's iconography is based on Sumedha, a systematic mapping of all possible sources of symbolism is necessary. As a follow-up study, the current research intends to examine more versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story and more Avalokiteśvara images to establish definite intertextuality between the two bodies of text. Nine versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha stories will be first summarized, and then, symbols and symbolic actions that are associated with Sumedha in each story will be highlighted. Subsequently, present ancient stone and bronze images of Avalokiteśvara that fully match the symbolism in the stories will be

examined.⁵ Due to the limitation of space, the author will use one to two illustrative images for each story and, at the same time, list sources of similar images that are collected by various organizations to illustrate the consistency and stability of the artistic styles across culture and history. In addition, since the current study attempts to corroborate the findings of the earlier studies, a bibliography on the research of Avalokiteśvara will be compiled instead of reviewing the relevant literature. In summarizing the stories, the basic narrative elements will be retained to show their wide variations, which, to an extent, explains the stark inconsistency of Avalokiteśvara images. The basic assumption underlying the study is that ancient Buddhist devotees created prototypes for images based on sutra texts (Huntington, 2017; Vesna, 2019). In recapping the Dīpaṃkara Buddha stories, including the version in the *Jātakatṭhakathā* and the matching images that were published earlier to map a complete and systemic intertextual relationship between written texts and visual images.

The Dīpaṃkara stories and Avalokiteśvara images

I. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha story in the *Jātakatṭhakathā*

Eons ago, in a city, there lived a Brahmin called Sumedha. He was of noble birth on both sides. When his parents died, the official in charge of his wealth brought the accounts book to Sumedha and opened for him the room filled with treasures. He said to Sumedha: “Prince, so much belonged to your mother, so much to your father...” He asked Sumedha to make use of the wealth. But Sumedha gave away all of his wealth in charity (Jayawickrama, 2002, pp. 3-33).

One day, Sumedha was in solitude in his splendid mansion and, seated cross-legged, began to reflect on birth, decay,

disease, and death. He then renounced everything he had and went to the Himalayas to become an ascetic, where he evolved the powers of insight. At the time, the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was visiting the city of Ramma. The whole city was prepared for the welcoming ceremony. Sumedha went to see the Buddha. He was amazed by the perfection of the beauty of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. He untied his hair, spread on the black mud his deerskin, matted locks, and bark garment, and lay down in the mire, wishing the Buddha to tread on his back. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha prophesied that Sumedha would become the Śākyamuni Buddha (Jayawickrama, 2002, 3-33).

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story: The story portrays two images of Sumedha: (A) a prince and (B) an ascetic. The symbols and symbolic actions in image (A) include the prince, a pensive gesture (reflected in the cross-legged pose), and compassion/renunciation. The symbols and symbolic actions in image (B) include matted locks, deerskin, and the prophecy to become a Buddha. The following are the ancient images that are likely based on this version of the story.

A Type: Figure 1. The image fully fits the princely image of Sumedha.

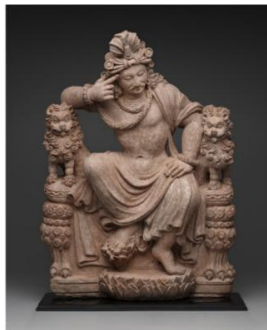


Figure 1

**Pensive Bodhisattva, 4th-6th century C.E, Gandharan culture,
Hadda region, Pakistan, Dallas Museum of Art**

Author's note: This princely image is a clear representation of Sumedha in *Jātakatṭhakathā*, in which he is depicted as a prince in a pensive gesture before he renounced worldly life. Similar images can be found in the collections of Gandhara Gallery of Indian Museum, Kolkata, India; Hirayama Ikuo Silkroad Museum, Hokuto-shi, Yamanashi, Japan; Los Angeles County Museum of Art (1994.8.1); Matsuoka Museum, Tokyo Japan; Metropolitan Museum of Art (1987.142.92); The Art Institute of Chicago (1987. 361. 8); Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (EAOS.26.c).

B Type: Figure 2 fits the ascetic image of Sumedha in his version of the story.



Figure 2

**Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Infinite Compassion, ca. late
7th–first half of the 8th century, Anuradhapura period, Sri Lanka.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.**

Author’s note: The image of Avalokiteśvara is a barely clothed ascetic with matted locks. He wears animal skin, as vividly represented by the two legs attached to the skin. A Buddha image appears in his matted hair, indicating that he was prophesied to become a Buddha. His right-hand gesture is most likely a variant of the *abhayamudrā* instead of holding a once-existing flower. This is consistent with Matsumura Junko’s observation that the Pāli versions of the story in general lack the motif of honoring the Buddha with lotus flowers (Matsumura, 2010, p. 112). Similar images are collected by the Birmingham Museum of Art (2001.285) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1898,0702.135).

II. *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經⁶

In the past, the Dīpaṃkara Buddha appeared in the world. There was a Brahmin student named *Vimalaprabha* (cn. *Wugouguang* 無垢光). He was a well-learned ascetic living in the mountains. One day, he left the mountains to look for offerings for his teacher. It happened that many Brahmins had gathered in a village for a big sacrificial ceremony. They had prepared numerous precious prizes to be given to anyone who proved to be the wisest at the ceremony. *Vimalaprabhā* [hereafter he is referred to as “the Bodhisattva” in the story] went to the ceremony and demonstrated his talent to the people. The leader of the Brahmins was so impressed that he wanted to marry his daughter to him, but the Bodhisattva declined. He took only an umbrella, a ringed staff, a water pot, a pair of shoes, and some silver and gold. He offered all of these to his teacher. Then he left again. His classmates donated some money to him.

As he came to the city, the Bodhisattva saw people preparing for a big event. He was told that the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was coming. Hearing this, the Bodhisattva became very excited. He wanted to buy flowers for the Buddha. However, the king forbade selling flowers because he wanted to give all of the flowers to the Buddha himself. The Bodhisattva was upset. This was all known by the Dīpaṃkara Buddha.

At that moment, a girl passed by, carrying a bottle with five flowers in it. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha emitted light to make the bottle transparent. The Bodhisattva saw the flowers and offered to buy them for five hundred coins. The girl asked him why he was paying so much money for flowers that were worth only several coins. The Bodhisattva said he would offer them to the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. The girl asked him to promise to be her husband in future lives. The Bodhisattva declined. The girl said, in that case, she would not sell the flowers to him. The Bodhisattva recalled his past lives and realized that she had been his wife five hundred years ago. He agreed and bought the flowers. The girl asked him to offer two flowers to the Buddha on her behalf.

The crowd was so large that the Bodhisattva could not get close to the Buddha. The Buddha knew this and turned the ground in front of him into a muddy puddle. The crowd split. The Bodhisattva offered the flowers to the Buddha; the flowers stayed in the sky and became an immense flowery canopy above the Buddha. Two flowers stood on the Buddha's shoulders. The Bodhisattva spread his hair and laid it on the mud, wishing the Buddha to tread on it. The Buddha did. He prophesied that the young man would become the Śākyamuni Buddha in the future.

The Bodhisattva practiced the *Brahma-vihāras* until his death. He was reborn in the *Tuṣita* heaven. Later, he was reborn thirty-six times as a universal monarch and *Brahmā* back and forth between heaven and the earth.

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story: It includes the water pot, flowers, the prophecy to become a Buddha, the practice of *Brahma-vihāras*, and rebirth as Brahmā. The images that follow largely match the symbolism in this story. The eleven heads represent the eleven benefits of and eleven directions in practicing the *Brahma-vihāras*; the multiple arms represent the likeness to Brahmā and rebirth as a god.



Figure 3

**Eleven-Headed Bodhisattva of Compassion (Avalokiteśvara),
around 1000 CE in Western Himalayas, The Cleveland Museum of
Art.**

Author's note: The statue closely resembles the young man depicted in this version of the story. He has eleven heads, representing the eleven benefits of the *Brahma-vihāras*, the most important practices of the future Buddha on his Bodhisattva path. Like Brahmā, he has four arms. He holds a flower in one hand and a bottle in the other. The only minor discrepancy is that he wears a deerskin, as represented by the deer head over his left shoulder. This is likely due to the influence of images based on stories in which the young man wears a deerskin. Alternatively, the image itself may be based on a slightly different story that contained such a narrative. Similar images can be found in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (B60S231); The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.86.220.2); The Walters Art Museum (54.3087), The Tibet Museum in Gruyères, Switzerland (ABS 332); The Art Institute of Chicago. 1984.1496).

III. *Yichu pusa benqi jing* 異出菩薩本起經⁷

When the Buddha was a Bodhisattva, he was a young student (*Māṇavaka*, cn. *Mona* 摩納). He lived in the mountains, wearing a deerskin. One day, he went to the city and saw people hurrying around. He asked them what they were doing. They told him that the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was coming. Hearing this, the Bodhisattva became excited.

At that moment, a girl passed by, carrying seven blue lotus flowers in a bottle. The Bodhisattva stopped her and asked her to buy the flowers. The girl said that she was bringing the flowers to the king, who would offer the flowers to the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. The Bodhisattva offered to pay one hundred coins for the flowers. The girl declined. When the Bodhisattva upped the offer to five hundred coins, the girl thought to herself, "These flowers are worth only two or three coins, and he offered five hundred coins!" She sold

five flowers to the Bodhisattva and kept two for herself. She then thought, "This ascetic wears only a deerskin, but he used five hundred silver coins for several flowers. He must be an unusual person."

She asked the Bodhisattva why he was buying the flowers. She said to him that if he did not tell the truth, she would take the flowers away. The Bodhisattva said that he had already paid for them. The girl said that the flowers belonged to the king, per se, and she could certainly take them away. The Bodhisattva told her that he was going to offer the flowers to the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. The girl said, "That is very wonderful!" She asked him to let the Buddha know that she hoped to become his wife in the future. The Bodhisattva agreed. The girl said that she could not get close to the Buddha. She gave him the two flowers she kept and asked him to offer them to the Buddha.

As the Bodhisattva approached the Buddha, he saw people throwing flowers at the Buddha's head, but they all fell to the ground. The Bodhisattva threw the five flowers at the Buddha's head. The flowers stood there in a row, as if they had roots. He threw two more flowers, both of which stood on the Buddha's head. The Buddha knew the Bodhisattva's will. He prophesied that the Bodhisattva would become the Śākyamuni Buddha ninety *kalpas* later. The Bodhisattva was elated. He spread his hair on the ground and let the Buddha tread on it.

After seeing the Dīpaṃkara Buddha, the Bodhisattva returned to the mountains. Upon his death, he was reborn into the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven. Later, he was reborn as a universal monarch and Śakra back and forth thirty-six times before becoming enlightened. Symbols and symbolic acts in the story include a deerskin, flowers, the prophecy

to become a Buddha, rebirth as a universal monarch, and Śakra.



Figure 4

Avalokiteśvara in his *Padmapani* form, 10th century, Kashmir. The Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Author's note: The Avalokiteśvara image closely resembles the image depicted in this version of the story. In the image, he is a young, scantily clad ascetic with matted long hair and a deer skin over his left shoulder. His left hand

holds a lotus flower, and his right hand shows the "holding back nothing" gesture. However, the crown on his head requires further analysis. It could represent his princely identity before he renounced worldly life, as recorded in the Pali version of the story. Or it could represent the regal and kingly aspect of his rebirth as universal monarch and Śakra. Without the testimony of the ancient artist who first designed the image, it is impossible to know for sure. However, these are the two most likely interpretations of the crown's symbolism. Similar images can be found in the collections of The Art Institute of Chicago (2015.450); Rubin Museum of Art, New York. If rebirth as a god, which is represented by multiple arms, is not considered, images show high resemblance to the young man in this version of the story can be found in the collections of the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, Russia, and the Musée Guimet, Paris.

IV. *Taizi ruiying benqi jing* 太子瑞應本起經⁸

When the Dīpaṃkara Buddha appeared in the world, there was a kingdom called Padma, where people led a happy and peaceful life. The Bodhisattva was a young student (*Māṇavaka*, cn. *Rutong* 儒童). He was extremely talented. He lived in the mountains as an ascetic and practised meditation. When he learned that the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was coming, he became very excited. Putting on his deerskin, he set off toward the capital. On the way, he came across five hundred ascetics who were impressed by his wisdom and donated five hundred silver coins to him. When he arrived at the city, he saw people busy cleaning. He asked them what it was for and was told that the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was coming.

It happened that at that moment, a royal girl passed by carrying seven blue lotus flowers in a bottle. The

Bodhisattva ran to stop her and asked to buy the flowers with one hundred silver coins. The girl said that the Buddha was coming and that the king would offer the flowers to the Buddha. The Bodhisattva insisted on buying the flowers, but the girl would not sell them. When the Bodhisattva upped the price to five hundred coins, the girl thought, "These flowers are only worth two to three coins, and he offered five hundred coins!" She sold five flowers to the Bodhisattva and kept two for herself. She then thought, "Who is this ascetic? He wears a deerskin that barely covers his body, but he spent all the money to buy five flowers! He must be an unusual person."

She stopped the Bodhisattva and asked why he was buying the flowers. She said to him that if he did not tell the truth, she would take away the flowers. The Bodhisattva said that he had already paid for them. The girl said that the flowers belonged to the king, *per se*, and that she could certainly take them away. The Bodhisattva told her that he was going to offer the flowers to the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. The girl said, "That is great!" She asked him to let the Buddha know that she hoped to become the Bodhisattva's wife in the future. She said that she could not get close to the Buddha. She asked the Bodhisattva to offer two flowers on her behalf. The Bodhisattva agreed.

The king and his people threw flowers at the Buddha, and the flowers all fell to the ground. The Bodhisattva threw five flowers to the Buddha. They all stood in the air. He then threw the other two, and both stood on the Buddha's shoulders. The Buddha knew his wish. He praised the Bodhisattva and prophesied that he would become the Śākyamuni Buddha in the future.

Hearing this, the Bodhisattva was elevated into the air. As he landed on the ground, he saw a muddy puddle. He took

off his deerskin to cover it. The skin was not big enough, so he spread his hair on it, wishing the Buddha to tread on it.

The Bodhisattva followed the Dīpaṅkara Buddha until his death. He was reborn into the *Caturmahārājāyikās* heaven. From there, he was reborn as a universal monarch. Then he was reborn into the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven and turned into Śakra. After his death, he was reborn as *Brahmā*. In total, he was reborn thirty-six times between heaven and the earth.

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story include the deerskin, blue lotus flowers, the prophecy to become a Buddha, and rebirth as gods (Śakra and *Brahmā*). The following image matches the symbolism in the story.



Figure 5

Standing Avalokiteśvara, bronze figure from Kurkihar, Bihar, 9th century CE, in Patna Museum, Patna, Bihar, India.

Author's note: The young man's image in this version of the story resembles the young man in Version III of the story. He is an ascetic wearing a deerskin (represented by the deer head on his left chest), holding lotus flowers, and was prophesied to become a Buddha (represented by the Buddha image on top of his head). However, there is one slight difference: He is reborn not only as *Śakra* but also as *Brahmā*. In Hindu mythology, *Brahmā* has four arms. As such, this image of Avalokiteśvara closely resembles the young man's image in Version IV of the *Dīpaṃkara Buddha* story.

V. The story in the *Mahāratnakūṭa*⁹

When the *Dīpaṃkara Buddha* became fully enlightened, the king of Padma invited him for a visit. To welcome the Buddha, the king ordered that all flowers and incense be reserved for the Buddha and allowed no private sale.

At the foot of the Snow Mountain, a Brahmin taught five hundred students. One of them, Megha (*Mi Jia* 迷伽), was extremely talented. One day, Megha decided to leave. He asked his teacher how to repay him. The teacher said that five hundred coins would be good. Megha travelled from town to town to gather offerings for the teacher. As he went toward the city of Padma, he saw people busy preparing for a big ceremony. He learned that they were welcoming the *Dīpaṃkara Buddha*. Megha was very excited and decided to use the money he had collected to buy flowers for the Buddha.

At that time, a girl carrying seven blue lotus flowers passed by. Megha asked her where she had found the flowers. The girl said that she had bought them from a flower shop for five hundred coins. Megha asked if he could buy her flowers for the same price. The girl declined. Megha then offered to give her five hundred coins if she would share the flowers

with him. The girl asked why he was buying the flowers. Megha said he wanted to offer them to the Dīpaṅkara Buddha. The girl said that if he promised to be her husband in future lives, she could give the flowers to him. Megha said she should not have asked for that, because that way she would only become a barrier to his pursuit of enlightenment. He said that he had renounced his treasures, thrones, body parts, chariots, servants, and even his lives in the past to get away from a householder's life. He said that she might as well have received his giving in the past. The girl promised that, regardless, she would never become a barrier to his pursuit of enlightenment. Megha said that in that case, he would promise to be her husband in future lives. The girl gave the flowers to Megha.

Megha went to see the Dīpaṅkara Buddha. He saw people donating expensive clothes, but he wore only an old deerskin. He laid it on the ground, wishing that the Buddha would walk on it. The crowd condemned him for putting a shabby animal skin before the Buddha. They cast it away. Megha ran to the roadside and laid the deerskin on a muddy puddle, wishing for the Buddha to walk on it. The Buddha knew his wish and walked on the deerskin. Megha was elated. He spread the flowers over the Buddha. The flowers multiplied and stayed in the sky, becoming a flowery canopy over the Buddha. Megha saw it and became firmly resolved. He loosened up his bun of golden hair, which had grown uncut for twelve years, and spread his hair on the ground. The Buddha walked on the hair and prophesied that Sumedha would become the Śākyamuni Buddha.

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story include blue lotus flowers, renunciation (represented by *avara mudrā*), matted hair, deerskin, and the prophecy to become a Buddha. The following images match the symbolism in the story.



Figure 6

Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara Padmapani, 11th century, Jammu Kashmir or Himachal Pradesh. The Royal Ontario Museum, Canada.

Author's note: The Avalokiteśvara image closely matches the young man's image as depicted in this version of the story. He is an ascetic wearing a deerskin, as represented by the deer head over his left shoulder. He holds a flower in one hand and shows the hand gesture of holding back nothing. The image in his matted hair represents that he

would become a Buddha. Similar images can be found in the collection of the National Museum in New Delhi, India (labeled as 'Rakta Lokeshvara', 9th century, Kashmir); Tibet Museum (Fondation Alain Bordier) (ABS 006, ABS 057); The Palace Museum in Beijing (Avalokiteśvara and attendants, 10th–11th century, Kashmir), and Paris Sotheby's (Arts d'Asie, June 10, 2015, lot 166).

VI. *Ekottara-āgama* story: Version One.¹⁰

In former times, the Dīpaṃkara Buddha appeared in the world. At the time, there was a Brahmin living at the foot of the Snow Mountains, teaching five hundred students. The Brahmin had a student named *Yunlei* 雲雷. One day, Yunlei wanted to repay his master and leave. He went to Padma to find offerings. The master did not want his favorite student to leave. He told Yunlei that there was something he had not learned. Yunlei asked what it was. The master told him that it was the Verse of Five Hundred Lines. Yunlei wanted to learn it. The master made up the verse in hopes of keeping Yunlei from leaving, but Yunlei learned the verse in a few days. He told his teacher that he was leaving. The teacher agreed.

In a place not far from Padma's capital, many Brahmins gathered for a big ceremony. When the ceremony was almost over, the Brahmins donated five hundred silver coins, a gold cane, a gold water jar, and a thousand oxen to the senior elder. Yunlei reckoned that perhaps he could go to the ceremony to debate with the Brahmins so he could win some offerings there.

When the Brahmins saw Yunlei, they all thought that he was Lord *Brahmā*. Yunlei told them that he was not Lord *Brahmā*. He challenged the senior elder to debate. The elder recited the Brahmānic canons without an error. Yunlei asked him to recite the Verse of Five Hundred Lines. The

elder had never heard of it. Yunlei recited it with great fluency. The Brahmins were amazed. They elected Yunlei as the top elder.

The donor of the ceremony offered Yunlei five hundred silver coins, a gold cane, a gold water jar, one thousand oxen, and a beautiful woman. Yunlei only accepted the five hundred silver coins and the gold water jar for his master. Carrying the gold cane and the water jar, Yunlei went toward Padma. It happened that the king was going to make offerings to the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. He had banned the sale of flowers because he wanted to buy them all for the Buddha.

Yunlei knew it was extremely rare to see a *Tathāgata*. He decided to buy flowers for the Buddha, but he could not find any. Upset, he stood by the city gate. At that moment, he saw a Brahmin girl carrying a water jar and five flowers. Yunlei asked to buy the flowers, but the girl declined. She asked him why he wanted the flowers. Yunlei explained to the girl who the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was and what his wishes were. The girl said, “If you promise that you and I will become husband and wife in future lives, I will give you the flowers.”

Yunlei said that, according to his practice, he could not have a wife. The girl said that she was only asking to be his wife in future lives. Yunlei agreed. He bought the five flowers. The two pledged their vows and departed.

Carrying the flowers, Yunlei walked toward the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. He said to the Buddha that he wished the Buddha to make a prophecy that he would become a Buddha in the future. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha told him that a Bodhisattva has to be able to endure eons of suffering and renounce his head, body, ears, and eyes, wives, children, countries, treasures, chariots, horses, and servants. Yunlei vowed that he would. He knelt on his right knee and spread the five

flowers onto the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. He then spread his hair on the mud. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha told Yunlei that he would become the Śākyamuni Buddha in the future world.

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story include a water bottle, flowers, renunciation, resemblance to *Brahmā*, and the prophecy to become a Buddha.



Figure 7

Avalokiteśvara, 9th century, Nalanda. The Indian Museum, Kolkata.

Author's note: In this image, Avalokiteśvara has four arms, like *Brahmā*. One hand holds a flower and another a bottle.

His third hand shows the “holding back nothing” gesture. A Buddha image in his matted hair shows that he will become a Buddha, and the two *apsaras* removing the crown indicate that he has renounced the princely identity. Similar images can be found in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago (1979.617), Asian Art Museum, San Francisco (B60S77+), and British Museum (1859,1228.75).

VII. *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經¹¹

In the remote past, there was an ascetic named *Shanhui* (善慧). He led a holy life to pursue enlightenment. At the time, the *Dīpaṃkara* Buddha was visiting his home country. The *Dīpaṃkara* Buddha’s father, the king, ordered people to prepare a ceremony to welcome the Buddha. For this purpose, he forbade selling flowers.

One day, *Shanhui* had a strange dream. He saw in the dream that he slept on the ocean with his head lying on Mount Meru. All beings in the ocean came into his body, and his hands held the sun and the moon. Perplexed by the dream, he went to the city to find wise people for an explanation. On the way, *Shanhui* encountered five hundred heretics. He went to them, intending to ask them about the dream, but instead they engaged in talks about the paths toward deliverance. The heretics were overwhelmed by *Shanhui*’s eloquence. They asked to be his students, and each offered him a silver coin. There were five hundred more heretics who were also impressed by *Shanhui*’s intelligence. They mentioned that the *Dīpaṃkara* Buddha was coming. Hearing this, *Shanhui* became extremely excited. He bid farewell to the heretics. The heretics asked where he was going. *Shanhui* said he was going to visit the *Dīpaṃkara* Buddha. The heretics wanted to follow him, but *Shanhui* said he wanted to go first.

In the city, Shanhui saw people cleaning and decorating the street. He asked what it was for. He was told that they were welcoming the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. Shanhui wanted to buy flowers for the Buddha, but he was told that the king had forbidden the sale of flowers. Shanhui was upset. At that moment, he saw a royal maid passing by, concealing seven blue lotus flowers in a bottle. Shanhui's piety made the flowers jump out of the bottle. He stopped the girl and offered to buy the flowers. The maid was surprised that Shanhui had seen her concealed flowers. She said that the flowers belonged to the royal palace and were not for sale. Shanhui insisted, offering five hundred silver coins for five flowers. The maid became more surprised, because the flowers were only worth several coins. She asked why he was buying the flowers. Shanhui said that he wanted to buy them for the Buddha so he could become enlightened for the sentient beings. The girl thought to herself: This young man is handsome, but he wears a shabby deerskin that barely covers his body; he is very devoted and does not care about money. She decided to give the flowers to him but asked him to promise that in their future lives they could always be a couple.

Shanhui said that he was leading an ascetic life and could not make the promise. The girl told him that, in that case, he could not have the flowers. Shanhui agreed but cautioned that he might give away all that he had, including his body and his wife. The maid gave the flowers to Shanhui and asked him to present two flowers on her behalf.

People in the city turned out in the streets to welcome the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. The five hundred heretics who became Shanhui's followers also showed up. On the way, they found Shanhui. Together they went to see the Buddha. People threw flowers at the Buddha, and the flowers all fell to the ground. Shanhui threw five flowers to the Buddha, and they

stayed in the sky and became a flower canopy. He threw two more flowers, and they stood in the air on either side of the Buddha. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha prophesied that Shanhui would become the Śākyamuni Buddha in the future. He saw Shanhui sporting an ascetic's matted hair and wearing a deerskin. He wanted him to get rid of them. He turned the ground in front of him into a muddy puddle. Seeing this, Shanhui placed his deerskin on the mud. It was not big enough. He spread his hair and laid it on the mud. The Buddha said that Shanhui would become a Buddha in the future life. Excited, Shanhui was elevated into the air. He shed his hair, and a robe appeared on his body. He became a monk. Shanhui asked the Buddha about his dream. The Buddha said that the ocean represented birth and death, Mount Meru meant that he would attain *nirvāṇa*, the creatures entering his body represented that he would be the refuge of sentient beings, the sun represented the bright light of wisdom, and the moon represented the coolness of the Dharma: all these were signs that he would become a Buddha.

After his death, Shanhui was reborn thirty-six times as the four heavenly kings, the universal monarch, the head of devas in the *Trayastrimśa* heaven, *Brahmā*, ascetics, a teacher of heretics, Brahmins, and lesser kings. He attained the tenth *bhūmis* before he was reborn into the *Tuṣita* heaven; from there, he was reborn as Prince Siddhartha.¹²

Symbols and symbolic acts in this story include blue lotus flowers, deerskin, matted hair, prophecy to become a Buddha, and rebirth into gods. The symbolism in this version of the story is the same as in version IV.



Figure 8

Lokeshvara, 10th century, Kashmir. The Brooklyn Museum, New York.

Author's note: The Avalokitesvara image perfectly matches the young man's image in this version of the story. He has matted hair and a Buddha image in it, holds a lotus flower, and wears a deerskin, as represented by the deer head over his left shoulder. His multiple arms represent his rebirth into the gods. A similar image can be found in the collection of the Musée Guimet in Paris, France (published in Himalaya Buddhist Art Resources).

VIII. The story in the *Dharmagupta-vinaya*¹³

The Buddha told the story to two merchants who had asked him about the merits of making offerings to the Buddha's hair and nails. In ancient times, there was a king who ruled a prosperous kingdom, of which the capital city was Padma. The king had a minister with whom he had been a very intimate friend since childhood. Later, the king split half of his kingdom to let the minister rule it. The minister had no son. He made offerings to all the gods, and finally, his wife

gave birth to a son. When the son was born, he took seven steps and said, "I am the only one worthy of honor, in heaven and on the earth; I will ferry all beings out of the sufferings of birth, ageing, illness, and death." When the son grew up, he renounced worldly life and became fully enlightened. He was the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. The king of the Padma learned the news and invited the Dīpaṃkara Buddha to his kingdom. He ordered the people to clean up the city. He banned the sale of flowers because he wanted them all for the Buddha.

The king had a Brahmin minister, who had held sacrificial ceremonies for twelve years. The minister prepared numerous treasures as prizes for anyone who proved to be the wisest at the ceremony. This year, the top elder Brahmin would be another minister, who looked extremely ugly. The minister who held the sacrificial ceremony did not want to award his treasures and his daughter to such a man, so he decided to postpone the ceremony to see if a handsome and bright Brahmin would appear.¹⁴

To the south of the Snow Mountains, there lived an immortal with five hundred followers. His top student was named Megha (cn. *Mique* 彌却), who also taught five hundred students. One day, Megha asked the immortal if there was anything new to learn because he had already learned everything that had been taught. The teacher improvised a text and told Megha that no other Brahmin knew of this text; if he learned it, he would be superior to them all. Megha quickly learned it and again asked the teacher what to do. The teacher said Megha needed five hundred gold coins to repay him. Megha took his five hundred students and walked from village to village to collect money. As they walked toward Padma, they learned about the sacrificial ceremony and the numerous treasures

it would award. Megha decided to win the prize. As he appeared at the ceremony, his godly appearance made the Brahmin minister believe that the young man would replace the ugly top elder.

Megha went to the ceremony and engaged in a reciting contest with the Brahmins. He overwhelmed them all and toppled the top elder. The Brahmin minister was extremely excited and awarded the treasures and his daughter to Megha. However, Megha only took five hundred gold coins and left. The minister's daughter followed him. Megha turned back and asked why she was following him. The girl said that her parents let her be his wife. Megha said that he was an ascetic and did not need a wife. The girl returned to her father's garden, where she saw seven lotus flowers. Five of them grew on a single stem, and the other two on another stem. The girl thought to herself, "These flowers are so beautiful. Perhaps I can pick them and make Megha happy." She picked the flowers and put them in a water bottle. She went to the city to look for Megha.

In Padma, Megha saw people cleaning and decorating the streets. He asked them what they were doing. The people told him they were welcoming the Dīpaṃkara Buddha. Megha thought, "I shall use the five hundred coins to buy flowers for the Buddha." He searched everywhere but could not find any flowers. At that moment, the Brahmin minister's daughter saw him. She asked him what he was looking for. Megha said he wanted to buy flowers. (The following conversations are largely the same as the first EA story and are not summarized here.) The girl said he could have her flowers, as long as he promised that in future lives he would become her husband. Megha said that he was pursuing the Bodhisattva Path and would renounce everything except for his parents. He said he was afraid that she might be a barrier to his pursuit. The girl said that

wherever he was to be reborn, he would have great divinity, and so would she; she would not mind if he renounced her. She then sold five flowers to Megha for five hundred coins. She asked Megha to offer the remaining two flowers to the Dīpaṃkara Buddha on her behalf.

Megha carried the flowers to see the Dīpaṃkara Buddha at the east gate of the city, where he saw tens of thousands of people. He wanted to offer the flowers but could not get close to the Buddha. He returned to the city to see the king and asked him why he was decorating the city. The king said that the Dīpaṃkara Buddha was coming. Megha asked him how he would recognize the thirty-two marks of a Buddha. The king responded that the Brahminic books contained such knowledge. Megha said to the king that he was versed in the books. The king said that if that were the case, he could go to see the Buddha when he appeared. When Megha went to the east gate, this time the crowd split to clear the way for him because Megha had the king's order.

When Megha saw the Buddha, he spread the flowers toward the Buddha, and they became an immense flowery canopy over the Buddha. As people took off their new clothes and laid them on the ground, Megha took off the two deerskins on his body and laid down one of them. The city people picked it up and threw it away. Megha thought, "The Buddha did not pity me." The Dīpaṃkara Buddha knew what Megha was thinking and turned the ground in front of him into a muddy puddle. No one put his clothes in the mud. Megha thought, "The city people are not discerning; they do not cover what should be covered." He put his deerskin on the mud, but it was not large enough. So, he loosened up his matted hair, which had not been loosened for five hundred years, and spread it on the mud. He vowed by heart that if the Buddha did not make a prophecy, he would rather die here. The Buddha knew that Megha possessed virtue and

had planted good roots. He stepped on Megha's hair and prophesied that, in the future, Megha would become the Śākyamuni Buddha. Hearing the prophecy, Megha rose into the air, and his hair still covered the mud.

To conclude the story, the Śākyamuni Buddha says that Megha was his past life, the ugly top elder was the Devadatta-to-be, the girl is Yaśodharā-to-be, and the immortal teacher is the Maitreya-to-be.

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story include blue lotus flowers, deerskin, matted hair, and the prophecy to become a Buddha. The following images match the symbolism in the story.

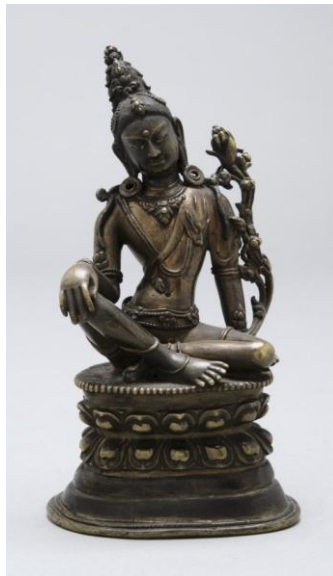


Figure 9

Avalokiteśvara, copper alloy, 4th-15th century, Tibet. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, US.

Author's note: The Avalokiteśvara image closely resembles the young man's image in this version of the story. He wears a deerskin, holds a flower, and has a Buddha image in his matted hair. Similar images can be found in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1974.273) and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (EA1971.14).

IX. *Ekottara-Āgama* story: Version Two¹⁵

(The Buddha tells Upāli the story.) In the remote past, the Dīpaṃkara Buddha appeared in the world. The king of the Padma invited the Dīpaṃkara Buddha and his followers to the capital city. There was a young Brahmin named Megha (*Mi'le* 彌勒¹⁶) who was good-looking, like *Brahmā*, learned, and familiar with all the canons. When he saw the Dīpaṃkara Buddha from afar, he was overwhelmed by the Buddha's appearance. He knew from the canons that it was extremely rare to see a Buddha in the world. So, he took five flowers to visit the Buddha. Megha thought, "A Buddha should have thirty-two marks." He spread the flowers on the Buddha and looked at the marks, but he only saw thirty marks. Megha became suspicious. He asked the Buddha to show all thirty-two marks. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha entered *samādhi* so that Megha could see the other two marks. When Megha saw all the marks, he was elated, saying, "Now I offer these five flowers to the *Tathāgata*, along with my life." The flowers became a beautiful seat in the sky, with four columns and four gates. Megha made a vow, wishing to become a Buddha. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha, knowing his wish, emitted bright light from his mouth that entered Megha's body at the top of his head, signifying the prophecy for a Buddha. Seeing this, Megha spread his hair on the ground. The Dīpaṃkara Buddha prophesied that he would become a Buddha in the future.

Symbols and symbolic acts in the story include a resemblance to *Brahmā*, flowers, and the prophecy to become a Buddha. The main difference between this version of the story and earlier versions of the story lies that the young man does not bear a deerskin, nor does he hold a water bottle. The image in Figure 10 fully matches the symbolism in the story.



Figure 10

Four-armed Avalokiteśvara. Rob Linrothe Image Collection, Northwestern University Libraries.

Author's note: Avalokiteśvara in this image has four arms, like *Brahmā*. He holds a flower and has a Buddha image in his matted hair. He thus fully resembles the young man's image in this version of the story. This image does not feature a deerskin. A similar image can be found in the collection of Musée National des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet, Paris, France (labeled as Avalokiteśvara, 8th - 9th century CE, Java, Indonesia) and The Los Angeles County Museum

of Art (labeled as Şađakşarī Lokeśvara, 16th century, Western Tibet).

Story number	Symbols									
	Prince image	Pensive Gesture	Water bottle	Practiced <i>Brahma-viharas</i>	Vow to renounce- Fearless/Giving	Likeness to god (L) Reborn as god (R)	Matted hair	Deer skin	Flowers	Prophecy to become a Buddha
I	0	0			0		0	0		0
II			0	0		0 (L)			0	0
III						0 (R)		0	0	0
IV						0 (R)	0	0	0	0
V					0		0	0	0	0
VI			0		0	0 (L)			0	0
VII						0 (R)	0	0	0	0
VIII							0	0	0	0
IX					0	0 (L)			0	0

Table 1. Symbols and Symbolic Actions Associated with Sumedha in Different Versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha Story, with the presence of the symbols being represented by 0.

Sūtras and matching images of Avalokiteśvara

- I. *Jātakatṭhakathā*. Figure 1-2
- II. Xiuxing benqi jing 修行本起經 (*Caryā-nidāna Sūtra*). Figure 3

- III. Yichu pusa benqi jing 異出菩薩本起經 (*Abhiniṣkramaṇa*). Figure 4
- IV. Taizi ruiying benqi jing 太子瑞應本起經 (*Arthavargīya Sūtra*). Figure 5
- V. Da baoji jing 大寶積經 (*Mahāratnakūṭa*). Figure 6
- VI. Zengyi ahan jing 增壹阿含經 (*Ekottara-Āgama*): Version One. Figure 7
- VII. Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing 過去現在因果經. Figure 8
- VIII. Si feng lǚ 四分律 (*Dharmagupta-vinaya*). Figure 9
- IX. Zengyi ahan jing 增壹阿含經 (*Ekottara-Āgama*): Version Two. Figure 10

Discussions and conclusion

The above intertextual analysis reveals a close correspondence between the symbolism in different versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story and the symbolism in different types of Avalokiteśvara images. However, it is important to note that some Avalokiteśvara images do not exactly match the young man's image in any version of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story. They may resemble his image in one version or another of the story, but they may also have more or fewer of his key iconographic traits. This is likely due to mutual influence and the resulting artistic syncretism of different prototype images of Avalokiteśvara that were strictly based on different types of stories. Alternatively, they may have been based on stories that have been lost to history. In the following section, several such images are presented along with the author's notes.



Figure 11

Avalokiteśvara, 11th - 12th century (1001 - 1200), West Tibet (place of creation). Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

Author's note: Figure 11 depicts a young ascetic wearing a deer skin, holding a lotus flower and a water bottle, and with matted hair. Presumably, there should be a small Buddha image in his headdress. This image closely resembles the young man's image in version IV of the story, but the story does not mention a water bottle, nor does the young man have multiple arms to represent his divinity. Similar images can be found in the collections of the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (EA2000.24), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1987.142.350), the National Gallery of Australia (NGA 2011.946.1), and the State Hermitage Museum, Russia (y-895).



Figure 12

The Bodhisattva Padmapani Lokeshvara. Thakuri periods. 11th–12th century. Nepal, Kathmandu Valley. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. 1982.220.2.

Author's note: The Avalokiteśvara image in Figure 12 wears a crown, holds a lotus flower, and shows the "holding back nothing" hand gesture. He is also a scantily dressed ascetic. This image seems to represent the two identities of Sumedha in version I of the story: the prince and the ascetic. However, the crown may also refer to his rebirth as universal monarch or king of the gods. The presence of the lotus flower indicates that the image is not based on the Pāli versions of the story, which usually do not contain the motif of offering flowers. Similar images can be found in the collections of the Cleveland Museum of Art (1976.3), the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.85.9), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (2016.752), the Linden-Museum in Stuttgart, Germany (labeled as Avalokiteśvara, 11th century, Western Tibet or Kashmir), the Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford (EA1997.185).



Figure 13

Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva. Rubin Museum of Art C2002.24.1.

Author's note: In some images, Avalokiteśvara is simply an ascetic holding flowers, without the deerskin or the small Buddha image in his matted hair. This is likely to show that he has not yet been prophesied to become a Buddha. Similar images can be found in the collections of the Rubin Museum of Art (C2005.16.8).

Regardless of the above variations, the findings of this research corroborate the conclusion that Avalokiteśvara's iconography is based on Sumedha's images. This, of course, is not to say that all the ancient artists who made the stone and bronze images were aware of Avalokiteśvara's identity and his origin, and created the images consciously based on the stories. If that were the case, Avalokiteśvara's origin would not have been a mystery for a long period of time in history. Rather, the most likely scenario is that after the earliest artistic prototypes were created, artists in later generations reproduced them without necessarily knowing who Avalokiteśvara was.

Some versions of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha stories and material images of Avalokiteśvara may have disappeared from history. However, the symbolism in the stories and images presented in this study still constitutes a good sample to reveal the artistic patterns (See Table 1). Some symbols/symbolic actions are more likely to appear than others. For example, the flowers and prophecy to become a Buddha appeared in almost all versions of the story. Thus, it is not surprising that the lotus flower and the Buddha image in the headdress are often used to identify Avalokiteśvara images in archaeology. In addition, the variation of narrative in the Dīpaṃkara Buddha stories appears to parallel the variation of the artistic representations of Avalokiteśvara. The Pāli version of the story shows Sumedha firstly as a prince, while the available northern versions invariably show him as an ascetic who was reborn as a god or a universal monarch. Such changes are manifested in stone and bronze images. The princely image of Avalokiteśvara is mostly found in Gandhara, indicating that it might be based on stories similar to the Pāli version. Avalokiteśvara images in the later ages mostly show him as an ascetic and Hindu god, indicating that they might be based on the northern versions of the story. It appears that the early Mahāyāna Buddhists “de-royalized” Sumedha so as to highlight asceticism and to promote their ideal that a member of the common folk could become a Buddha. The changes also indicate an increasing need for Buddhism to appeal to the Brahmins. The transformation of Avalokiteśvara’s image from that of a prince to an ascetic and then to Brahmanic/Hindu gods, not to mention various kings in between, is best represented by the image found in Surajkund, Nalanda. In the image, two angels remove his prince’s crown to reveal the matted hair of an ascetic, and he has four arms, like Brahmā (See Figure 7).

Endnotes

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- ¹ See literature Avalokiteśvara in the appended bibliography.
- ² In the EA (T 125, 2.599b03) version of the Dīpaṃkara Buddha story, the Dīpaṃkara Buddha spoke a verse to Sumedha: “You shall endure eons of suffering/And give your head, body, ears, and eyes/Wives, children, countries, treasures/Chariots, horses, and servants/Should you be able to do that/I would now make a prophecy.” To this, Sumedha replied, “Even if a mountain as heated as fire/is placed on top of me/I would endure the suffering for eons/And it won’t change my resolve/Please now make your prophecy”. As such, the vow to fearlessly renounce everything can be represented either by *abhayamudrā* or the *varadamudrā*.
- ³ In the EA 10.7 (T 125, 2.565b28; AN.7.62. Metta Sutta), the Buddha states that in his past lives he practiced loving-kindness: “Bhikṣus, in the former times, for seven years I practiced loving-kindness. I was reborn into the Avraha Heaven; I was once reborn as Brahmā, heading the devas and governing the ten-thousand worlds; for thirty- seven times, I turned into Indra, and for numerous times, I turned into *chakravartins*.” 比丘。昔我自念七年行慈心。復過七劫不來此世。復於七劫中生光音天。復於七劫生空梵天處為大梵天。無與等者統百千世界。三十六反為天帝釋形。無數世為轉輪王。 Also see SA.264 (T 99, 2.67c18).
- ⁴ In the EA (T 125, 2.806a20), the Buddha speaks of the eleven benefits of practicing loving kindness of the *Brahmā-viharas*: “If a sentient being practices loving-kindness and widely spreads its meanings, he will be rewarded with eleven benefits. Which eleven benefits? Sleeping in comfort; waking in comfort; dreaming no evil dreams; deities guard him; dear to human being; poison, weapon, fire, water, and robbers do not affect him. He appears in *Brahmā*’s world if he dies.”
- ⁵ I used the original identification titles of the statues, which may not be consistent.
- ⁶ T 3.184. *Xiuxing benqi jing* 修行本起經 (Caryā-nidāna-sūtra), translated by Mahābal 竺大力 and Kang Mengxiang 康孟祥 (Eastern Han Dynasty, 25-220 CE).
- ⁷ T 188. *Yichu pusa benqi jing* 異出菩薩本起經 (*Abhiṅskramaṇa, Sutra of the Former Events of the Bodhisattva*), trans. Nie Daozhen 聶道真 (280–313 CE).
- ⁸ T 185. *Foshuo taizi ruiying benqi jing* 佛說太子瑞應本起經 (*Arthavargīya-sūtra, The Buddha Speaks of Stories of the Prince’s Previous Incarnations with Auspicious Omens Sutra*), trans. Zhi Qian 支謙 (222–228 CE).

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- ⁹ T 310, 11.317b19-T 310, 11.319a18. Da Baoji Jing (大寶積經, The *Mahāratnakūṭa*), translated by Xuanzang (602–664 CE).
- ¹⁰ *Zengyi ahan jing* 增壹阿含經 (*Ekottara-Āgama*), first translated by Dharmanandi (Tanmonanti 曇摩難提) in 384 CE and retranslated by Sanghadeva (Sengqietipo 僧伽提婆) in 398 CE.
- ¹¹ T 189. *Guoqu xianzai yinguo jing* 過去現在因果經 (Sutra on Past and Present Causes and Effects), translated by Guṇabhadra 求那跋陀羅 (Qiunabatuoluo, fifth century CE).
- ¹² This narrative is consistent with the depiction of Avalokiteśvara’s transcendental powers in the *Da fang guang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 (T 279, 10.367a16- T 279, 10.367b01. *Mahāvaiṣṭya Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*, The Great *Vaiṣṭya Sutra* of the Buddha’s Flower Garland), translated by Śikṣānanda (Shichanantuo 實叉難陀, 652–710 AD).
- ¹³ *Si Feng Lü* 四分律 (*Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*, T 1428, 22.782a26-T 1428, 22.0785c22.), translated by *Buddhayaśas* (*Fotuoyeshe* 佛陀耶舍, c. 406–413 CE) and *Zhu Fo Nian* (竺佛念 4–5th century CE).
- ¹⁴ This part of the narrative appears to be a reference to a story in *Foshuo qianshi zhegnu jing* 佛說前世諍女經第七 in *Sheng Jing* 生經, translated by Dharmarakṣa (Zhu Fahu 竺法護, 233–316 CE).
- ¹⁵ EA.43.2 (T 125, 2.0758a07– T 125, 2.0758c05).
- ¹⁶ The young man’s name, Mi’le 彌勒, which is the Chinese translation of the Maitreya Bodhisattva, is an obvious error because in the story the young man was prophesied to become Śākyamuni Buddha. His name in the Chinese Song, Yuan, and Ming *Tripitakas* is Miqu 彌佉, obviously the translation of Megha (Sumedha). His name in the Qisha *Tripitakas* (磧砂藏) of the Chinese Song Dynasty is also Miqu 彌佉 (Q 38, 18a20).

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