

A Philological Account of a Silk Road tale: The Painter and the Mechanical Maiden

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Versions

- 2 Sanskrit: Vinaya of the Mulasarvāstivādin¹ and Kathināvadāna²
- 1 Tibetan: Kanjur³ (9th c.)
- 2 Chinese: Taishō 1448 (cca. 700)⁴; Tripiṭaka (5th c.)⁵, without a major frame
- 1 Tocharian: part of the Tocharian Puṇyavanta Jātaka⁶ (cca. 800)

Clusters of motifs

- A contest between two artisans: power of illusion, magic (Skt. *ṛddhi*) over knowledge, wisdom (Skt. *prajña*)
- Creating an imitation of a woman/man
- Believing the artificial woman/man is real + falling in love with the mechanical maiden
- Painter's passion is blind, close to madness, leading to (an imitation of) a suicide
- Art vs. life: both artisans succeed in creating a human imitation on par with life

Alterations in form

- Only Tocharian version: versified, dramatized
- Genres: chu-kung-tiao 諸宮調 “all keys and modes”; pien-wen “transformation texts” 變文

The pre-verse formula in *pien-wen*, according to Mair (6, 27-28, also in Pinault ‘Une version’ 210), goes as follows: “(Please look for a moment at the) place [where] X [occurs]. How [should I] present [it]? Or: How does it go?” This formula is also found in the Tocharian tale. For example: “She, that with his [the mechanic’s] reverence held in her hand, as it were, beauty and reverence, attended to him. But how so? || in the S.-tune:|| Like one ashamed casting her glance to the ground a little, she looked lovely” (A4 b1-b3). “He painted himself opposite(?) the door. But how so? || in the S.-tune:|| The head tilted a little – the eyes set [continues to describe the hanged body]” (Malzahn A7 a4-a5).

Alterations in content

Versions	Painter and mechanic are Buddha's disciples	Mention of the land	Mention of policy of the land: royal witness	Suggestion to cut the rope is given by ...	Detailed descriptions of the mechanical maiden's beauty	Detailed descriptions of the painter's hanged body	The ending
Sanskrit VM	✓ (revealed only at the end)	✓	✓	King's officials	✗	✗	overtly Buddhist moral
Sanskrit K	✓	✓	✓	the crowd	✗	✗	overtly Buddhist moral
Tibetan	✓	✓	✓	King's officials	✗	✗	abrupt; no moral
Younger Chinese	✓ (revealed only at the end)	✓	✓	King's officials	✗	✗	overtly Buddhist moral
Older Chinese	✓	✓	✗	the mechanic (no one else present)	✓	✓	appeal for joining religion (i.e. Buddhism) doesn't mention Buddhism,
Tocharian	✗	✗	✗	the mechanic (2×) (neighbors present)	✓	✓	concludes with a (Buddhist) moral

Notes

- ¹Hofinger, M. 1982. *Le congrès du lac Anavapta, (vies de saints bouddhiques): extraits du Vinaya de Mulasarvāstivādin Bhaisajyavastu*. Vol. 1, Légendes des anciens (Sthavirāvadāna). 2nd ed. Louvain-La-Neuve. 185-187.
- Pinault, G. 2008. *Chrestomathie tokharienne: textes et grammaire*. Leuven. 251-252.
- Dutt, N., ed. 1939. *Gilgit manuscripts I-III*. Calcutta. 166-168.
- ²Degener, A., ed. and trans. 1990. *Das Kathināvadāna*. Bonn. 48.
- ³Schiefner, A. 2007. *Übersetzungen aus dem tibetischen Kanjur: Beiträge zur Buddhismuskunde und zur zentralasiatischen Märchenforschung*. Wiesbaden. 16-17.
- Davids, C. A. F. R., A. Schiefner, and W. R. S. Ralston, eds. 2003. *The Bible of Tibet: Tibetan tales from Indian sources*. London and New York. 361-362.
- ⁴Chavannes, E. 1911. *Cinq cents contes es apologues: extraits du Tripitaka chinois*. Vol. 2. Paris. 12-13.
- ⁵Dschi, H. L. 1943. "Parallelversionen zur tocharischen Rezension des Punyavanta-Jātaka." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 97: 284-324.
- ⁶Malzahn, M. A. 2011. Comprehensive Edition of Tocharian Manuscripts. University of Vienna. <https://www.univie.ac.at/tocharian/>. Accessed May 10, 2016.
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