

# THE ŚĀKYAS AS GAUTAMAS: MONASTIC SELF-REPRESENTATION IN THE *MŪLASARVĀSTIVĀDAVINAYA*<sup>1</sup>

Yael Shiri

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the relationship between the Śākya and Gautama designations associated with the historical Buddha in relation to the re-imagination of his lineage in the textual environment of the (Mūla-)Sārvāstivādins and their wider religio-historical context. In particular, it explores the amalgamation of these two names within an otherwise unknown aetiological story embedded in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*, in a unique narrative sequence designed to re-tell the origin of the Śākya clan. Through a close reading of the text, I provide evidence of the story's many Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources and propose a relatively late date for the story's appearance. In this light, I further suggest a reading of this story as an apologetic narrative with a polemic agenda vis-à-vis the imagined critique of allodox practitioners adhering to Brahmanical religious, social and aesthetic-literary values, and as a self-representation instrument for this monastic community.

## 1. Introduction

The “Chapter on Schism,” the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the monastic code (*Vinaya*) of the Mūlasarvāstivāda school, opens with a unique narrative sequence entitled “the discourse on Dharma regarding the ancient family lineage of the Śākyas,” given to the Śākyas themselves in Kapilavastu.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> *śākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśaṃ ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathāṃ* (SbhV i.6.10–11, and passim). Translations from the *Saṅghabhedavastu* are based on Gnoli's edition (SbhV) and

The discourse is preceded by a list describing the Śākya royal lineage (*rājavaṃśa*; SbhV i.3.3–4.9), and then commences with a narrative exposition in which the Śākya ask the Buddha about their origin (SbhV i.5.1–6.15). Then, at the request of the Buddha, their origin story is narrated by Maudgalyāyana from the genesis of the world and the first king Mahāsaṃmata (SbhV i.7.11–16.16), through another prose *rājavaṃśa* ending with Rāhula, occasionally embellished by longer narratives. The sequence ends with concluding remarks by the Buddha himself and an exhortation to the monks to “hold, keep and tell” this teaching (SbhV i.16.17–33.4). As I will show below, this exhortation is found in a few very well-known Buddhist discourses, and flags the importance of this teaching to the compilers of this *Vinaya* as well.

In his analysis of various versions of the Buddha’s lineage(s), Ryūtarō Tsuchida (1991: 114–117) concludes that apart from faint traditions regarding the Buddha’s pedigree, the historical origins of the Śākya have largely been lost irretrievably. This, he suggests, allowed the creativity of Buddhist authors in filling such gaps by forming the fully-fledged lists of ancestors appearing in Pāli “extra-canonical” texts but particularly in the works of other schools. Comparing these lineages, Tsuchida (1991: 128–129) points out the absence of Śākyamuni’s Gautama *gotra*, other than by the compilers of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* who wished to reconcile it by the “fanciful” (*phantastische*) incorporation of a narrative about an ancestor by the name of Gautama. The tale of the Śākya’s ancestor is found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* in the aforementioned Dharma discourse.

The epithet *Samaṇa Gotama* (Skt. *Śramaṇa Gautama*) – “the ascetic Gautama” – is of course a very common one for the Buddha. As already noted by scholars, in Buddhist literature it was usually placed in the

are my own unless otherwise specified. For the convenience of the reader, regardless of the source, in all quoted texts in Sanskrit or Pāli the editorial conventions have been harmonised: () will mark any text missing from the manuscript and restored for different reasons by the editor. Quotation marks « »/“” have been omitted, but other punctuations reflect the quoted edition. When a text in verse is referred to, rather than page and line numbers, the chapter and verse (vs.) numbers are mentioned. All Pāli references in this article are to the Pali Text Society editions following the *Critical Pāli Dictionary* abbreviation system. All Tibetan references are to the *sDe dge* edition of the Tibetan Buddhist canon (Barber 1991). The citations include the Tibetan names of sections, catalogue numbers of Ui et al. 1934 of Tōhoku University (Tōh.), the volume, folios, and line numbers.

mouths of non-Buddhist interlocutors and particularly *brāhmaṇas*.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, the Śākya clan as a group is seldom referred to by this lineage name.<sup>4</sup>

Remarkably, in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin* “Dharma discourse on the Śākya lineage” alone this name is used collectively, in the vocative case, fifty-seven times. It does not occur collectively anywhere else in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, nor in the *Mūlasarvāstivādivinaya* (henceforth MSV) as far as I am aware. I would therefore like to suggest that these vocatives were consciously added to this story by the monastic authors to advance the identification of the Śākyas as Gautamas, which in other sources is marginal at best. When we consider this special feature together with the fact that the story of the *ṛṣi* Gautama was, as I will show, a later insertion into the Śākya lineage, this intention becomes apparent.

In this story, a man by the name of Gautama, born to the royal lineage of Mahāsaṃmata, goes forth from the palace life and pursues an ascetic path under his preceptor Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana. Having been falsely accused of the murder of a prostitute, he is then sentenced to death by impalement. With the aid of his preceptor, before his death, the *ṛṣi* Gautama manages to miraculously produce twin offspring, one of which grows up to become king Ikṣvāku, the progenitor of the Sun Lineage and the Śākyas.<sup>5</sup>

In this article, I examine the relationship between the Śākya and Gautama names, the debates that surrounded the latter in the tradition as well as in modern scholarship, and how these might reflect a Buddhist

<sup>3</sup> Cf. BHSD s.v. *Gautama*; cf. DPPN s.v. *Gotama*; Tsuchida 1991: 110; Walser 2018: 114, n. 39.

<sup>4</sup> As individuals, however, members of the Śākya family do occasionally bear the name Gotama. To mention a few examples, in the *Theragāthā*, one finds that both of the Buddha’s parents, as well as Ānanda, are named Gotamas (Th vss. 535, 536, 1023). In addition to the well-known designation of the Buddha’s foster-mother and aunt as Gotamī, we also know of Kisā Gotamī (Skt. Kṛṣā Gautamī) who is a woman of Kapilavatthu to whom the Bodhisattva gave a necklace (Ja i.60–61) and who according to certain sources was his cousin (Dhp-a i.85). In a dialogue between the Buddha and his father, during his first return to Kapilavatthu, the Buddha refers to Suddhodana as “Gotama” (Vin i.82.34–37). This is also the case in other versions of the same dialogue in the *Mahāvastu* (Mhv iii.118.22–119.3) and the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (SbhV i.193.1–11), where the Buddha also refers to Devadatta, his cousin, as Gautama (SbhV ii.69.1).

<sup>5</sup> For a translation of this story from the Sanskrit see Shiri 2020b: §3.2.1. For a summary of this episode from the Tibetan see Rockhill 1907: 9–11.

monastic discourse of self-representation. Gautama 𑖀𑖀i's story appears not to have come down to us in the same way in any other *Vinaya* tradition. And so, in addition to its echoes in the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin *Abhidharma* tradition, its evidently composite nature makes it a very interesting case study in the search for the way the re-imagination of the Śākyaś reflected the process of self-representation of this particular monastic milieu. Specifically, this article argues that the Vedic *gotra* name Gautama was re-appropriated by this monastic community in order to put forward a new tradition regarding the Buddha's origin. Moulded in purāṇic-like style, the story of the Śākyaś progenitor exhibits great sensitivity to Brahmanical literary genres, motifs and ideals, as part of an apologetic/polemical dialogue with its Brahmanical environment.

## 2. The story of the 𑖀𑖀i Gautama beyond the *Saṅghabhedavastu*

As part of the re-imagined Śākya lineage, the story about the 𑖀𑖀i Gautama, the ancestor of the Śākyaś, does not seem to have prevailed beyond the MSV's line of transmission. It can be found mainly in later literary compositions, all drawing heavily on this *Vinaya*, and particularly the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. Hence, it is not surprising that most of these sources came down to us in Tibetan.<sup>6</sup> Best known among them is probably the Tibetan *Abhiṅṣkramaṇasūtra* (*mNGon par 'byung ba'i mdo*; Tōh. 301), presumably translated by Rin chen bzang po (958–1055 CE).<sup>7</sup> While the narrative order in this Buddha biography is slightly different, its description of the lineage is copied almost verbatim from the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, along with the story of the 𑖀𑖀i Gautama and stylistic features such as the

<sup>6</sup> For a survey of Tibetan historiographic texts containing the Mahāsaṃmata lineage based on the MSV see Dietz 1992: 437.

<sup>7</sup> But see Skilling 1997: 131–132 on this attribution and the similarity to the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. For a translation/summary of the story of the Śākya origin from this source see Csoma de Kőrös 1833. While the Tibetan translation is relatively late, an *Abhiṅṣkramaṇasūtra* is already alluded to in the MSV *Vibhaṅga* ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 3, Ja, 222b1–230b1; ca. 2<sup>nd</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> c. CE), as part of a story describing the writing of a play on the Buddha's life, based on the *Abhiṅṣkramaṇasūtra* (on which see Schopen 2014: 419–422; and English tr. in von Schiefner 1906: 236–246). We cannot know if this is the same version that came down to us in Tibetan but taking this reference into account along with the clear association with the MSV, it is most likely that the Sanskrit original can be dated to quite a few centuries earlier.

uniquely recurring usage of the plural vocative “Gautamas” dotting the story in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. In the Chinese \**Mahāsaṃmatarājasūtra* (*Zhongxumohedi jing*; 眾許摩訶帝經; T. 191), translated in the 10<sup>th</sup> century by Faxian (法賢), the Buddha biography shares the structure of the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, starting with the exposition on the Śākyas and the story of the ṛṣi Gautama, but is clearly not translated verbatim and lacks certain features emphasised in the *Vinaya* such as the aforementioned vocatives.<sup>8</sup>

Another mention of Gautama as a progenitor of king Ikṣvāku and the Śākyas appears in a list transmitted in the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra*, the first part of the *Prajñaptiśāstra*, a Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* text considered one of the seven so-called “early” *Ṣaṭpādābhidharma* works. Although these are often considered canonical Sarvāstivāda works *par excellence* (Willemen et al. 1998: 147), the *Lokaprajñapti* as we have it in the Tibetan *bsTan ’gyur* (*mNGon pa*, Tōh. 4086, Yi, 1b1–93a7) clearly represents a later state of transmission and incorporates Mūlasarvāstivāda material (Dietz 1989a, 1989b: 122; Willemen et al. 1998: 71). Unfortunately, other than its translation in the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century, very little is known about the transmission and dating of the (probably) Sanskrit original.<sup>9</sup>

The *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* contains two genealogical lists of the Śākyas. Both, like the lineage described in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, start with Mahāsaṃmata and end with Rāhula. However, the text specifies that the first list, which is rather short, was transmitted in the *Abhidharma* and the second, which follows the one in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* quite closely, transmitted in the *Vinaya*.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the latter list contains a statement

<sup>8</sup> For a comparison of the structure and the transmission history of these two *sūtras* vis-à-vis the *Saṅghabhedavastu* see Liu 2008: §3.3.2.

<sup>9</sup> For some unknown reason, the *Lokaprajñapti* is the only one of the seven early texts not translated by Xuanzang and is also missing from Fahu’s 11<sup>th</sup> century translation of the *Prajñaptiśāstra* (*Shi she lun*; 施設論; T. 1538). Therefore, all currently extant versions are late, which might suggest that the Tibetan version, containing the *Lokaprajñapti*, represents a later stage of development compared with the possible 4<sup>th</sup>-c. Sanskrit original now lost to us (Willemen et al. 1998: 189–193). Some Sanskrit fragments of the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* have been identified, closely corresponding to the Tibetan version, yet none of them contains the segment discussed here. For a survey of these fragments see Dietz 1989a, 1989b.

<sup>10</sup> *bdag nyid chen po de dag gis yi ge rgyas pa dag las mdor bsdus so | ’dul ba las ji skad du ’byung ba de bzhin du yang bri bar bya ste* (*mNGon pa*, Tōh. 4086, Yi, 66a5). For a summary of the Tibetan passage see La Vallée Poussin 1919: 320–323.

missing from the first which could be read as a summary of Gautama's story in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*:

King Karna's two sons were Gautama and Bharadvāja. Of the two [i.e. Gautama and Bharadvāja], Gautama's son was Ikṣvāku. Among king Ikṣvāku's sons, grandsons and great-grandsons were a hundred kings, named Ikṣvāku, ruling over the city of Potala.<sup>11</sup>

This short statement makes the MSV the list's most likely *Vinaya* source. And so, as the few sources referring to Gautama the Śākyan progenitor indicate, the *Saṅghabhedavastu* is the earliest version of this tradition to have come down to us, and the most probable textual origin for its later transmission. In the following two sections, I will provide evidence to suggest that in the MSV as well, this story was introduced at a relatively late stage in the *Vinaya*'s compilation, as both its frame story and its core are crafted out of and influenced by various other literary sources.

### 3. The “Dharma discourse on the Śākya lineage” and its sources

The narrative cycle about the Śākya lineage, entitled “the discourse on Dharma regarding the ancient family lineage of the Śākyas,” is framed by a very telling story in which the Śākyas of Kapilavastu approach the Buddha to hear about the history of their lineage in case they are asked about the issue by others. As the story of their lineage unfolds, they are repeatedly referred to collectively as Gautamas.

The only known instance in the Pāli *Nikāyas* in which the Śākyas are referred to collectively by their *gotta* name as Gotamas is in the *Avassutasutta* in the *Samyuttanikāya* (SN iv.183.30; tr. in Bodhi 2000: 1245). There are good reasons to believe that the aforementioned frame story is closely related to an equivalent discourse transmitted in Sanskrit in a (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin context. Like the frame story in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* the *Avassutasutta* also takes place in Kapilavatthu in the Nigrodhārāma in the Śākyan assembly hall. To celebrate the initiation of

<sup>11</sup> *rgyal po rna ba'i bu ni gau ta ma dang ba ra dwa tza gnyis so / de gnyis las gau ta ma'i bu ni bu ram shing pa zhes bya'o / rgyal po bu ram shing pa'i bu tsha brgyud dang tsha bo dang yang tsha'i rgyud bu ram shing pa'i rgyal po brgyas yang grong khyer gru 'dzin du rgyal srid kyi dbang phyug la dbang byas so* (mNGon pa, Tōh. 4086, Yi, 68b–3).

a new hall, the Śākyas invite the Buddha to consecrate it, and to do so, he indeed attends with his monks and gives the Śākyas an unspecified discourse on Dharma (*dharmīkathā*). Having finished the teaching, the Buddha sends the Śākyas away (calling them “Gotamas”) and then, like in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, asks Moggallāna to give another discourse on Dharma to the monks, since his back aches. Moggallāna agrees and teaches the *Avassuta*.

The setting in the Śākyan assembly hall (P. *santhāgāra*; Skt. *saṃsthāgāra*), as well as the fact that the Buddha refers to the Śākyas here as Gotamas in a very unusual way, suggests the possibility that the compilers of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* might have used a similar discourse, or module therein, circulating in a (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda environment to frame this story about the Śākya lineage. Since the Pāli *sutta* does not specify the content of the discourse the Buddha gave to the Śākyas, this would make it a very convenient setting to introduce a new narrative as a *dharmyā-kathā*. The fact that this is a rare instance where the Śākyas are referred to collectively as Gotamas would also make this *nidāna* a very appropriate one for a retelling of their lineage. Since we do not have the Sanskrit equivalent of this *sutta*'s exposition, this might appear like mere speculation, but since we do have the *sūtra*'s conclusion, I can suggest that this is in fact most likely.<sup>12</sup>

In both these Dharma discourses, when Maudgalyāyana is finished, the Buddha rises and approves of his teaching. In the Pāli text, this is with the simple “Very well, Moggalāna! Very well indeed you have taught the Letting-in and Not Letting-in discourse to the monks, Moggalāna!”<sup>13</sup> The *Saṅghabhedavastu*, presents a slightly longer endorsement:

“Very well, Maudgalyāyana! Very well indeed have you narrated, Maudgalyāyana, a discourse on Dharma regarding the ancient family lineage of the Śākyas in front of the monks. Even again, you Maudgalyāyana, you should tell repeatedly the discourse on Dharma regarding the ancient family

<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, an equivalent *sūtra* exists in the Chinese *Saṃyuktāgama* (*Za ahan jing*; 雜阿含經; *sūtra* no. 1176, T. 99 vol. ii, 316a9ff) affiliated with the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda school. There, the Buddha also refers to the Śākyas as Gautamas (瞿曇) and appears to refer to a newly built *saṃsthāgāra*.

<sup>13</sup> *sādhū sādhū moggalāna sādhū kho tvam moggalāna bhikkhūnaṃ avassutapariyāyaṇī ca anavassutapariyāyaṇī ca abhāsīti* (SN iv.187.27–29).

lineage of the Śākya. This will be for a long time for their prosperity welfare and happiness.” Then the *Bhagavant* addressed the monks: “O monks, you must comprehend the discourse on Dharma regarding the ancient family lineage of the Śākya to be able to hold, to keep, and to tell. For what reason? The discourse on Dharma regarding the family lineage of the Śākya is useful to prosperity (*arthopasaṃhita*). It is useful to the prosperity of the pure practice (*brahmacaryopasaṃhita*). It is only proper, monks, for a son of good family, who has gone forth with faith, to hold, to keep, [and] to tell the discourse on Dharma regarding the ancient family lineage of the Śākya.”<sup>14</sup>

A fragment of a very similar Central Asian Sanskrit text has been edited and identified by Ernst Waldschmidt (1978) as the conclusion of a *sūtra* entitled *Avasrutānavasrutadharmaparyāya*. Unlike the Pāli, but very much like this story in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, the *sūtra* concludes with a formula spoken by the Buddha, in which he not only “approves the message” but also instructs monks “to hold, keep, and tell” this teaching:

“Very well, Maudgalyāyana! Very well indeed have you taught the Dharma enumeration on Letting-in and Not Letting-in (*Avasrutānavasrutadharmaparyāya*) to the monks, Maudgalyāyana! Even again, you should tell repeatedly to the monks the Dharma enumeration on Letting-in and Not Letting-in. This will be for a long time for the prosperity, welfare and happiness of gods and men.” Then the *Bhagavant* addressed the monks: “O monks, you must comprehend the Dharma enumeration on Letting-in and Not Letting-in. You must hold, keep and tell the Dharma enumeration on Letting-in and Not Letting-in. For what reason? This Dharma enumeration is useful to prosperity, useful to welfare, useful to morality, useful to pure practice; it leads to higher knowledge, to perfect enlightenment, to *nirvāṇa*, and having taken it up and appropriated it, the Dharma enumeration on Letting-in and Not Letting-in, by whichever good person who has gone forth with faith, should be held, kept and told, just so.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *sādhu sādhu maudgalyāyana sādhu sādhu khalu tvam maudgalyāyana, yas tvam bhikṣūṇāṃ purastāc chākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśam ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathāṃ kathayaḥ; punar api tvam maudgalyāyana abhikṣṇam api tvam śākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśam ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathāṃ kathaya; tad eṣāṃ bhaviṣyati dīrgharātram arthāya hitāya sukhāya; tatra bhagavān bhikṣūṇāṃ āmantrayate sma udgrhṇīta yūyaṃ bhikṣavaḥ, śākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśam ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathāṃ dhārayituṃ (grāhayituṃ) vācayituṃ; tat kasya hetoḥ? arthopasaṃhitā bhikṣavaḥ śākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśam ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathā; arthopasaṃhitā brahmacaryopasaṃhitā; yuktam eva bhikṣavaḥ śraddhaya pravrajītena kulaputrena śākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśam ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathāṃ dhārayituṃ grāhayituṃ vācayituṃ (SbhV i.32.10–33.2).*

<sup>15</sup> *sādhu sādhu maudga(lyāyana / sā)dhu khalu tvam maudgaly(āyana bhikṣūṇāṃ avasrutānavasrutam dharmaparyāyam) deśayasi (f) punar api tvam abhikṣṇam api bhikṣūṇāṃ*



Having searched for other texts utilising such a “hold, keep and tell” formula in the MSV ( $\sqrt{dhr}$ ,  $\sqrt{grah}$ ,  $\sqrt{vāc}$ ), I was able to identify only two other discourses contained in the *Kṣudrakavastu* which correspond to the Pāli *Dhammacetiya-sutta* (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Tha, 82a6–86a7), and the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Da, 228a2–301a3).<sup>16</sup> In the first discourse, the formula is spoken by the Buddha to conclude a long speech by king Prasenajit, in which he explains why he reveres the Buddha. Its conclusion corresponds exactly to the Skt. in the *Avasrutānavasrutadharmaparyāya* and the Central Asian version of the *Saṅgītisūtra*.<sup>17</sup> In the second, a somewhat different version of the formula is used twice by the Buddha. In both these instances, the Buddha provides a sort of “summary” of his Dharma for the monks to hold, keep and tell “just so”

*avasrutānavasrutam dharmaparyāyam deśaya (j) ta(d bhaviṣyati dīrgharātram devamanuṣyāṇām arthāya hitāya su)khāya (j) tatra bhagavāṃ bhikṣūṃ āma(ṇ)trayati (j) udgṛhṇādhv(amaṃ) bhikṣavaḥ avasrutānavasrutam dharmaparyāyam dhāray(ata grāhayata vācayata avasrutānavasrutam dharmaparyāyam / tat kasmād dhetoḥ / ayam dharmaparyāyah hitopasaṃhītaḥ arthopasaṃhītaḥ śilopasaṃhītaḥ brahmācāryopasaṃhītaḥ abhijñāyati saṃbodhaye nirvāṇāya saṃvartate yāvac ca satpuruṣeṇa pravrajitena śrad-dhayā avasrutānavasrutam dharmaparyāyam udgṛhya paryavāpya tathā tathā dhārayitavyo grāhayitavyo vācayitavyaḥ j).* For a slightly different translation see Waldschmidt 1978: 28–29. On his reconstruction of this text see Waldschmidt 1978: 33, nn. 20 & 21.

<sup>16</sup> I exclude from this discussion other instances where variations of these three verbs are used not in the context of a full concluding formula (but see for example: *’Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Tha 210b–211a).

<sup>17</sup> *dge slong dag khyed kyis chos sna tshogs pa’i chos kyi rnam grangs zung shig / chongs shig / lhogs shig / de ci’i phyir zhe na / dge slong dag chos sna tshogs pa’i chos kyi rnam grangs ni don dang ldan pa / chos dang ldan pa / tshangs par spyod pa dang ldan pa ste / mngon par shes par byed pa dang / rdzogs par byang chub par byed pa dang / mya ngan las ’das par byed ba yin no // de lta bas na rigs kyi bu dad pas rab tu byung bas chos sna tshogs pa’i chos kyi rnam grangs blangs te kun chub par byas nas de lta de ltar gzung par bya / bcang bar bya / bklag par bya’o //* (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Tha, 86a5–86a6). For all extant versions of the Prasenajit “speech” see Anālayo 2011: i.510–519; Allon and Silverlock 2017: 12–14. For versions of the *Avasrutānavasrutāsūtra* see Waldschmidt 1978: 32, nn. 1 & 2. For versions of the *Saṅgītisūtra* (and its commentary) see Chung and Wille 2018; Salomon 2018: 295–299, 398, nn. 389–391; Stache-Rosen 1968; Willemen et al. 1998: 66–67. In the Pāli canon, a related set of verbs is used in a similar formula urging monks to “comprehend, master and hold” (*ud√grah*, *pari√āp*, *√dhr*). These instances are found for example in the *Dhammacetiya-sutta* (MN no. 89); *Ātānāṭiya-sutta* (DN no. 32); *Tāyana* verses (SN i.50). For further examples of the usage of these verbs in Buddhist literature at large see Drewes 2015, and in Pāli sources specifically on pp. 121–125. Another albeit quite different version of this type of formula is also found in the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (DN no. 16). See references in notes 18 and 19 below. For versions of the *Ātānāṭiya Protection* see Skilling 1997: 553–556. See also note 20 below.

in his absence. In Vaiśāli, the Buddha declares that the monks should “hold, keep and tell” what he has discovered, which he then enumerates in a series of lists, from the four foundations of mindfulness to the eight-fold path (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Da, 251a–251b).<sup>18</sup> In Kuśinagara, during his last speech to the monks, the Buddha summarises his Dharma by an enumeration of a twelvefold division of scriptures, from *sūtras* to *upadeśas* (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Da, 287a–287b).<sup>19</sup> In both instances, the Buddha declares that this will be for the longevity of the pure practice, and the prosperity, welfare and happiness of gods and men.

In reference to the occurrence of a similar formula in the Pāli *Āṭānāṭi-yasutta* and its parallels, Peter Skilling (1997: 574) observes that while in Mahāyāna *sūtras* such exhortations are common and often expand into entire chapters, they are “rarer in the Śrāvaka literature, but not altogether infrequent.”<sup>20</sup>

A couple of questions immediately arise from the above. First, is the appearance of this statement at the end of the Dharma discourse in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* just a case of mechanical copying from a pre-existing frame-story topos? Or is this an intentional usage of an otherwise, in this context, rather infrequent and quite assertive instruction? When one compares the formula in its MSV instances and the other available texts, at least one anomaly surfaces. While in all other versions the instructions given by the Buddha appear in the causative of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person imperative or a gerundive, in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* there is a different usage of the infinitive to designate purpose.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, while the other discourses

<sup>18</sup> A section of this narrative, likely derived from the MSV, is also found in the *Divyāvadāna* (Divy 200.20–209.4) see trans. of the Sanskrit by Rotman (2008: 337–346, 438–440, nn. 689–708). On the relationship between the *Divyāvadāna* and the MSV see Hiraoka 1998. See the parallel sections of the Sanskrit and Pāli discourses in MPS §19.7–19.10 (pp. 222–225).

<sup>19</sup> See parallel Sanskrit and Pāli sections in MPS §40.60–40.62 (pp. 384–386).

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of such “entrustment” chapters (*parīdanā*) in Mahāyāna *sūtras* also in relation to the practice of writing/copying and physically “holding” texts see Schopen 2010 and Apple 2014.

<sup>21</sup> At least in the first instance (SbhV i.32.18; VT 259v8), where the second verb is also omitted, it is quite likely that the infinitive is a scribal error, perhaps related to the appearance of the same list of infinitives a couple of rows below (SbhV i.33.2–3; VT 259v10). This anomaly is not reflected in the Tibetan translation (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Ga, 273a4–6) where one finds the imperative, which also accords with the preceding imperative *udgrhṇīta*.

are said to be advantageous to gods and men, this Dharma discourse is said to be of benefit “to them” (i.e. the Śākya). I would suggest then, that this is an indication of the fact that the *Vinaya* compilers here did not simply insert a pre-existing mould but reshaped it to complement this particular narrative.<sup>22</sup>

This leads to the second question, which is what do the discourses containing this instruction have in common and what can that teach us about our narrative? One thing is certain, and this is that all of the discourses enumerated above (the *Saṅgīti*, *Avasrutānavasruta*, *Āṭānāṭiya*, *Dhammacetiya* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa*) were very well known. This is evident from the many versions that have come down to us across different languages and schools.<sup>23</sup> In at least two of the cases it is also very clear that the actual recitation of the text was seen as beneficial in its own right. The *Āṭānāṭiyasutta* is a *rakṣā* (P. *rakkhā*, also *paritta*), a protective text understood to be potent against *yakṣas* and malevolent beings. The *Saṅgītisūtra*, as described in the text itself, is an enumeration of the Buddha’s basic teachings in mnemonic form meant to be recited together by the *saṅgha*. Indeed, the transmission of this *sūtra* was seen as so important to the definition of the Buddhist community that its commentary made its way as a self-standing *Abhidharma* text into the Sarvāstivāda canon (Willems et al. 1998: 66–67). It is then likely to be the case that the compilers of the MSV thought that this Dharma discourse about the Śākya lineage was in itself particularly worthy of recitation. In other words,

<sup>22</sup> Additional differences, other than the fact that the *Saṅghabhedavastu* version is somewhat abbreviated, include the fact that the *Saṅgītisūtra*, the *Avasrutānavasrutadharmaparyāya* and the two additional MSV discourses specify that the discourse should be kept “just so” (*tathā tathā*). Furthermore, in Waldschmidt 1978: 29, n. 20, and Stache-Rosen 1968: 206, the Sanskrit reconstruction is *satpuruṣa* rather than *kulaputra* in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. While this would have been an interesting difference considering that our discourse deals exclusively with lineage, both scholars do not explain their choice, and since the terms could be used interchangeably and the Tibetan version of the *Dhammacetiya*sutta in the *Kṣudrakavastu* also has *kulaputra* (‘*Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Tha, 86a7; *rigs kyi bu*), I am not sure if this is actually the correct reconstruction for the *Saṅgītisūtra* and the *Avasrutānavasrutadharmaparyāya*. It is possible that Waldschmidt bases this on the Chinese, but see Silk’s (1994: 287, n. 2) remarks on the interchangeability of the terms.

<sup>23</sup> See note 17 above. For the various versions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* see Waldschmidt 1944–1948: 1–9, and Allon and Salomon 2000.

the transmission of this discourse *just so* with its various details was understood as important and beneficial.<sup>24</sup>

When we consider the fact that a similar enumeration of the Śākya lineage, without the accompanying narratives, was transmitted in the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra*, a (Mūla-) Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma* text (see above, Section 2), and the fact that *Abhidharma* texts are most often school-specific, it becomes evident that this description of the Śākya lineage was of some importance to the self-representation of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivāda community. It is worth noting that while the full formula of the Buddha's instruction in the *Saṅgīti*, *Avasrutānavasruta*, and MSV "Prasena-jit speech" describes it as conducive to pure practice (*brahmacarya*), to higher knowledge, to perfect enlightenment and to *nirvāṇa*, in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* the only reference is to prosperity and *brahmacarya*.

Another striking detail is that few of these discourses were actually delivered by the Buddha himself, which might explain the formula's necessity. In the case of the *Avasrutānavasrutadharmaparyāya* and the *Saṅgītisūtra*, more than simply approving the discourse, the frame-story specifying that the Buddha was resting with his mind set on the time of his arising makes it clear that the message is to be understood as given by the Buddha via "proxy."<sup>25</sup> In the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, the compilers go one step further in asserting this when an unambiguous explanation is supplied as to why the Buddha would not give the discourse himself:

If I were to relate the discourse on Dharma regarding the origin of the ancient family lineage of the Śākyas, it is possible that allodox ascetics might say thus: "The *śramaṇa* Gautama is boasting. He declares whatever he fancies."<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> In this regard, another interesting text to consider is the *Nagaropamasūtra*. This text was also evidently very popular and has come down to us in different versions, some of which, particularly from Central Asia, contain a similar formula encouraging the transmission and recitation of the text as a potent protective spell (*vidyā*). As suggested by Bongard-Levin et al. (1996: 30–37) the addition of this instructive appendix to an existent canonical *sūtra* probably reflects an "already developed Buddhist use" of this text.

<sup>25</sup> A similar observation was made by Skilling (1992: 159) in regard to the *Āṭṭānātikasūtra* as a "device to 'convert' a non-Buddhist text." When we consider other usages of this "device," however, a more complex picture emerges.

<sup>26</sup> *saced ahaṃ śākyānāṃ paurāṇaṃ kulavaṃśam ārabhya dharmyāṃ kathāṃ kuryāṃ sthānam etad vidyate yad anyatīrthikaparivrājakā evaṃ vadeyuh, āmaślāghī śramaṇo gautamo yad icchati tad vyākaroti* (SbhV i.6.10–13).

This disclaimer exposes that the discourse was seen as particularly laudatory and so had to be somewhat removed from the Buddha himself. This would also explain the usage of this formula in the case of the *Dhammacetiya sutta* in its various versions as it is essentially a eulogy for the Buddha.

The exhortation to commemorate and recite this Dharma discourse about the lineage calls to mind another textual genre with which it has much in common – the *Purāṇas*. The recreation of the Buddha’s temporal lineage in itself is not unique to the *Saṅghabhedavastu*; it developed in the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism (1<sup>st</sup>–5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> c. CE) among the different schools.<sup>27</sup> In some texts, such as the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* and the *Mahāvastu*, this genealogy became associated with the Buddhist cosmogonic myth, known to have been circulating independently beforehand.<sup>28</sup> The engagement with the genealogy of the Buddha, however, does not seem to be an isolated development, since at the same time purāṇic texts narrating the ancient past were proliferating all over India.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> For a survey of such texts with emphasis on the *Mahāvastu* see Tournier 2017: 233–239. Przyluski (1938) briefly touched on the phenomenon suggesting that another Buddhist genre, that of the lineage of past buddhas (*buddhavaṃśa*) is in fact based on this older genealogy, a theory that is now clearly dated. See for example Walters 2000: 101.

<sup>28</sup> Most famously the Pāli *Aggaññasutta* (DN iii.80–98). For a comparison of its different parallels in Chinese see Meisig 1988. For a comparison of the different *rājavamśas* containing this “module” see table 2.8 in Tournier 2017.

<sup>29</sup> It is impossible to discuss the dating of the *Purāṇas* as a corpus as this is a huge and varied body of texts which never ceased to expand and continues to do so (Rocher 1986: 100–103). For the sake of comparison, I shall mention only an example. In the *Brahmaṇḍapurāṇa* (ca. 400–600 CE) the section on the description of royal lineages (*vaṃśānūvarṇana*) concludes: “On account of the innumerable repetitions it is impossible to mention all completely along with the Yugas. These five families of the sons of Yayāti are beneficial to the people. They have been recounted. They have passed by sustaining the worlds. By retaining in memory and by listening to the description of the five families of great intellect one acquires five excellent and rare worldly benefits viz. long life, reputation, wealth, children and heavenly bliss for an indefinite period;” *punarukti bahuvāc ca na śakya tu yugaiḥ saha / ete yayāti putrāṇāṃ pañca vaṃśā viśāṃ hitāḥ // kīrtitāś ca vyaṭītā ye ye lokān dhārayanty uta / labhate ca varān pañca durlabhā niha laukikān // āyuh kīrttiṃ dhanam putrān svargaṃ cānāntyam aśnute / dhāraṇāc chravaṇāc caiva pañcavaṃśasya dhīmataḥ //* (BP vss. ii:3:74:275–277; tr. by Tagare 1983: iii.953). For additional examples see Bonazzoli 1983: 258–259.

Three of the five *lakṣaṇas* of a *Purāṇa* are shared with the Buddhist *rājavaṃśa*, namely the inception in a creation myth, continued by the enumeration of a lineage (*vaṃśa*), and the tales of kings of the solar and lunar dynasties (*vaṃśānucarita*; Rocher 1986: 26–27).<sup>30</sup> Purāṇic lineages would often comprise lists of names in which narratives are embedded elaborating on certain characters. Like the Buddhist *rājavaṃśa*, incorporating narrative material from different traditions, a *Purāṇa* would often draw upon the genealogies of the *Mahābhārata* along with older texts (Bailey 2009: 136). I will show below how the narrative of the *ṛṣi* Gautama itself is modelled after such epic and purāṇic archetypes as well. Like the Śākya petitioning the Buddha, the framing of a *Purāṇa* would be the pleading by a pupil to his master to elucidate the ancient past (Inden 2000: 34). This is not to suggest that the authors of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* wished to model a sort of “Śākya-purāṇa,” but rather to point out that the preoccupation with one’s royal (and often divine) genealogy was a pan-Indian phenomenon from the turn of the Common Era, a fact reflected not solely in texts but in epigraphical records as well.<sup>31</sup> This consideration, then, is a step forward in illuminating the intention behind this narrative cycle.

What is the connection the authors of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* sought to highlight to their contemporaries when embedding this tale of ancient lineage (*paurāṇa-kulavaṃśa*) at the outset of this chapter? As will be discussed below (Section 6), throughout this narrative sequence there is an intentional ambiguity between the monks and the Śākya – the Buddha’s ancestral and spiritual lineages. Since the story makes clear that the ancestral lineage ended with Rāhula, by imparting to the monks the duty of retaining this genealogy for “a long time,” it in fact replicates their role as the legitimate heirs of the lineage of Mahāsaṃmata, in charge of perpetuating it, as any “son of good lineage” in India would do for his ancestors.

<sup>30</sup> The purāṇic-like character of the *Mahāvastu*’s *Rājavaṃśa*, for example, opening with the cosmogonic myth, was noted already by Winternitz ([1927] 1977: 244–245).

<sup>31</sup> See for example Francis 2012: 341 on the Paḷḷan Koyil copper plates (550 CE), containing a “*Purāṇa*-style genealogy stretching from creation up to the donor.”

What are we to make of the fact that in its invocation it is said that this commemoration is conducive to *brahmacarya* (and not, like in the *sūtras*, also to *nirvāṇa* and enlightenment for example)? *Brahmacarya* is a very complex and laden term in Buddhist literature, so it might not be possible to discover for certain what it entails in this context. However, more often than not, the term, rather than simply alluding to a general “spiritual path,” refers to a way of life that is celibate, and in the *Vinaya* in particular, to the celibacy of monks and nuns.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, one can conclude that the compilers of the *Saṅghabhedavastu* saw a bond between the transmission of the convoluted ancient Śākya lineage – a string of “births and deaths” as John Strong (2011: 174) has it – to the monks’ success in leading a pure monastic life.

To summarise this analysis of the discourse’s frame story, I would like to suggest that one can identify two axes, representing the Buddha’s dual lineage, around which it was constructed: the ideal of celibacy and the severing of one’s lineage as represented by the monks on the one hand, and at the same time the glorification and mythologizing of the Śākyas’ ancestral lineage, as a magnificent tale of the ancient past, to be commemorated as conducive to the *saṅgha*’s self-establishment. The co-existence of these two seemingly contradictory elements in this narrative are what fashions it as an apologetic discourse meant to mitigate the religious ideal of a celibate monk to a society which sanctifies genealogy and progeny above all. The exhortation to the monks at the end of the discourse to “hold, keep and tell” it indicates that this teaching was seen as central to this effort by the compilers of the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. To

<sup>32</sup> In particular, one can recall the 1<sup>st</sup> *pārājika* offence of the MSV *prātimokṣa* regarding sexual misconduct/unchastity as *abrahmacarya*: *yaḥ punar bhikṣur bhikṣubhiḥ sārddham sāmīcīṃ samāpannaḥ śikṣām apratyākhyāya śikṣādaurbalyam anāviṣkṛtyā brahmacaryamāithunadharmam pratisevetāntaśas tiryagyoniḡatayāpi sārddham ayaṃ bhikṣuḥ pārājiko bhavaty asamvāsyah ||* (Hu-von Hinüber 2003: 8). “Whatever monk, having attained the proper course together with the monks, not having rejected the formal instructions, [and] not having showed himself inept in the formal instructions, should indulge in unchastity and sexual intercourse, even so much as with an animal, this monk is *pārājika*, expelled from the community.” See also Clarke 2009 on the monk Nandika who was tempted by a goddess/Māra and so compromised his *brahmacarya*. Similarly see Clarke 2014: 129–133 for an example of a pregnant nun accused of committing *abrahmacarya*.

further support this theory, I will first provide evidence of the story's late introduction into the Buddha's biography in the MSV, and then will turn to analyse this innovation's polemical negotiation with the MSV's religio-historical environment.

#### 4. The Gautama story as a "late" innovation

Before I analyse this narrative, I first wish to discuss its origin, chronology, and placement within the Bodhisattva's birth cycle in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. There are good reasons to conclude that the story was one of the latest additions to this narrative cycle, a fact that will prove relevant as I proceed.

As already mentioned, the story is part of a longer sequence describing the origin of the Śākya lineage. However, before the above-mentioned exposition in Kapilavastu, there are three lists, functioning as a "table of contents" for the Buddha's birth cycle opening this chapter of the *Vinaya*. The first, the *piṇḍoddāna* ("abridged summary") is highly corrupt, but the first part seems to refer only to the first king, the "great elect" Mahāsammata.<sup>33</sup> The following *uddāna* ("summary"), similarly, only refers to Mahāsammata, marking the chapter on the lineage of the Śākyas, and then continues to the next chapter describing the Buddha's grandfathers Siṃhahanu and Suprabuddha.<sup>34</sup> Most relevant is the final list, a *rājavamśa* or lineage of kings (SbhV i.3.3–4.9) mirroring the highly formulaic prose description of the Śākya lineage which then follows (SbhV i.15–32).<sup>35</sup> A close comparison of the two series of kings shows that the list is generally identical to the prose apart from some skimming over marked by *peyālaṃ* ("et cetera"). Yet the story of the ṛṣi Gautama, the progenitor of Ikṣvāku, is missing from the list. What we have instead is: *karna ikṣvākuḥ potalake ekaśataṃ* (SbhV i.4.5). This means that

<sup>33</sup> *saṃmato devapālaś ca niryūho jīrṇo bhadrakaḥ* / (SbhV i.1.1–4). Gnoli (SbhV i.1, n. 1) interprets *devapāla* ("king of the gods") as a reference to the Tuṣita episode which seems to make sense considering that narratively it is a beginning of a new chapter in the birth-cycle. This also accords with the *uddāna*, see next note.

<sup>34</sup> *mahāsammataḥ siṃhahanuḥ suprabuddhas tathaiva ca* / (SbhV i.1.5–6).

<sup>35</sup> These *uddānas* are missing from the Chinese *Saṅghabhedavastu* starting at T. 1450, vol. xxiv, 99a21, which corresponds to p. 5 in Gnoli's edition (SbhV).



Karṇa, who in the prose is the father of the ṛṣi Gautama, is here himself conceived as the direct progenitor of Ikṣvāku. The inevitable conclusion would be that the list refers to an earlier version of the lineage, in which the ṛṣi Gautama was not yet known.

When these two series are compared with the *rājavaṃśa* attributed in the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* to the *Vinaya* (see note 11 above), it appears that the latter represents the later version of the Buddha's lineage in which the ṛṣi Gautama is already known. In this version, although the word ṛṣi is not mentioned, it is also not stated that Gautama, the father of Ikṣvāku, is a king as is stated about other members of the list. As already discussed, the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* exhibits awareness of (at least) two different yet coexistent traditions of the Śākya lineage. The first and shorter list, said to be transmitted in the *Abhidharma*, lacks most of the names which appear in the following list, Gautama being one of them.

In addition to its evident absence from the *Saṅghabhedavastu*'s "tables of contents," when one takes a closer look at the story one can see that much of it is in fact a sophisticated "patchwork" made of other pre-existent narratives. The story describes how Gautama, born as the son of king Karṇa wishes to forego his role as crown prince. Where the going forth of Gautama is described (SbhV i.21.5–15), one finds a formula which is recurrent in quite a few stories throughout the MSV. In it, a prince, abhorring his father's conduct wishes to go forth; his father unsuccessfully pleads with him to stay. The formula even occurs more than once within the *Saṅghabhedavastu* itself, in the stories of Kṣāntivādin (SbhV ii.4–5) and Bhānumān (SbhV ii.64–65).<sup>36</sup>

After Gautama found his preceptor and settled outside the city, another narrative sequence is inserted in which Gautama is falsely accused of murdering a prostitute named Bhadrā, killed by the cunning man Mṛṅāla, and is sentenced to impalement by his brother the king (SbhV i.22.12–24.1). This sequence is taken verbatim from an *avadāna* found in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (GM iii.1.213.11–215.12). This *avadāna* is part of the *Anavataptagāthā* anthology embedded in the MSV, and more precisely, from the subsection intended to explain different instances of suffering experienced by the Buddha in his last life as a result of bad karma.

<sup>36</sup> This formula will be discussed at length below, Section 5.

Originally only in verse, the *Anavataptagāthā* was a well-known and widely circulated text, as evidenced by many versions, translations, fragments, and quotations that have come down to us. The verses within this compilation attributed to the Buddha, which likely circulated as an independent anthology as well, exist in many variations among the different *Anavatapta* versions. However, the tale of Mṛṅāla seems to have already been an integral part of the *Anavataptagāthā* as early as 303 CE when it was translated by \*Dharmarakṣa into Chinese, as *Fo wubai dizi zishuo benqi jing* (佛五百弟子自說本起經; T. 199), and as part of a distinct text, the *Xingqi xing jing* (興起行經; T. 197), as early as the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.<sup>37</sup>

The *Anavataptagāthā* describes how the Bodhisattva, born as Mṛṅāla, slandered an innocent and virtuous *pratyekabuddha* named Suruci. As a result, the ascetic is bound and led away to be executed by a great crowd of people. Mṛṅāla, seeing the suffering he caused, repents and causes the release of the ascetic. As a result of his slander, the Bodhisattva was born many times in hell and the Buddha had to suffer such slander in his last life. The verses describe these events in all extant versions.<sup>38</sup> The *Anavataptagāthā*, once incorporated into the MSV, was then embellished by prose, elaborating on many of these *avadānas*. The prose tale of Mṛṅāla is then quoted verbatim in the Gautama story of the *Sanḅhabhedavastu*.

<sup>37</sup> For a survey of the different versions and their relative chronology see Salomon 2008: 11–13. For a translation and comparison of the above-mentioned Chinese translations of the Buddha's recitation including the MSV Mṛṅāla *avadāna* see Bechert 1961: 204–243. These verses were also borrowed from the *Anavataptagāthā* (but in a slightly abbreviated manner) into the Pāli *Apadāna* (where the evil Muṅālī frames the *paccekabuddha* Surabhi; Ap i.299 vss. 4–6) and then elaborated upon in prose in the *Udānaṭṭhakathā* by Dhammapāla (Ud-a 263–264; tr. by Masefield 1995: 632–633). On the *Pubbakammapiloti* of the Pāli *Apadāna* see Walters 1990. On the process of borrowing into the *Apadāna* from the Northwestern tradition see Salomon 2008: 28–29, drawing heavily on Bechert 1961 and Hofinger 1982. The *Udānaṭṭhakathā* prose, which is very short, bears an interesting resemblance to the MSV in that it also specifies that the act of which the *pratyekabuddha* is accused is of a sexual nature. This fact can be explained by an existing association of this past deed and the accusation of the Buddha by Sundarikā and Ciñcā. Dhammapāla's writing was tentatively dated by von Hinüber (1996: 166–171) to the latter half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, which is probably later than this tale's appearance in the MSV.

<sup>38</sup> In addition to the two versions mentioned above, the verses survive only in the Tibetan MSV *Bhaiṣajyavastu* ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Ga, 12b4–13a2; an English translation of the Tibetan has been published by 84000. Accessed May 8, 2022. <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-6.html>).

However, instead of a *pratyekabuddha* named Suruci, the evil deed here is falsely attributed to the *ṛṣi* Gautama himself.

Salomon (2008: 53–56) has pointed out that it is very likely that these prose *avadānas* in the MSV *Anavataptagāthā* also circulated independently and were then inserted into the MSV, since they do not correspond exactly to the order of *avadānas* told in verse. For all of these reasons, one can only conclude that the *avadāna* is here “patched” into the Gautama tale and not, to the contrary, extracted from it. In addition to the fact that, as explained, the Mṛṅāla *avadāna* was already well known in a similar format, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, when the compilation of the MSV was still in progress,<sup>39</sup> and that the prose was likely a separate text, when we compare the *avadāna* and the *Saṅghabhedavastu* prose, internal evidence seems to point to the same direction of transmission.

For example, after murdering Bhadrā, Mṛṅāla runs away and ends up at the doorstep of Suruci/Gautama. Since we are told that the murder was committed in a park (*udyāna*), and that Suruci was also dwelling in a park, this makes perfect sense. Gautama, however, was dwelling outside the city border, which we could interpret as a rare instance in which the *Saṅghabhedavastu*’s “seams” disclose a hidden assemblage (SbhV 1.2.3–13; cf. GM iii.1.214.12–215.1).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> One of the most quoted anchors in dating this *Vinaya* is a “prediction” of a *stūpa* to be built by Kaniṣka (GM iii.1.1.20–2.5). Kaniṣka’s era was dated by Harry Falk (e.g. 2015: 111) as likely commencing in 127 CE, which would make this date the *terminus post quem* for the redaction of this *Vinaya* as we have it, although it certainly contains materials that are much older. Like most texts in ancient India the MSV’s date is still a matter of debate among scholars and is far from being resolved. Although the date of this *Vinaya* has been addressed by a few prominent scholars, the authority most often quoted today is Gregory Schopen who suggests the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE as the time of its initial redaction (see 2004: 20–22, 2005: 75–77 and references therein; more recently also 2018: 376).

<sup>40</sup> Albeit much later (11<sup>th</sup> c.) one should consider in this regard Kṣemendra’s *Avadānakalpalatā*, which also relies heavily on narrative material from the MSV. In *avadāna* no. 26 entitled “The origin of the Śākyas” (*Śākyotpatti*), this narrative cycle is summarised, yet the story of the *ṛṣi* Gautama is entirely missing (Dās et al. 1888–1918: i. vss. 26:1–27). However, the Mṛṅāla *avadāna* is inserted later in *avadāna* no. 50 on the “Ten karmic threads” (*daśakarmaplutyavadāna*), clearly based on the MSV *Anavataptagāthā*, where we are told that an unnamed *pratyekabuddha* was framed by Mṛṅāla (Dās et al. 1888–1918: ii. vss 50:72–116). In Black’s translation (1997: 250) based on the Tibetan *Byang chub sems dpa’i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam gyi ’khri shing* (*Skyes rabs*, Tōh. 4155), the *ṛṣi* is named Gautama in this *avadāna*, but this does not seem to be the

Most notably, while in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* the inclusion of the story is easily explained by the fact that the Buddha himself was falsely accused of sexual misconduct by two women, Sundarī and Cañcā, in the case of Gautama the tale does not seem to directly contribute to the narrative other than leading to the death of Gautama. Therefore, it would appear that the compilers of the text, who wished to give this new story an aura of ancient times, chose an *avadāna* which already had a *ṛṣi* for its protagonist.

Unlike in the *avadāna*, Gautama dies on the stake, but not before his aching body and mind are pacified with the help of his preceptor and he ejaculates two drops of semen mixed with blood forming two eggs. These are the eggs from which his twin sons of the Ikṣvāku lineage are born. However, one can certainly sense that the addition of the miraculous account of the *ṛṣi* as a progenitor of Ikṣvāku made the *Vinaya* authors somewhat uncomfortable. This is made clear by the statement preceding the twins' conception:

[It is said that]: “The four inconceivable matters are: the concept of the self, concept of the world, concept relating to the [result of] maturation of living beings' actions, and the domain of buddhas.”<sup>41</sup>

case in the actual Sanskrit or Tibetan (see the critical edition of this chapter in Okano 2007). There is no question therefore that this is a later confluence between the two nearly identical stories.

<sup>41</sup> *catvāri sthānāny acintanīyāni; ātmacintā lokacintā sattvānām karmavipākacintā buddhānām ca buddhaviśaya(cintā) iti* (SbhV i.25.6–8). The issue of inconceivable matters (*acintya*), the thought of which causes misery, is discussed in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (ii.80.13–25). However, the four-fold list in Pāli is slightly different from this one, namely: *buddhānaṃ buddhaviśayo, jhāyissa jhānaviśayo, kammavipāko, and lokacintā* (AN ii.80.13–25). As pointed out by Eltschinger (2014: 206, n. 41), a similar list containing six inconceivable matters appears in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*, adding the “object meditated upon by the meditators” (*dhyāyinām dhyāyiviśayaḥ*), also appearing in the Pāli above, and the “concept of living beings” (*sattvacintā*). I have not yet been able to locate a list matching exactly the one in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. The Chinese *Ekottarikāgama* (*Zeng yi a han jing*; 增一阿含經; T.125) also mentions a different set of four, namely: *sattva, lokadhātu, nāgaviśaya, buddhaviśaya* (Kritzer 2002: 79, n. 3). The *\*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa* (*Dazhidu lun*; 大智度論; T. 1509) mentions a very different set of five: the number of beings, the maturation of actions, the power of a man in meditation (*\*dhyāyibala*), the power of *nāgas*, and the power of buddhas (see Lamotte 1970: 1639, n. 1).

As discussed by Robert Kritzer (2002), in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharma-kośabhāṣya* for example, *acintya* usually signals a difficulty in explaining something such as magical manifestations, a contradiction between phenomena and doctrine, or even divergence from an orthodox view. Vasubandhu himself evokes *karmavipāka* and *buddhānāṃ buddhaviṣaya*, the latter two items quoted here, possibly drawing on a similar list as the authors/redactors of the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. Presumably, in this case, the quote was inserted to give an apologetic tone to this account, which at the very least was seen as something that could be perceived as odd or even suspicious, or as a matter one should not dwell upon. In a similar fashion, in the MSV *Cīvaravastu* and *Saṅghabhedavastu*, a reference to *acintya* is employed to explain the miraculous births of Mṛgaśīras and Ṛṣyaśṛṅga respectively. Both were conceived by a doe who drank the urine of a ṛṣi.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, *acintya* is invoked in the MSV *Vibhaṅga* to describe the somewhat "suspicious" manner in which Udāyin's ex-wife, the nun Guptā, impregnated herself with his semen-soiled robe ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 3, Cha, 83b6).<sup>43</sup> That said, while in all the above the reference to *acintya* only refers to the maturation of karma, the tale of Gautama is the only one containing an entire list of the four. This variance could be read as another indication of this story's unusual style compared with the rest of the MSV.

The prose commentary of the Kaṇhadīpāyana *jātaka* in the Pāli *Jātakāṭṭhakathā* (Ja iv.27.25–37.2; no. 444) also bears a striking resemblance to the story of Gautama in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*. It tells of two ṛṣis, one called Dīpāyana and the other Māṇḍavya. After robbers had left stolen goods outside Māṇḍavya's hut, the king ordered his impalement on a stake. Dīpāyana sat under his friend's stake and gore fell on him creating black spots, and so he came to be known as Kaṇhadīpāyana

<sup>42</sup> *acintyaḥ satvānāṃ karmavipākaḥ* (GM iii.2.80.1; SbhV ii.38). In the *Mahāvastu*, there are two consecutive tales in which a doe conceives by drinking the urine of a ṛṣi: first, the equivalent tale to that of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga (Nālinī *jātaka*; Mhv iii.143.11–152.19) and the second, the Padumāvati *pūrvayoga* (Mhv iii.153.7–172.4). Interestingly, only in the second story do the authors similarly add: *acintyo satvānāṃ karmavipākaḥ* (Mhv iii.153.14). In the Pāli Alambusa *jātaka* (no. 523) and Nālinī *jātaka* (no. 526), where the doe eats grass with the ṛṣi's semen, there is no such disclaimer (Ja v.152, 193).

<sup>43</sup> On this interesting story see Clarke 2014: 99–106. In the Pāli version the *Vinaya* authors did not find it unusual enough to warrant justification (Vin iii.205–206).

(Skt. Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana). The verse *jātaka*, however, mentions nothing of the sort, and it seems clear that this tale is a younger addition. The *Cariyāpiṭaka*, which was early enough to be included in the Pāli canon, already summarises this part of the Kaṇḍadīpāyana tale in two verses (Cp vss. 334–335). The sage Māṇḍavya rather than Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana actually provides another clue for the sources of the Gautama tale, since, in the *Mahābhārata*, we find a sage by the very same name also unjustly impaled on a stake for a robbery he did not commit after the loot had been hidden in his hermitage (Mbh vss. i:101.1–28). It therefore seems reasonable to assume that both the MSV and the Pāli tradition either drew from this Brahmanical narrative repository or at least shared a common source.<sup>44</sup> As I will show, this is not an isolated instance.

Finally, in addition to this elaborate patchwork of stories and motifs, as stated above, since it seems that the tale of the ṛṣi Gautama did not make its way into any other tradition of the Buddha's hagiography outside the *Saṅghabhedavastu*'s chain of transmission, it may have been in fact marginal. As such, it represents an exclusively Mūlasarvāstivādin addition, which did not enter a wider Buddhist narrative "reservoir" in compositions such as the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāvastu*, or the Pāli commentaries, all sharing many narratives with the *Saṅghabhedavastu*.<sup>45</sup> And so, internal and external evidence point to the fact that this story should be dated to

<sup>44</sup> On this episode in the *Mahābhārata* see Goldman 1985: 418–421; and in relation to the Pāli *jātaka* tradition see Appleton 2016: 96.

<sup>45</sup> A related tale did enter the *Fo benxing ji jing* (佛本行集經; T. 190) sometimes wrongly alluded to as *\*Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*. In this 6<sup>th</sup> century Chinese compilation, we find a similar description of the Śākya lineage in the Buddha's biography prior to the Tuṣita episode. There, a prince named *\*Mahākūśa* (*Da maocao* 大茅草) went forth also without having a son, leaving the kingdom to his ministers, and became a great ṛṣi with many followers. Having been shot in error by a hunter, two drops of blood from his wound became two shoots of sugar-cane from which the Ikṣvāku twins, a boy (Sujāta) and a girl (Subhadrā), were born. These were then married to each other and installed as the rightful king and queen (see tr. by Beal 1875: 18–20). While it certainly bears a resemblance to our story, this version of the Ikṣvāku myth seems to also combine elements of two different Ikṣvākus in the *Mahāvastu*; one, in a *jātaka* describing the birth of a king named Ikṣvāku born of a cane which grew in his parents' bed, who then was father to prince Kūśa (Mhv ii.421.6–496.18) and the second, in the *rājavaṃśa*, which describes an Ikṣvāku king named Sujāta as the father of the exiled Śākyas (Mhv i.348.8–351.14). The name Mahākūśa also appears in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* once (SbhV i.17.23), in the second *rājavaṃśa* list, but is not mentioned anywhere else including the lists in the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* (Cf. Mvy

the latest stages in the development of this *Vinaya*, somewhere between the middle and the end of the Middle Period (ca. 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> c. CE).

What purpose was served by the compilation and preservation of this story? First, one must consider the fact that this new story is not an *avadāna/jātaka*, but an origin story. As such, one must assume that it was intended to clarify something in the authors' present and so its function should then be sought in the wider narrative context. Like many aetiological stories in the Indian (and not exclusively Indian) narrative world, the driving force behind it is an etymology.<sup>46</sup> In this case, these are a few etymologies of the different lineage designations of the Śākyas and the Buddha. Having found the twins, Gautama's preceptor adopts the children and establishes their names:

They were born at the moment of the rising of the sun, warmed by the sun-rays. Therefore, they are of the *Sūryagotra* [= the sun lineage]. Thus, the name "Sūryagotras" came about. They are the sons of the *ṛṣi* Gautama. Thus, the second name "Gautamas" came about. They came forth from his own limbs (*svāṅgīniṣṛtā*). Thus, the third name "Āṅgīrasas" came about. They were found in the cane-thicket (*ikṣuvāṭa*). Thus, the fourth name "Ikṣvākas" came about.<sup>47</sup>

If one examines these etymologies closely, it becomes clear that while three of them are indeed semantic, Gautama is the only name explained entirely genealogically. This immediately flags the explanation of this name as unusual. Were the authors of the MSV struggling to come up with a semantic explanation? I find this very unlikely. Among the other semantic explanations and accompanied by the ubiquitous name reduplication

s.v. *ku sha chen po*). The *Fo benxing ji jing* is stated in a colophon to be based on hagiographies transmitted by different schools (see tr. by Frauwallner 1956: 50).

<sup>46</sup> On the development of etymologies into narratives and genealogies, particularly names of key figures, in the Brahmanical tradition see Hegarty 2011. On aetiological etymologies in the Bible see Long 1968. On the function of "semantic etymologies" as revealing the meaning of a name or object to the tradition, rather than its historical root, often giving rise to myth, see Bronkhorst 2001.

<sup>47</sup> *sūryasyābhyudgamanakālasamaye sūryaraśmibhiḥ paripācītau jātāu bhavataḥ; tasmāt sūryagotrāv iti sūryagotrāḥ sūryagotrā iti saṃjñā saṃvṛttā; gautamasya ṛṣeḥ putrau gautamā gautamā iti dvitīyā saṃjñā saṃvṛttā; svāṅgīniṣṛtā iti āṅgīrasā āṅgīrasā iti tṛtīyā saṃjñā saṃvṛttā; ikṣuvāṭal labdhā ikṣvākā ikṣvākā iti caturthī saṃjñā saṃvṛttā* (SbhV i.25.18–23).

formula used in such cases, one might even say that, to give it an aetiological aura, this name is “disguised” as an etymology. Read in light of the fact that throughout this entire discourse the Śākyas are repeatedly and very unusually called Gautamas, one is led to conclude that the function of this narrative is to assert this epithet of the Śākyas and the Buddha by introducing it in a “new” tale of the past. This tale was clearly constructed to address the question regarding the Śākyas’ origin posed in its frame story (see above, Section 3). Now, having established the narrative and its advocacy of the Śākyas as Gautamas in a relatively late and probably localised tradition of the Bodhisattva’s birth cycle, let me turn to the possible motivation for this innovation.

### 5. An apologetic myth? The story’s brahmanical overtones

As discussed above, much of the story is compiled of pre-existing formulas and narrative material. Therefore, it makes sense to focus the analysis on the innovative passages embellishing these stereotypes. But first let me closely examine one of these stereotypical formulas, namely, that of the “prince asking to go forth.”

Naturally, any Buddhist narrative on royal renunciation can be read as a prefiguration of the Bodhisattva’s own story. Indeed, in this story as well, we are discussing a prince (and therefore most likely a *kṣatriya*) who wishes to forego all material luxury to pursue a spiritual path. As in the Bodhisattva’s case, the father represents the prevailing familial social order, wishing his son to take his place as king. However, in the *ṛṣi* Gautama’s case, an additional element is added which displays, more than merely a familial sentiment, a Brahmanical attitude towards the relationship between ritual and temporal dominion:

Son! The purpose for which sacrifices are being made, *homas* are offered, oblations are performed, is that kingship be in the palm of your hand, that upon my passing, you will be king. For what purpose are you going forth?<sup>48</sup>

The argument used by the father to persuade his son to remain home is that the whole purpose for the religious life, namely, making sacrifices

<sup>48</sup> *putra yasyārthe yajñā iḥyante, homā hūyante, tapāṃsi tapyante tat tava karatalagataṃ rājyaṃ; mamātyayād rājā bhaviṣyasi / kimarthaṃ pravrajāsīti* (SbhV i.21.13–15).



and self-mortification, is gaining power, and that power is already in the hands of the young prince. The prince, on the other hand, wishes to go forth because he fears going to hell on account of his anticipated unlawful (non-“dharmic”) rule (SbhV i.21.3–5).<sup>49</sup> The worldview here challenged by the prince clearly echoes śāstric morals.

A king’s *dharma* (*rājadharma*) in the Brahmanical Dharma-literature is most often invoked in reference to the proper rules of statecraft. This *dharma* is understood also in the Epics to encompass all other forms of *dharma* (Gonda 1969: 19; Kane 1967–1977: iii.3), and hence king Karṇa’s puzzlement at his son’s request. Most often, *dharma* in such a context would prioritise the laws of *varṇa*, and *adharmā* would refer to their disruption (Scharfe 1989: 44, 214–215). In the *Arthaśāstra* for example, under the chapter on the “Classification of Sons” dealing with such restrictions, it is stated that: “Only by acting in this manner will the king attain heaven; otherwise, [he goes to] hell” (tr. by Olivelle 2013: 194).<sup>50</sup>

Interestingly, throughout the MSV, the “prince asking to go forth” formula is not used exclusively to describe sovereignty (*rājya*), but also the position of high-priest or royal preceptor (Skt. *purodhāna*; Tib. *mdun na ’don*), which was also mostly hereditary.<sup>51</sup> In the *Dharmaśāstras*, as

<sup>49</sup> The formula is spoken for example by Brahmadaṭṭa to his son Mūkapaṅgu who wishes to go forth in a *jātaka* contained in the 4<sup>th</sup> *Naiḥsargika* offence of the MSV *Vibhaṅga*. There, Mūkapaṅgu, who is the Bodhisattva, explains that since in a past life he was a king for sixty years, he had spent sixty thousand years in hell, and this is why he refuses to inherit his father’s kingdom. The *adharmā* is also depicted in detail when the prince witnesses his father punishing a robber in a very harsh manner. The exchange between the king and his son in this *jātaka* is much more extensive (‘*Dul ba*, Tōh. 3, Cha, 89a3–96b3). Cf. the prince’s reflections in the Pāli Mūgapakkha *jātaka* (no. 538; Ja vi.3.19–4.12). The issue of punishment and the use of force (*daṇḍa*) is integral to proper statecraft in śāstric literature (see Kane 1967–1977: iii.55; KĀŚ vss. i:4:2–16, iii:1:42; Manu vss. 7:14–32; Scharfe 1989: 88).

<sup>50</sup> *kevalam evaṃ vartamānaḥ svargam āpnoti rājā narakam anyathā* (KĀŚ vs. iii:7:38).

<sup>51</sup> Another very extensive use of this formula, including much repetition, is in the story of Mahāmaudgalyāyana’s going forth in the MSV *Pravrajyāvastu*. Kolita (Mahāmaudgalyāyana) is the son of the king’s *purohita*, and when Upatiṣya (Śāriputra) suggests to him that they go forth together, he himself utters this formula and asks why he should give up what is already in the palm of his hand. Then, the same formula is repeated to him by his relatives (‘*Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Ka, 19b7–20a1, 20a4, 42b7–43a2). See also additional instances of this formula in the MSV *Vibhaṅga*: ‘*Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Cha, 93b1–2; Nya, 164b2–166a7; and *Saṅghabhedavastu*: SbhV ii.4–5, 64–65. The versions containing the formula as referring to the role of the *purohita* exist only in Tibetan, but a few Skt. fragments were edited

well as the Epics, the king and his preceptor are the two pillars of the kingdom; one is dependent on the other (Mitchiner 1982: 223–224; Olivelle 2011: 131; Scharfe 1989: 112–118, 148). Therefore, if we accept the suggestion that the social order represented here by the king is that governed by Brahmanical ethics, it should not surprise us that this formula can be applied to both positions.

In a Buddhist context however, we can assume that the word *dharma* is here employed more widely to mean “just,” and more specifically, even though in a “pre-Buddhist” setting, it echoes of course the Buddha’s own Dharma.<sup>52</sup> In this case, it is also cleverly used to correspond to the previous section describing the origin of the world. In that section, Maudgalyāyana, as the story teller, occasionally addresses the Śākyaas saying: “And this is in accordance with Dharma and not non-Dharma. With respect to this (i.e. to Dharma), the foremost Dharma is that of the Supreme Conquerors (i.e. buddhas).”<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, it is safe to say that the “prince asking to go forth” formula is closely associated throughout the MSV with the challenge of a Brahmanical śāstric view on temporal dominion, understood as a direct result of rituals and sacrifices performed by the *ṛṣi* or the *purohita* in the name of the king. The formula also incorporates both Dharma and what is, from a Buddhist perspective, non-Dharma – i.e. the use of force.<sup>54</sup> Gautama, the Buddha’s ancestor, represents in this pre-Buddhist

in Vogel and Wille 1984: 304, 317. The Tibetan formula, however, is generally identical to the one referring to kings except for the substitution of *rgyal srid* with *mdun na ’don*.

<sup>52</sup> Olivelle (2011) promotes the theory that the Buddhist use of “Dharma” was initially adopted from the Vedic royal vocabulary.

<sup>53</sup> *tac ca dharmeṇa nādharmeṇa | tatrāyaṃ dharmāḥ śreṣṭho jinendrāṇām |* (SbhV i.14.6–7, 12.1–2). This statement is clearly inserted to relate the audience of this cosmogonic myth back to the frame story and the question posed by the Śākyaas governing it, creating a coherent narrative unit. Additionally, much of the birth cycle in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* is modelled on the *Mahāvadānasūtra* (MAvS: xx–xxi and *passim*; SbhV: i.xxiv–xxvi; Shiri 2020b). In both sources, it has been predicted by the *brāhmaṇas* that if the prince indeed becomes a *cakravartin* king, he will conquer the earth by means of Dharma and not by punishment or brutal force (literally, “neither by rod nor by sword,” *adaṇḍeṇāśastreṇa*, SbhV i.49.12). See MAvS 72.13–14; also quoted in the *Ambaṭṭhasutta*, DN i.89.6–7 and in Skt. *Ambāṣṭhasūtra* (Melzer 2010: i.144).

<sup>54</sup> This notion of *adaṇḍa* of course represents an ideal view of kingship that was not necessarily adhered to in Buddhist political treatises. These more often display a rather pragmatic view of force which agrees quite well with that of the Brahmanical Dharma-

imagined past governed by śāstric morals, an alternative to the Brahmanical ideal king. For that, however, another Brahmanical ideal seems to be summoned – that of the *rājarṣi* – the royal seer.

The *rājarṣi* as an ideal of class-amalgamation prevails in the Epics and *Purāṇas* in the figure of a *kṣatriya* who, by means of austerities and self-control, gains a saintly status or even changes his class to that of a *brāhmaṇa*. The most well-known example would be Viśvāmitra, a great *kṣatriya* king turned *brāhmaṇa* by the grace of Indra.<sup>55</sup> Not exclusive to the literary domain, the ideal of the *rājarṣi* was invoked also in inscriptions by Indian kings throughout the subcontinent who wished to claim both *kṣatriya* and *brāhmaṇa* qualities.<sup>56</sup>

Generally speaking, the ancient *ṛṣi* is a stock character in the narrative reservoir of all Indian religions. Giacomo Benedetti (2016) has helpfully mapped six different types of *ṛṣis* encountered in Buddhist narratives in the *Mahāvastu* and in Pāli which could just as easily apply to the MSV. Among these, one finds the ascetics of the past. These characters live in *āśramas* in the wilderness and are usually devoted to meditation and the attainment of the five super-knowledges.<sup>57</sup> These *ṛṣis* function in an

literature. See for example Scherrer-Schaub (2007: 783) on Nāgārjuna's understanding of moderate force as something not detrimental to the king's purity.

<sup>55</sup> On the *rājarṣi* ideal see Scharfe 1989: 41–43. Additional cases of such *varṇa* transformations in the *Mahābhārata* are quoted by Brodbeck (2009: 139).

<sup>56</sup> See for example: the second set of Copper plates from Tummalagudem, dating 566/567 CE (EIAD 175 I.2–16; Tournier 2018); the Lakkhā Maṇḍal *praśasti* inscription, ca. 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century CE (Salomon 1998: 276–280); Udayagiri cave inscription of Chandragupta II, ca. 375–415 CE (Fleet 1888: 34–36). On the Pallavas as *brāhmaṇa* kings claiming such dual genealogy see Francis 2012. Probably the Buddhist author who invoked this motif most often was Aśvaghoṣa, who used this epithet to refer to the Buddha as well as his lineage (BC vss. xiii:1, xiii:10; SNa ii:29, vi:39). Particularly on Śuddhodana as a royal seer in Aśvaghoṣa's work see Eltschinger 2018: 319–320.

<sup>57</sup> The other categories include ascetics at the time of the Buddha such as Asita or *jaṭilas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, Buddhist monks, buddhas, and finally the list of ancient Vedic authors found in Buddhist *sūtras*. Benedetti (2016: 174, n. 1) attributes these to the Pāli *suttas* but they are found as well in their Mūlasarvāstivāda equivalents. As studied by Mitchiner (1982), there are different traditions regarding the seven *ṛṣis*, but he was able to map two provisional lists – early and late. The earlier list, articulated in the Vedic scriptures, generally includes: Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha and Kāśyapa, with Agastya sometimes added as the eighth. Later, in the Epics and the *Purāṇas*, a new list was circulating simultaneously with names unknown from the Vedas, including: Marīci, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasiṣṭha, and at times Bhṛgu and

imagined ancient past, and so are typically found in Buddhist *jātakas* or *avadānas* and in the Brahmanical Epics. Often, as shown by Benedetti, not only the archetype but also specific tales of such ancient ṛṣis are shared between the Buddhist and Brahmanical traditions. In certain cases, Brahmanical ideals and paradigms also seemed to have been “imported” along with them.

In particular, one of the major attributes of the ancient ṛṣi archetype across traditions is the inherent tension in his role both as a celibate ascetic and a progenitor. The ascetic’s celibacy is seen as inherent to his spiritual prowess, be it *tapas* in the Epics and *Purāṇas* or meditation and spiritual attainment in the Buddhist case. Semen in particular is also associated, not exclusively in Buddhist texts, with mental potency, and the emission of semen with its weakening. Accordingly, a common term for a celibate monk/ṛṣi is “one who holds his semen up.”<sup>58</sup> At the same time, the power of ṛṣis is often depicted as a very fertile force. For example, in the story of Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, a celibate ṛṣi was able to inadvertently produce an offspring simply by micturating, while Ṛṣyaśṛṅga himself could harness his *tapas* to stop the rainfall. In order to stop the drought, the king had to send his daughter to seduce the young ṛṣi and break his celibacy which in turn made him a progenitor of a great royal lineage (SbhV ii.38.1–40.18). It is no wonder then that this tale was utilised as a Buddhist *jātaka* to mirror the issue of celibacy and the sexual seduction of the Buddha or other monks (Benedetti 2015: 16–17). This tale of the ancient past was clearly very influential as it is shared by many different religious traditions.<sup>59</sup>

Dakṣa. In the late lists Gautama is omitted, most likely because of the rise in the influence of *gotra* lineages, as well as regional association of various *gotras*, which shifted and manipulated the lists in order to change the status of the primordial ṛṣis as well as their own. At this point, Gautama usually appears as subordinate to Aṅgiras (Mitchiner 1982: ch. 1 and 3). A list of ṛṣis referred to as the authors of the Vedas is also known in Buddhist *sūtras* such as the *Ambāṣṭhasūtra* where Gautama is not included but rather Aṅgira: Aṣṭaka, Vāmaka, Vāmadeva, Viśvāmītra, Jamadagni, Aṅgiras, Bharadvāja, Vasiṣṭha, Kāśyapa and Bhṛgu (Melzer 2010: i.202, ii.307; cf. the same list in Pāli: DN i.104.8–17).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. MW s.v. *īrdhvareta*.

<sup>59</sup> For a comparison of the different versions of the story in Buddhist and Brahmanical sources see Benedetti 2015. On what appears to be a “sharing” of Brahmanical ideals see particularly pp. 40–41, nn. 115, 116; Benedetti 2016: 186.

While the story of the ṛṣi Gautama, to the best of my knowledge, is not found in any other Buddhist tradition, it seems however to share an uncanny resemblance to the story of another such warrior-ṛṣi found in the Epics' tradition. This ascetic, similarly called the ṛṣi Gautama (Śaradvat), was tempted by the sight of an *apsaras* sent by Indra. From his sexual excitement, semen fell into a thicket of reeds and divided into two parts, from which Gautama twins were born: Kṛpa and Kṛpī. Like the twins in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* who were found and adopted by a *brāhmaṇa*, they were later found and adopted by the king (Mbh vss. i:120:1–20).<sup>60</sup> While the epic twins both played a part in the following narrative, in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* one of the twins seems to be born only to die sonless, which raises the question: why were they twins at all? One could speculate that either this detail is meant to reflect Gautama's potency, or to design closer similarity to such an epic model. In the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra*, Gautama is only said to have one child – Ikṣvāku – which might be read as support of the second possibility. The resemblance between these stories of the two ṛṣis named Gautama is too great to be overlooked.

Since the epic ṛṣi, in adherence to the *āśrama* system, generally embodies the tension between his vow of celibacy and his most important debt (*ṛṇa*) – begetting offspring – there are many epic tales of ṛṣis who, despite their celibacy and purity, fathered children in miraculous ways.<sup>61</sup> In many cases, copulation does not even take place. The fruits of such miraculous births are most often very powerful ṛṣis, who in themselves carry the traits of warriors or rulers. Probably the most famous male parthenogenesis story in the *Mahābhārata* is that of Droṇa, born of the semen of the celibate ṛṣi Bharadvāja (namesake of Gautama's brother in the MSV story), who ejaculated into a jar at the sight of a beautiful *apsaras* sent by Indra (Mbh vss. i:154:1–6).<sup>62</sup> Droṇa, another type of

<sup>60</sup> Also found in *Mahābhārata* vss. i:57:89–90, i:120:2–21, v:54:48, v:163:20–21; BhP vss. ix:21:34–36.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Manu vs. 6:37: “If a twice-born seeks renunciation without studying the Vedas, without fathering sons, and without offering sacrifices, he will proceed downwards” (tr. by Olivelle in Manu: 150); *anadhītya dvijo vedān anutpādya tathā sutān | aniṣṭvā caiva yajñaiś ca mokṣam icchan vrajaty adhaḥ ||*; on the “classical” *āśrama* system as it is dealt with in the *Mahābhārata* see Olivelle 1993: 153–155.

<sup>62</sup> Mary Carroll Smith (1991) ties such male-parthenogenesis births in the *Mahābhārata* (Kṛpa, Droṇa and Skanda) to the military prowess of a *kṣatriya* warrior. The fact

class amalgamation which is the *brāhmaṇa*-warrior, was the military preceptor to different kings and princes and a general.

In his analysis of the role of epic *kṣatriyas*, Alf Hiltebeitel (2011: 583) concludes that they were reconstructed by *brāhmaṇa* authors to embody secondary exponents, as well as an idealised audience of a “new classical combination of ideas, norms and values, which they combine with remodelled Vedic ideas about *varṇa* and *āśrama*.” The primary exponents of these values in the tales, however, are the characters of epic *brāhmaṇas*. Positioning themselves not only as the *kṣatriyas*’ “saviours” the Brahmanical architects of the Epics imagine their ancient past so that “all epic *kṣatriyas* descend on their male sides from Brahman ancestors” (Hiltebeitel 2011: 590).<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, the *ṛṣi* Gautama in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* is rescued and redeemed by a *brāhmaṇa*. Nearing his death, Gautama becomes anxious about his fate:

“Preceptor! When I move on from here, what will my destination be? What rebirth? What future existence?” He said: “Son! The *brāhmaṇas* say: ‘There is no destination for the sonless (*aputrasya gatir nāsti*),’ is there an offspring begotten by you?” “Preceptor! I was just a youth when I went forth, ignorant in the ways of women, groomed to rule by [my] father. How could I beget an offspring?”<sup>64</sup>

that all of her examples generally refer to *brāhmaṇas* and there is no discussion of the meaning of *varṇa* and *svadharma* in this context, weakens her argument, but there is certainly merit in the suggestion that non-female gestation is associated with warrior qualities. For example, Gautama’s story is not the only case of male-parthenogenesis in the Śākya lineage, and quite a few kings are described as born of a blister on their father’s bodies (SbhV i.15.27–17.7).

<sup>63</sup> A similar interpretation is given by Brodbeck (2009: 65): “In *Mahābhārata* royal families, heirs are produced by ritual stages, each one overseen by brahmins. An heirless king is often just a king who has not yet found a brahmin willing to provide him with one. In some cases a brahmin provides the king with a son by explicitly impregnating his wife – that is, through *niyoga*.” He further suggests that in this very way, *brāhmaṇas* producing heirs without copulation can also be understood in the *Mahābhārata* as performing their “common *niyoga* role” (2009: 68). Also on the role of the *ṛṣis* in producing sons for kings see Mitchiner 1982: 224–228.

<sup>64</sup> *upādhyāya itaś cyutasya me kā gatir bhaviṣyati, kā upapattiḥ, ko ’bhisaṅparāya iti / sa kathayati vatsa brāhmaṇāḥ kathayanti aputrasya gatir nāstīti; asti tvayā kiṃcid apatyan utpāditam? upādhyāya kumāra evāhaṅ; strītantrē aprakṛtījñāḥ; pitrā rājyanimittam protsāhyamānaḥ pravrajitaḥ; kuto mamāpatyasamutpattiḥ* (SbhV i.24.18–23). Gnoli refers to this *pāda* as a “Hindu memorial verse” and quotes the rest of it as: *svargo naiva*

The *brāhmaṇa* named Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana, a name not otherwise known in the MSV and who “happens” to be the namesake of Vyāsa, the mythic author of the *Mahābhārata* and many *Purāṇas*,<sup>65</sup> quotes a message clearly not meant to represent a Buddhist monastic ideal.<sup>66</sup> Like the Brahmin ṛṣi Kapila, who functions in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* as the authoritative seal of the law when he encourages the Śākyas to marry their sisters and not mix with other *varṇas*,<sup>67</sup> Gautama’s teacher is here the voice of *śruti* or scriptural authority.

*kathaṃcana | tasmāt putramukham dṛṣtvā paścāt bhavati tāpasah ||* but does not supply the source. This full quote is collected in Sternbach’s *Mahāsubhāṣitasamgraha* (1974: 468–469 vs. 2090), which then gives the *Vikramacarita* as its (rather late) source. However, the first *pāda*, as quoted in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, appears for example in the *Garuḍapurāṇa*’s *Pretaskhaṇḍa* (GP vss. ii:2:4, ii:29:4) with a different ending (*svargo naiva ca naiva ca | yena kenāpy upāyena kāryaṃ janma sutasya hi ||*). For a list of further references see Sternbach 1974: 469. On the issue of the son embodying his father’s immortality in Vedic literature see Olivelle 1993: 42–46. A similar verse for example can be found already in the *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa*: *nāputrasya loko ’stīti* (“there is no world for the sonless;” AB vs. vii:13:12). In the *Mahāvastu*, what appears to be a possible paraphrase of this verse (*nāsti anapatyasya lokā ti*; Mhv ii.209.11–12; cf. Benedetti 2016: 179, n. 8) appears in the Śyāmaka *jātaka*, where, having been a celibate ṛṣi, a *brāhmaṇa* decides to take a wife in order to produce a son. Similarly, in a Jaina tale from the *Uttarajjhayaṇasutta* (ca. 5<sup>th</sup> c. CE) the father of *brāhmaṇa* brothers who wish to go forth tries to dissuade them with a similar verse (Geen 2015: 194–195) which can be seen as more evidence of the fact that this sentiment was understood as a sort of Brahmanical “credo” in the eyes of non-Brahmin religious authors.

<sup>65</sup> Lit.: “Black island-born.” His name is not known in the *Mahāvvyūtpatti*, as well as his alternative name in this story Suvarṇadvaipāyana. Interestingly, in Tibetan his name is translated in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* as *mdog nag* (“dark”). This is the common translation for Asita. This literal translation was possibly the source of some confusion when translating and transmitting this story. See for example the interlineal gloss in Sørensen’s (1994: 51 and n. 51) translation of the Tibetan Chronicle *rGyal labs gsal ba’i me long* (14<sup>th</sup> c.). In the *Mahābhārata*, Vyāsa is also the biological father of the main protagonists: the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. The source of this character’s name in the epic context is also supported by the story’s affinity to the Māṇḍavya tale in the *Mahābhārata* and Pāli sources (see above, Section 4).

<sup>66</sup> In fact, as suggested by Olivelle (2006), it is quite possible that the “debt” to one’s ancestors was provoked as a reaction by *brāhmaṇa* authors to the threat of the growing prominence of celibate *śramaṇa* movements such as Buddhism.

<sup>67</sup> *labhyaṃ maharṣe asmābhir evaṃ kartum. labhyaṃ bhavanto, yathāpi tat kṣatriyai rājyaparibhraṣṭaiḥ; tatas te riṣivacanāṃ pramāṇam iti kṛtvā kāmāragādhyavasitāḥ prīti-prāmodyajātāḥ vaimātrkābhir bhagīnībhiḥ sārḍhaṃ kṛḍanti, ramante, paricārayanti* (SbhV 29.29–30.1). “[The Śākyas] said: ‘Is it proper, Great sage, for us to do so?’ ‘It is proper, sirs, since obviously you are disenthroned *kṣatriyas*.’ Accepting the words of the

Heaven and sons are tightly associated in the Brahmanical and Vedic context. As long as there are sons to commemorate you, your afterlife is secured, and this, one could say is at the heart of the very Vedic ritual. Gautama, for his part, amplifies the Brahmanical moral of this tale when he stresses that he went forth when he was still an unwed youth, so he could not have had any progeny. By doing so, he of course challenged the proper *āśrama* order as he skipped the stage of the householder. It is evident then that this proverb is quoted here in order to explain the events that follow, namely the birth of his children. In this respect, it becomes clear that the two layers of the story, the one which is a common cliché and the one which is a narrative innovation, also represent two different, or even contradicting morals. For, as one learns from the “prince asking to go forth” formula, the reason Gautama chooses to go forth and become an ascetic is precisely to avoid a hellish destiny. Nonetheless, his going forth is revealed as what doomed his next existence. And so, the tension between progeny and celibacy is built into this story’s very fabric.

The apologetic remark made by Gautama is also very telling about the imagined audience of this tale as it echoes another statement made by the Bodhisattva in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*’s narrative. Before going forth, the Bodhisattva chooses to sleep with one of his wives “lest others should say” that he is not a man.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in the *Kāraṇaprajñapti*, another section of the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin *Prajñaptiśāstra*, it is

sage as authoritative, seeking after passions and lusts and giving rise to feelings of joy and delight they had sex, made love and coupled with their agnatic half-sisters” (tr. by Silk 2008: 258–259).

<sup>68</sup> *bhaviṣyanti me atonidānaṃ pare vaktāraḥ śākyamuniḥ kumāro ’pumān, yena yaśo-dharāgopikāṃṛgajāprabhṛtīni ṣaṣṭis trīśahasrāny apāśya pravrajīta iti* (SbhV i.81.6–9). “lest others should say about me with respect to that: ‘Prince Śākyamuni is not a man (i.e., he is a eunuch); having rejected Yaśodharā, Gopikā, Mṛgajā and the other sixty-thousand women, he has gone forth.’” Compare this rhetoric for example with the docetism of the *Mahāvastu*’s *Daśabhūmikāsūtra*, where it is emphasised that from their time in Tuṣita onwards *bodhisattvas* do not indulge in bodily pleasures and so Rāhula was not conceived in such a fashion but simply entered his mother’s womb (Mhv i.153.6–15). Similarly, in the same discourse, a quote from the *Lokānuvartanāsūtra* (Tournier 2017: 217, 278–286) proclaims that from Dīpaṃkara onwards buddhas do not experience passion but appear to have sons “in conformity with the world” (Mhv i.170.3–4). On the denial of the Buddha’s corporeal body in the Mahāyāna see Radich 2015: 107–110 and particularly n. 265.



explained that the Bodhisattva fathers a son before going forth since it is the rule (*dharmatā*) for all *bodhisattvas*, but also, so that he is not reproached as someone unable to experience sensual gratification.<sup>69</sup> Evidently in the Bodhisattva's case, his having a son before going forth was perceived in the Mūlasarvāstivāda environment as crucial to his later teaching career. The fact that the (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin *Mahāvadānasūtra*, unlike the other versions of this discourse, enumerates the sons of various buddhas can be read as another expression of this paradigm (MAvS 46.1–12). For, who would listen to a man preaching the release from desire when he himself is devoid of sexuality? Who would listen to a man advocating the homeless life who never fathered a son? Clearly, the tale of Gautama, prefiguring the story of the Bodhisattva, has *brāhmaṇas* rather than monks as its imagined potential critics. Constructed in a distinct epic style, the birth story of Gautama's children reflects the ethos of the celibate *ṛṣi*, who both pays his debt and keeps his vow.

In sum, as I have demonstrated, the story of the *ṛṣi* Gautama as an ancestor of the Śākyas is a late insertion into this lineage's description and the Bodhisattva's birth cycle at large. Furthermore, this insertion is largely formulaic and based on narrative material borrowed from other parts of the MSV and other “floating” texts. The details of the story reveal a pre-Buddhist historicised past which is governed by imagined Brahmanical values of statecraft and the individual's debt to his ancestors

<sup>69</sup> *ci'i phyir byang chub sems dpa' de ltar sems can thams cad las khyad par du 'phags par gyur nas sras ma skyed par dad pas khyim nas khyim med par legs pa kho nar rab tu byung bar ma gyur zhe na | smras pa | byang chub sems dpa' ni yun ring po nas sras mnga' bar gyur pa'i las 'bras bu yod pa dag byas shing bsags (6) te | rnam par smin par mngon du phyogs shing nye bar 'ongs ba'i phyir ro | gzhan yang sras ma skyed par dad pas khyim nas khyim med par legs pa kho nar rab tu 'byung bar mi 'gyur ba 'di ni byang chub sems dpa' gāng gā'i klung gi bye ma snyed kyi chos nyid yin no | gzhan yang (7) 'dod pa la longs spyod par mi nus so zhes 'phyā bar 'gyur ba'i phyir ro | (mNGon pa, Tōh. 4087, Yi. 135b5–7); “Why did the Bodhisattva become special (*khyad par du 'phags par gyur*) out of all beings, and not go forth with faith, from home into homelessness as an ascetic, having not produced a son (i.e. went forth after having a son)? It is said that because for a long time the Bodhisattva accomplished and accumulated deeds the fruit of which is having a son; [this karma] has approached maturation. Moreover, going forth having produced a son is the rule for *bodhisattvas* as many as the sands in the Ganges. Moreover, because [otherwise] he will be reproached: ‘He is incapable of sensual gratification’.”*

in the form of securing progeny. As such, Gautama, in many respects modelled on the epic *rājarṣi*, by going forth and yet begetting twins, both defies these values and abides by them. In particular, the story bears an uncanny resemblance to the birth of the Gautama twins in the *Mahābhārata* with which other motifs, such as his wrongful impalement, are also shared. This brings us back to the frame story, which as discussed above, arranges this whole discourse on Dharma around the two axes – celibacy and progeny. In the next and final section, I will explore how and why this tension was distinctly curated into the *Vinaya*.

## 6. Layers of self-representation: Gautamas/Śākyaś/bhikṣus

In light of my findings, namely that this story exhibits sensitivity to Brahmanical values and is moulded in many respects in *Purāṇa*-like style, I would argue that the story is meant to put forward a new tradition regarding the Buddha's origin, and that this innovation was meant to reflect back upon the *saṅgha*.

While most Buddhist sources did not find the Śākyaś' *gotra* name problematic or needing justification, many modern scholars apparently did.<sup>70</sup> Grappling with this issue such scholars often adopted a normative Brahmanical perspective according to which the Śākyaś, being *kṣatriyas*, possibly adopted the lineage of their *purohita* subordinating them to an established Brahmanical *gotra*. Indeed, such a custom can be found in Brahmanical treatises and commentaries.<sup>71</sup> But is it possible that the source of this innovation in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* does in fact stem from

<sup>70</sup> See for example Brough 1947: 84; Burnouf 1876: 138; Patil 1973: 42; Thomas 1927: 22–23; Witzel 2009: 707. In the same vein, the fact that the Śākyaś clearly married within their *gotra*, as implied for example by the Buddha's mother/aunt's designation Gautamī, and the fact that this is forbidden by Brahmanical law, caused scholars such as Brough (1953: xv) to suggest that she must have taken her husband's name after they married, a practice not attested anywhere to the best of my knowledge.

<sup>71</sup> Medhātithi, Manu's commentator, writing in ca. 820–1050 CE according to Kane (1967–1977: i.2.583) claimed that when *gotra* is applied to *kṣatriyas* it is not in the same manner as *brāhmaṇas* but it is a *laukika-gotra* – *gotra* only in common-parlance – since *kṣatriyas* have no *gotra* (Kane 1967–1977: ii.1.485–486). The *Aitareyabrāhmaṇa* (AB 34.7), possibly alluded to in our story (see note 64 above), suggests that a *kṣatriya* should sacrifice with the *pravara* of his *purohita*.

a similar rationale? As suggested by Tsuchida (1991: 128), the additions to the genealogy of the Buddha were usually meant to settle discrepancies between different traditions. And so, it is likely that the authors of the MSV did feel, for some reason, the need to justify their teacher's *gotra* name.

Evidence for the acknowledgement of such a normative law in (Mūla) Sarvāstivādin circles can be found perhaps in Aśvaghōṣa's poem *Saundarananda*. It has long been the consensus, in accordance with tradition, that Aśvaghōṣa was a Brahmin convert (Eltschinger 2013a: 167, n. 2; Hildebeitel 2006: 241–243; BC ii. xviii, xcvi; Olivelle 2016: 395; 2019: 260–261), or at the very least exhibited incredible mastery of Brahmanical legal literature and Epics, in light of which he fashioned his Buddhist *kāvya* (BC ii. xlv–lxii; Hildebeitel 2006; Eltschinger 2018). In fact, as stressed in recent years by Patrick Olivelle (2008: xxvi–li; 2016; 2019), Aśvaghōṣa's presentation of Brahmanical theology and ethics is a form of apologetics intended for an audience which was also intimately familiar with it, most likely Brahmin intellectuals.<sup>72</sup>

Recently it has been convincingly argued by Vincent Eltschinger in a series of articles (2013a; 2013b; 2019; 2020: 138–139, 144–150) that, in light of the strong evidence that his writing draws on canonical sources of a (Mūla-)Sarvāstivādin orientation such as the *Saṅghabhedavastu* or the *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*, Aśvaghōṣa was most likely ordained in this monastic tradition. Therefore, it is striking that other than the *Saṅghabhedavastu* and its immediate line of transmission, *Saundarananda* is the only source I am aware of which addresses, or even justifies, the Śākyas' collective designation as Gautamas. This is done at the outset of this *kāvya* in a lengthy sequence of verses. This poem, however, avoids the tension between progeny and celibacy found in the MSV by using a different strategy.

According to Aśvaghōṣa (SNa vss. i: 1–27), a *ṛṣi* by the name of Kapila Gautama, who was the paragon of Vedic virtue and piety, established an *āśrama* on the slopes of the Himalayas. His hermitage, housing many

<sup>72</sup> To a certain extent, this was already suggested by Johnston (BC ii. xv–xvi, lv–lxii) without referring explicitly to apologetics. See also Eltschinger 2014: 8–12; 2013a: 168–169.

ascetics, was the ideal picture of pre-Buddhist Brahmanical asceticism, including all necessary oblations, sacrifices and *soma* offering, all this despite, as Aśvaghōṣa polemically points out, the fact that “their release from rebirth was open to doubt and their scriptures were contradictory” and that “they seemed by their very passion for austerities to destroy religion” (i.e. *dharma*; tr. by Johnston 1932: 2–3). Then one day, the Śākyas’ ancestors, a group of princes of the Ikṣvāku lineage escaped into the forest and took Kapila Gautama as their preceptor. For that reason, Aśvaghōṣa explains, they adopted the Gautama *gotra* name. To support this aetioloical explanation, he then quotes an epic precedent as he invokes two other *kṣatriya* brothers: Rāma (namely Bālarāma) and Vāsubhadra (namely Kṛṣṇa) who each adopted the *gotra* of their respective preceptor. Kapila, in turn, initiated the Śākyas into the rites of his *gotra*.

The *Saṅghabhedavastu* and the *Saundarananda* are unique in trying to explain the Buddha’s *gotra* name and both do this by constructing stories based in a pre-Buddhist past imagined in light of contemporary “Brahmanical” values with an apologetic/polemical overtone. However, while the *Saṅghabhedavastu* offers a biological-genealogical explanation of the Śākyas’ Gautama name, Aśvaghōṣa opts for a theological-genealogy relying only on the kinship of a guru and his disciple and eliminates any understanding of the Buddha’s name as hereditary. While Aśvaghōṣa elaborated on what were probably widely circulated etymological aetiologies of Kapilavastu as named after the sage Kapila by simply assigning him the Gautama *gotra*,<sup>73</sup> the compilers of the MSV polemically fashioned a royal-seer, a *kṣatriya* establishing his own line by sustaining progeny and keeping his vow of celibacy.<sup>74</sup>

By the adoption of an epic design, Gautama in the MSV is able to avoid *adharmā* and please his ancestors simultaneously. In this respect, this story intended for a monastic audience, is a response to perceived normative Brahmanical claims of superiority, by suggesting a modified social structure placing Brahmanical ideals (the association of sacrifice

<sup>73</sup> See for example: SbhV 29.19–30.11; Mhv i.350.14–352.5; Sv i.259.20–260.11.

<sup>74</sup> Note also the unique authoritative part played by Kapila in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (see above, Section 5).

with temporal prosperity and the debt to one's ancestors) as inferior to Buddhist ideals (going forth and "dharmic" rule), applied to the Śākya as the Buddha's family. Alternatively, the *Saundarananda*, probably intended for a wider audience of a Brahmanical orientation, offers an explanation which does not challenge such normative societal structures.

As suggested, the striking similarity between the epic and the *Saṅghabhedavastu*'s Gautama *ṛṣi*s is unlikely to be coincidental. The ethos of the ancient *ṛṣi*s as progenitors, from the Vedas to the Epics, is embodied most of all in the *gotra* and *pravara* systems, in reference to which each "twice-born" is ideally meant to establish his family lineage. While the "ancient *ṛṣi*s" of the Epics and *Purāṇas* are all said to harness their celibacy into sublime spiritual faculties, their ability to procreate was pertinent to the image of society envisioned by the authors of these genres. Hildebrandt (2011: 286) discusses the fact that, in the Epics, the seven *ṛṣi*s "represent not only the authority of the Veda, but the very human tissue of Brahmanism." By the time the MSV was composed, the *gotras* understood to be stemming from these *ṛṣi*s were a matter of fact in Brahmanical literature.

To the audience of the *Mahābhārata*, the *ṛṣi* Gautama embodies a crucial link in the construction of their dynastic present. In the same way, the designation of the Buddha as belonging to the Gautama *gotra* was, already in the *Mahāvadānasūtra*, a well-established fact (MAvS 40, nn. 1, 2; cf. DN ii.3.22). In this light, it would appear that the architects of the Śākya lineage in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* chose to tap into such traditions by naturalising the Buddha's *gotra* name and recreating a pseudo-Brahmanical myth planted in an Epic-like remote past governed by a pastiche of Brahmanical norms. Similarly, as already suggested by Strong (2011: 173), the integration of Ikṣvāku into the Śākya lineage is probably an attempt to "undermine" another Brahmanical tradition.<sup>75</sup>

One could suggest that the reference to so-called Brahmanical values in our narrative is in fact adherence to common Indian social norms since "Buddhism" and "Brahmanism" were obviously not entirely distinct entities. While this is a valid critique that must always be kept in mind,

<sup>75</sup> Strong refers to the MSV but this tradition of course goes back much further. For details and references see Shiri 2020a: 32–33, n. 4.

this is not the case for this story. Here, we are clearly dealing with seemingly contradictory elements which are at least presented by a Buddhist *Vinaya* as the core of both religious systems: celibacy versus progeny, filial piety versus monasticism, *gotra* versus severing any type of ancestral lineage, since, despite the great emphasis placed in this narrative cycle on the purity and glory of the Śākya lineage, one cannot ignore the Buddha's intermediate remarks concluding the Śākyan royal list:

Gautamas! In Rāhula the lineage of Mahāsaṃmata was fixed. [In him,] the desire for existence is destroyed, birth into *saṃsāra* ruined. Transmigration does not exist now.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>76</sup> *gautamā rāhule mahāsaṃmatavaṃśaḥ pratiṣṭhitaḥ ucchinnā bhavanetrī vikṣiṇo jātisaṃsāro nāstīdāniṃ punarbhavaḥ* (SbhV i.32.5–7); Cohen (2000: 26) translated this as meaning that the lineage “endures” in Rāhula. As further evidence he quotes the *Mahāvadānasūtra* (46.11–12) which states that the sons of buddhas are great *śārīrāntimadhārins*, and Cohen reconstructs: “They are the final preservers of the[ir fathers’] bodies” or “They are heirs who succeed the[ir fathers’] bodies” (2000: 27). However, the word father does not appear in the verse and *śārīrāntimadhārīn* is a known epithet attributed to the Buddha himself referring simply to his “possessing a final physical existence/body” (cf. SWTF s.v. *śārīrāntima-dhārīn*; cf. PTSD s.v. *antima*; Ud vss. 1.2, 21.10). In the *Mahāvadānasūtra*, this title is then attributed to the sons of buddhas who are also said to have ended rebirth and gained this final existence (MAvS 46.11). Therefore, this verse conveys the same sentiment as the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, namely that these sons embody the *end* of their fathers’ corporeal lineages. Although “endure” is indeed a common rendering for this term, I do not think *pratiṣṭhita* is meant here in the sense of continuity, but rather conclusion. And so, *pratiṣṭhā* is here intended as “fixed,” as in “at a standstill,” or without further development, since, as the rest of the statement makes abundantly clear, Rāhula forgoes any wish for further existence. A possibly similar Sanskrit usage can be found in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* when the Buddha chooses Ānanda as his attendant. Mahāmaudgalyāyana sees that the Buddha’s mind had been resolved/“fixed” upon Ānanda as his attendant: *adrākṣīd āyuṣmān mahāmaudgalyāyano bhagavato māna-sam āyuṣmaty ānande pratiṣṭhitam ānando me bhikṣur upasthāsyati* (SbhV ii.61.3–4). At the very least, it is clear beyond doubt that this is how it was understood in its Tibetan translation and transmission. In the Tibetan translation of the Buddha’s statement about Rāhula in the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, the verb used is *rdzogs* (*’Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Ga, 273a1–2), which would mean “to be finished, to be at an end, to terminate” (cf. JTED s.v. *rdzogs pa*, or alternatively in Skt. *parisamāpta*, cf. LC s.v. *rdzogs*). The same statement also concludes the Buddha’s lineage in the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra*, where this is illustrated even more explicitly: “Therefore, the lineage of Mahāsaṃmata reaches Rāhula, and with Rāhula it comes to an end, with Rāhula the ‘tail’ (*mjug*) has been severed. The system of existence (*srid pa’i lugs*) comes to an end. The lineage of birth is exhausted;” *de ltar na mang pos bkur ba’i rgyud ni sgra gcan zin la thug cing / sgra gcan zin du zad de / sgra gcan zin gyis mjug bcad nas srid pa’i lugs chad cing skye ba’i rgyud zad de /* (mNGon pa, Tōh. 4086, Yi, 68b6–7). This attests to the fact that the Tibetan translators understood

The motivation behind this discourse as an instrument for establishing group identity is emphasised by what appears to be a programmed ambiguity, by the text's authors, between the characterisation of the Śākyas and that of the monks. Raniero Gnoli for example, who edited the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, entitled its exposition: "The *bhikṣus* wish to hear the origin of the Śākyas" (SbhV i.5). Even though it is very clear from the story that the Śākyas are the ones who wish to know their own origins, Gnoli's confusion is understandable. It is clearly stated that the Buddha asked Maudgalyāyana to tell the story of origin to the monks,<sup>77</sup> and the learned disciple indeed takes his position in order to relate the teaching in front of the *bhikṣusaṅgha*. As mentioned above, the conclusion stated by the Buddha is also simultaneously addressed to the monks and the Śākyas. How could one explain this ambiguity?

Building on Strong's (2011) insightful view of this Buddha biography and others as a systematic attempt to parody or terminate the Buddha's family line, and of Śākyamuni as an "Ender and Transformer of Lineages," one must however accept that this narrative also exhibits a polyphonic understanding of the Buddha's double lineage. In the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, the long lineage indeed simultaneously ended with Rāhula and lived on with the *bhikṣus* who are entrusted, as his kin, with continuously "holding, keeping and telling" it. However, Strong's view of this transformation may appear slightly idealistic: "In this new family, old lines of genetic succession and inheritance from generation to generation are replaced by new lines of monastic ordination and *paramparā* succession" (2011: 176). It is evident that the MSV compilers often endorsed both types of lineages: monastic as well as genealogical. Not only the Śākyas, but other monks as well, did not seem to discard their family titles so easily.<sup>78</sup> It is indeed tempting to describe

the reference to Rāhula as meaning the one who extinguished, finished, concluded, etc., the lineage of Mahāsaṃmata.

<sup>77</sup> The monks appear for the first time in the gen. case (*bhikṣūṇāṃ*) which would imply that they are the intended audience of the Dharma teaching, even though until that moment only the Śākyas were mentioned. This seemed to also perplex the Tibetan translators who simply omitted this instance of *bhikṣūṇāṃ* ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Ga, 256b–257a1).

<sup>78</sup> As Cohen (2000: 7–10) points out, monks of the Śākya family, often called *Śākya-pravrajita* (Tib. *śākya las rab tu byung ba*), seemed to have formed their own category in the *saṅgha* alongside the four Brahmanical *varṇas* (ŚĀV 1.13–17; tr. in Schopen

this transformation from one lineage to the other so neatly, but the situation reflected to us from Buddhist sources is often more complex.<sup>79</sup> The tension between the ideal of celibacy and the need to glorify one's lineage is to be expected in the context of a monastic code compiled within a society so preoccupied with genealogy.<sup>80</sup>

It is clear that, as part of the discourse's apologetic agenda, there is a conscious intention to glorify the Buddha's ancestral lineage in itself and not a mere parody. In the frame story, the Śākya wish to know their origin in case they are asked and need to explain. The Buddha entrusts Maudgalyāyana with the telling of this Dharma discourse to make sure that allodox ascetics do not accuse him of boasting. Hence, it is clear that

2000: 101). Furthermore, in the *Pravrajyāvastu* the Buddha states that only Śākya and ex-*jaṭilas* do not need a probation period when entering the order: the firsts on the basis of their birth and seconds due to their spiritual attainments ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 1, Ka 72a5–6; 73b4–5). The same is also repeated in the *Kṣudrakavastu* ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 6, Da, 287b2–b3). A similar rule exists also in the Pāli *Vinaya's Mahāvagga* (Vin i.71), yet in a rather abbreviated fashion compared with the MSV. An interesting example of preoccupation with lineage in the *saṅgha* is also embodied by the "infamous" group of six who, in the MSV *Vibhaṅga*, are often said to enquire as to people's lineage, *gotra*, etc. ('*Dul ba*, Tōh. 3, Ca, 206a4–5; Nya, 37b2). The first of these instances, where Udāyin gives *brāhmaṇa* women a tour of the Jetavana is discussed by Clarke (2014: 107–108) who points out that the familial ties are the first to be mentioned by Udāyin, especially when it comes to the Buddha's relatives.

<sup>79</sup> Another example is a fragment of a Sanskrit recension of the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* from Gilgit, containing an appendix to the Śākya lineage missing from the Tibetan. While I have already mentioned (see note 76 above) how the lineage of Mahāsaṃmata in the *Lokaprajñaptiśāstra* ends in Rāhula, in this Sanskrit version the Śākya lineage was continued to associate it with the Mauryan dynasty (Dietz 1989b).

<sup>80</sup> This polyphonic element is enhanced by another motif in this discourse, that of the king who dies sonless. As I have established, the ancestral debt is a powerful motif in the story of the *ṛṣi* Gautama, quoting the fact that one with no sons (*aputra*) has no destination. Therefore, it is interesting to note that there are quite a few kings in the description of this *vaṃśa* who are explicitly said to have died sonless, a detail which is not present in other versions of the Śākya lineage. Particularly interesting is the fact that Gautama's brother, unlike Gautama, died sonless. Of Gautama's two sons, one also dies sonless and only the youngest has a son. Similarly, out of Virūdhaka's sons, only the one – Nūpuraka, has a child and the rest die sonless (SbhV i.31.7–11). This odd motif, clustered only around the Gautama story, leads to the conclusion that there is only one continuous and legitimate lineage directly descendant from Gautama himself. A fact which would remove any doubt that the Śākya (and the Buddha) as well were his descendants. This would also leave only one legitimate line of heirs/transmission preventing any struggles over sovereignty, which is of course a central motif in Brahmanical Epics.



the genealogical lineage is seen here as an effective and important tool in asserting one's identity in light of critique. Considering what I have shown above, it is also clear who is the implied or rather imagined religious adversary hinted at by this generic description: the MSV's "other" in the form of a re-imagination of Brahmanical orthodoxy.

## 7. Conclusions

In this article, I have re-examined the relationship between the Śākyas and their Brahmanical *gotra* name Gautama. While certain Śākyas were on occasion referred to by this *gotra* name, it was most often used in Buddhist literature for the Buddha himself, primarily by allodox religious practitioners. Therefore, the story of the *ṛṣi* Gautama in the MSV, forcefully ascertaining the collective identity of the Śākyas as Gautamas, clearly stands out as unique. As the article shows, this narrative tradition first appeared in the MSV at a relatively late stage of its compilation and did not make its way beyond its line of transmission. Furthermore, this "young" tradition clearly made use of other Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources such as the *Anavataptagāthā*, the *āgamas*, and the epic and purāṇic narrative stock. By analysing the modular components of the story, bearing in mind its historical context, I suggest reading it as an apologetic narrative with a polemical agenda vis-à-vis an imagined critique of allodox practitioners adhering to Brahmanical religious, social and aesthetic-literary values. As such, I suggest understanding the re-imagination in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* of the Gautama *gotra*, an essentially Brahmanical lineage, as one originating in a *rājarṣi*, a king turned into a seer defying the Brahmanical *varṇa* order and *āśrama* system. The story is an important link within a long sequence meant to eulogise, mythologise, and commemorate the Buddha's genealogy. At the same time, the self-proclaimed "Discourse on Dharma regarding the family lineage of the Śākyas," in which the story appears, is meant to reinforce the Buddhist monastic ideal of celibacy in the face of a society which highly values such genealogy. This re-imagined Śākya lineage is unique to the monastic Mūlasarvāstivāda sphere and echoes through its *Abhidharma* literature. Built around two seemingly contradicting axes – the ideal of celibacy and the responsibility for progeny – it sheds new light on the

MSV's dialogue with its cultural and historical environment. The lineage of the Śākyas as introduced in this discourse's frame story and conclusion, defies a clear distinction between the Buddha's two lineages: the monks and the Śākyas, and so transforms this "new" story into a historicized tradition about the *saṅgha* itself.

### Abbreviations

All Pāli references in this article are to the Pali Text Society editions.

- AB Aufrecht, Theodor, ed. 1879. *Das Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. Bonn: Adolph Marcus.
- AN *Aṅguttaranikāya*
- BC Johnston, Edward Hamilton, ed. 1935–1936. *The Buddhacarita: Or, Acts of the Buddha*. 2 vols. Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press.
- BhP Shastri, Hariprasāda Gaṅgāśaṅkara, Bharati Kirtikumar Shelat, and Keśavarāma Kāśīrāma Shastri, eds. 1996. *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Mahāpurāṇa: Critical Edition*. 4 vols. Ahmedabad: B.J. Institute of Learning & Research.
- BHSD Edgerton, Franklin. 1970. *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- BP *Brahmaṇḍapurāṇa*. 1912. Bombay: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press.
- Cp *Cariyāpitaka*
- Dhp-a *Dhammapadāṭṭhakathā*
- Divy Cowell, Edward B. and Robert A. Neil, eds. 1886. *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DN *Dīghanikāya*
- DPPN Malalasekera, Gunapala Piyasena. 1960. *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*. 2 vols. London: Luzac and Co. [Reprint of orig. ed. London: J. Murray, 1937–1938.]
- EIAD Griffiths, Arlo, Vincent Tournier with contributions by Stephan Baums, Emmanuel Francis, and Ingo Strauch. 2017–. *Early Inscriptions of Āndhradeśa*. <http://hisoma.huma-num.fr/exist/apps/EIAD/works/>.
- GM Dutt, Nalinaksha, D. M. Bhattacharya, and Vidyavaridhi Shiv Nath Sharma, eds. 1942–1947. *Gilgit Manuscripts*. Vol. III (parts 1–4). Srinagar: Government of Jammu and Kashmir.
- GP *Garuḍapurāṇa*. 1906. Bombay: Veṅkaṭeśvara Press.
- Ja *Jātaka*
- JTED Jäschke, Heinrich August. 1998. *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.

- KAŚ Kangle, R. P., ed. 1960–1963. *The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra: A Critical Edition with Glossary*. 3 vols. Bombay: University of Bombay.
- LC Chandra, Lokesh. 2009. *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*. Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co. [Reprint of the orig. ed. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1958–1961.]
- Manu Olivelle, Patrick, ed. 2005. *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- MAvS Fukita, Takamichi, ed. 2003. *The Mahāvadānasūtra: A New Edition Based on Manuscripts Discovered in Northern Turkestan*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Mbh Sukthankar, Vishnu S., Belvalkar, Shripad Krishna, and Parashuram Lakshman Vaidya, eds. 1933–1966. *The Mahābhārata*. 19 vols. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.
- Mhv Senart, Émile Charles M., ed. 1882–1897. *Mahāvastu Avadānam: Le Mahāvastu*. Paris: Imprimerie Nationale.
- MN *Majjhimanikāya*
- MPS Waldschmidt, Ernst, ed. 1950–1951. *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra: Text in Sanskrit und Tibetisch, verglichen mit dem Pāli nebst einer Übersetzung der chinesischen Entsprechung im Vinaya der Mūlasarvāstivādins*. 3 vols. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.
- MSV *Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya*
- Mvy Sakaki, Ryōzaburō, ed. 1916–1925. *Mahāvvyūtpatti*. 2 vols. Kyoto: Shingonshū Kyōto Daigaku.
- MW Monier-Williams, Monier. 2008. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged*. Varanasi: Indica Books in collaboration with Parimal Publications. [Revised ed. of orig. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1872.]
- P. Pāli
- PTSD Rhys-Davids, Thomas William, and William Stede, eds. 1998. *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Pali Text Society. [Revised ed. of orig. Chipstead: Pali Text Society, 1921–1925.]
- ŚĀV Gnoli, Raniero, ed. 1978. *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Śayanāsavastu and the Adhikaraṇavastu: Being the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Sections of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*. Roma: Is.M.E.O.
- SbhV Gnoli, Raniero, ed. 1977–1978. *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu: Being the 17<sup>th</sup> and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*. 2 vols. Roma: Is.M.E.O.
- Skt. Sanskrit
- SN *Samyuttanikāya*
- SNa Johnston, Edward Hamilton, ed. 1928. *The Saundarananda of Aśvaghōṣa*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sv *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*

- SWTF Waldschmidt, Ernst, Heinz Bechert, and Klaus Röhrborn. 1973. *Sanskrit-Wörterbuch der buddhistischen Texte aus den Turfan-Funden*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Th *Theragāthā*
- Tōh. Ui, Hakuju, Munetada Suzuki, and Yenshō Kanakura. 1934. *Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons*. Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University.
- Ud *Udāna*
- Ud-a *Udānāṭṭhakathā*
- Vin *Vinayaṭṭhaka*
- vs. verse
- VT Clarke, Shayne. 2014. *Vinaya Texts*. Gilgit Manuscripts in the National Archives of India: Facsimile Edition 1. New Delhi; Tokyo: National Archives of India; The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhism, Soka University.

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