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THE “VREDENBURG MANUSCRIPT” AND ITS BOOK COVERS

Claudine Bautze-Picron

INTRODUCTION

Among “Pāla” manuscripts illustrated in the 11th and 12th century, the “Vredenburg Manuscript”, which is preserved in the Victoria & Albert Museum (inv. I.S. 4-10, 1958) holds a particular position. The brightness of its illuminations, the elegance of their composition and the intricate iconographic programme contribute indeed to create a fascinating vision, beside the fact that the colophon introduces a date, i.e., the regnal year 36 of Rāmapāla (ca. 1116 AD). The surviving folios, seven in all,¹ are those bearing the illuminations of the manuscript: as a matter of fact, the “Vredenburg Manuscript” only consists of these seven folios! The six illustrated folios, bearing respectively the numbers 1 & 2, 89 & 90 and 178 & 179 (inv. I.S. 4-9, 1958) were initially part of a manuscript with boards from where they were separated and acquired by E. Vredenburg. Vredenburg saw the boards of which he gave a detailed description in the first part of his paper published in 1920 in *Rupam*,² neither, however, supplying any further information as to their whereabouts or owner,³ nor providing the name of the previous owner from whom he had acquired his own folios. The fate of these boards has up to now remained unknown as mentioned by Jeremy P. Losty,⁴ and besides, it would appear that they were never published!

Thus was the state of knowledge till I recently read an article by Sentaro Sawamura published in the *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* for the year 1926. The Japanese scholar deals with manuscripts from eastern India known to him and preserved in Cambridge, Boston and Calcutta. He thus lists, as being preserved in Calcutta, the manuscript inv. Ms.A.15 of the Asiatic Society,⁵ the manuscript belonging to E. Vredenburg and “a manuscript of the same kind in the collection of Mr. Tagore” to which he devotes most of his paper and which is illustrated on his accompanying plates 9 & 10 (here: Pls. 1.1-1.4). Although the present whereabouts of the boards and the folios still remain unknown, we cannot exclude the possibility that Sentaro Sawamura had in fact acquired them.⁶ Since his paper passed unknown through the years, I shall quote him here at length:

I have the intention to speak about a palm leaf manuscript that has been recently found and might be compared with those just mentioned. As well as they, it contains the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*. Like some of them it is written in three columns to six lines each. The leaves

are numbered. The three leaves of the beginning are missing, the text begins with the end of the first chapter and stops with chapter 31. The date is not given, but according to its black square-topped Nāgarī character, this manuscript belongs apparently to the eleventh-twelfth century

Of great interest are the two original wooden covers (...). Their size is 49.3 cm. x 6.8 cm. They are somewhat damaged on the outside, but on the inner side they have well executed miniatures in beautiful colours

Follows then the description of the iconography of these two boards, on which we shall return below, but we should take notice of the peculiar presence of a *Krodha*-like figure at the extreme right of the one board, identified by Sawamura as being Mahākāla, by Vredenburg (i.e., probably Foucher) as being “a green Dharmapāla kneeling on one knee, with sword and lasso, probably some form of Acala Vajrapāni or of Mañjuśrī”.⁷ Further, Sawamura observed the absence of three folios at the beginning of the text (but only folios 1 & 2 reached the Vredenburg collection).

Although no doubt should remain at this point that the folios once in the possession of E. Vredenburg belonged to the manuscript seen by Sentaro Sawamura in the collection of “Mr. Tagore”, in fact Abanindranath Tagore, we should notice that the measurements given by Sawamura for the boards cannot tally with those made by Losty for the folios in London⁸: the boards should be slightly larger than the manuscript which they protect, and if the height given by Sawamura for them (6.8 cm) is larger than the height of the London folios (6.2 cm), the width which he gives (49.3 cm) is too small when compared to the size (54 cm) of the illuminated folios, which can only be but approximate since the edges are damaged at various degrees. Also a comparison of a folio with the boards as illustrated on pl. 9 of Sawamura’s paper shows that the folios are smaller than the boards. But when we restore the “49.3 cm.” in “59.3 cm.”, we reach the proportion (8.7) between the size of the London folios and of their reproduction (54 / 6.2; 59.3 / 6.8); it is thus likely that a printing mistake here occurred in Sawamura’s article.

Vredenburg wrote a detailed description of the two boards. His description of the cover with the Buddha’s life scenes, completed with the *Krodha*, tallies fully with the description proposed by Sawamura and the plates accompanying the later’s paper (here reproduced on Pls. 1.1, 1.2). The same observation applies to his description of the second board, which can be compared to the description proposed by the Japanese scholar:

The second cover is divided into five compartments, of which the middle panel is remarkable by its large size and fine execution. Its central part is occupied by the sitting figure of a goddess, probably the goddess of Prajñāpāramitā. On both sides of the goddess, twelve deities (six on each side) are worshipping her. They are sitting in two rows and all in different attitudes.

The two compartments to the right and left of the central one show an eight-armed goddess in each. They are Tārās, one of which might be identified with Mārīcī.

In the two compartments on the extremities of the cover, there are eight figures standing under the *Bodhi* trees. They are ranged symmetrically, four in each of the panels with their faces turned to the central composition, and could be identified with the seven Tathāgatas and Maitreya.⁹

Although he had seen the boards and the manuscript in the collection of A. Tagore, as well as the folios in the possession of E. Vredenburg, Sawamura was not given the information that the material divided between these two collectors initially belonged together. He observed, nonetheless, that,

In many a point our miniatures (i.e., the boards) show a resemblance with those of the manuscript of Mr. Vredenburg. The subject of the miniatures on the covers and the order of their arrangement reminds of that of our manuscript. The colouring and delineation of both have some resemblances. But I would not venture to ascertain that in both cases we have to do with the same artist.¹⁰

ICONOGRAPHY

The first board illustrates the cycle of the eight major events of the Buddha’s life, and thus we recognize, from left to right: the birth, the enlightenment, the great miracle at Śrāvastī, the taming of Nālāgiri, the first sermon at Sārnāth, the descent from the heaven of the 33 gods, the offering of the *madhu* by the monkey at Vaiśālī, and the final decease (Pls. 1.2, 1.4). A ninth panel is added in the extreme right corner depicting a ferocious green-skinned male figure kneeling on one knee, with sword and lasso, perhaps as suggested by E. Vredenburg (a form of *Acala*). As such, the depiction of the Buddha’s life is not very common on boards of manuscripts, being rather more often seen on the folios distributed at the beginning and the end of the manuscript (see appendix 3.1-6); it is, however, depicted on a board of a manuscript dated in the regnal year 15 of Madanapāla kept in the Rietberg Museum (appendix 2.3), and it is also distributed on the two boards of the Paris-Guimet manuscript (ref. under appendix 3.8)¹¹; the presence of the biography on the boards implies also that it is not depicted on the folios of the manuscript. A particular feature of the Buddha image here is that he wears either a plain dress or the rag-robe made of rejected pieces of cloth, a type of dress which is very rarely encountered; beside our board, it occurs in the Mumbai manuscript (appendix 3.6) and on the last folio of the New York manuscript (appendix 3.2).¹²

The second board presents the seven Buddhas of the past and Maitreya, forming two symmetric groups, of four characters each, at both extremities. Each of them stands in the shadow of his tree and is turned towards the central part of the board (Pls. 1.1, 1.3). In the central panel, we recognize the Prajñāpāramitā seated and teaching – two white lotuses painted at the level of her shoulders, and being surrounded by eight Bodhisattvas and four monks. Whereas the Bodhisattvas form the group of the *Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas*, a proper identification of the monks is at the moment impossible. Similar groups appear on either side of the goddess on the book cover preserved in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where three distinct groups are painted: eight monks, eight gods, eight Bodhisattvas.¹³ There also, the Buddhas of the past and Maitreya are painted; their presence reminds of a passage in the *Aṣṭhasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, where Sadāprarudita hears that “the Tathāgatas of the past, when they were Bodhisattvas, have also searched for perfect wisdom in the same spirit in which you just now search for it.”¹⁴ Besides, the Prajñāpāramitā, being described as “the mother of all the Buddhas”, is mother of all Buddhas of the past, present and future.¹⁵ Monks, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas might thus represent those Buddhas of the future, present and past respectively, and be simultaneously representative of the three spiritual states that are the *nirmāṇa*, *sambhoga* and *dharmakāyas*. On two further boards (appendix 2.1-2, Pl. 1.8), we also recognize the group of the Buddhas of the past accompanied by Maitreya listening to the Prajñāpāramitā.

Two depictions of a female eight-armed and yellow goddess flank the central scene, one of them being identified with Mārīcī by Sawamura and Vredenburg (Foucher). The considered deity sits at our right, and holds a branch of *aśoka* in the upper left hand; among her other attributes, we notice also the bow and arrow. The second goddess holds the same weapons, and probably the sword in the upper right hand. The quality of the reproduction unfortunately does neither permit to give a more detailed description nor propose an identification for the second deity. Both are very similar and we cannot exclude that both illuminations represent the same goddess in various guises.¹⁶ Moreover, Mārīcī being closely related to the enlightenment of the Buddha, would form the complementary image of the Prajñāpāramitā: both would be the female reflects of the two fundamental aspects of Śākyamuni, i.e., the enlightened one at Bodhgaya and the preacher at Sārnāth. These two aspects are enhanced on the first two folios of most manuscripts including the depiction of the Buddha’s life: Amitābha, Buddha of the Infinite Light, is seen between the scenes of the birth and enlightenment, two further moments synonymous of light (and of course the image of Mārīcī is the representation par excellentia of the light which fills the

universe at the moment of the *Bodhi*),¹⁷ whereas the Prajñāpāramitā, teaching, is flanked by the depiction of the first sermon at Sārnāth and of the great miracle at Śrāvastī, two scenes which show the Buddha expounding the *Dharma* (see here appendix 3.3, 5 and 6).

In the light of observations made previously in relation to the inner iconographic composition of other manuscripts and boards, we feel confident that the cover bearing the representation of the Prajñāpāramitā used to protect the beginning of the text: the goddess belongs to the *kula* of Akṣobhya, Tathāgata of the East, the direction of space where the sun rises and which symbolizes the beginning – as opposite to the West where the sun sets and which marks the end of the path which is followed while reading the text¹⁸; she resides in the East, and in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, we read that

Sadāprarudita ... found himself in the seclusion of a remote forest, and a voice up in the air said to him: Go East, son of good family! There you shall hear the perfection of wisdom! ... After receiving this admonition from the voice, the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita journeyed East ... do you go East!¹⁹

The goddess is usually depicted in one of the opening folios of the manuscript forming a pair with Amitābha (Pl. 1.6),²⁰ and in this case, she was introduced on the opening board (Pls. 1.1, 1.3), abandoning her traditional position on the second folio to Avalokiteśvara. Those manuscripts were written and illustrated at a period where the system of the five Buddhas distributed in the four spatial directions and the centre was firmly established since centuries. In this system, Amitābha occupies the western quarter where he sits, displaying the gesture of meditation or *dhyānamudrā* whereas the eastern quarter is occupied by Akṣobhya showing the gesture of touching the earth or *bhūmiṣpaṃsamudrā*. Both of them flank thus Vairocana, Tathāgata of the centre.²¹ The five Tathāgatas appear on two of the boards listed below (appendix 2.2 & 4) (Pl. 1.7), where in one case (2.4), Amitābha is located at the centre of the composition, most probably as an image of symmetry to the future Buddha seated the same way and meditating in the central field of the second cover.

But how to explain that Amitābha alone is introduced on one of the illuminated folios of some manuscripts, usually on one of the initial two folios (Pl. 1.5), forming a couple with the Prajñāpāramitā who is depicted, teaching on the other folio? Is it possible to relate this presence to the function of teaching? The teaching Buddha of a number of Gandhara images has been identified with Amitābha, flanked by two Bodhisattvas, in an iconographic composition which is similar to the one observed from the seventh century in China and Japan (and not before), without however that the Gandharan Buddha might definitely be identified with Amitābha.²² Would we have here a remembrance of this early situation, if the Gandharan Buddha is Amitābha?

Considering the particular depiction of the Tathāgata either on boards or on folios from eastern India, a feature is evident in some examples: whereas the monastic dress of the other four Buddhas is plain and red, Amitābha's robe is usually folded and of a golden colour, as seen on the first folio of the Victoria & Albert Museum (Pl. 1.5), the Detroit (appendix 3.3), the Mumbai (appendix 3.6),²³ the British Library (appendix 3.7),²⁴ and the Musée Guimet manuscripts (appendix 3.8),²⁵ or on a board (appendix 2.2, see here Pl. 1.7) – in which case, moreover, the robe of the other four Tathāgatas is red in contrast to the golden-coloured dress of Amitābha.²⁶ This enhancement of Amitābha's image within the group might be related to the location of the Tathāgata in the West, there where, when seen from Magadha, lied Gandhara. In short, the presence of folds in the dress, so evident in the art of Gandhara, would either stress the relation of Amitābha with what was once the fundamental region in the history of Buddhism in the North of the Peninsula, or Gandhara was understood to be the region of Amitābha's paradise.²⁷

However, the sole presence of the Tathāgata in the iconographic programme is most probably implied by his relation, in the context of late Indian Buddhism, to the red *vākcakra*, i.e., circle of the speech, whereas the two further white and blue circles of *kāya* and *citta* relate to Vairocana

and Akṣobhya, and are drawn around Vajravārāhī for instance.²⁸ The same triadic structure sustains the body of the yogin where Amitābha is positioned at the throat, place of the speech, and thus at the highest position whereas Akṣobhya is located at the heart, and Vairocana at the navel.²⁹ It is thus possible that the quasi-permanent presence of Amitābha on the initial folio of a large number of manuscripts, where it is often paired with the Prajñāpāramitā on the second folio, implies that the Tathāgata owns the function of holding a discourse upon the Perfection of Wisdom; moreover, a rare six-armed literary form presents him holding the manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in the second right hand.³⁰

The issue of the simultaneous presence of Amitābha and Prajñāpāramitā cannot be fully tackled here, but both clearly form a pair, if not a couple, marking the beginning of the text, a position which could imply that they are perhaps authoring it (Pls. 1.3, 1.5), or framing it (appendix 2.2, Pls. 1.7-1.8). This presence could also mean that it is through deep meditation that the realisation of the Prajñāpāramitā is made. Both are also synonymous of light, Amitābha is the Buddha of the Infinite Light and the Prajñāpāramitā "gives light ... (she) is the remover of the darkness of ignorance and delusion".³¹ At a first level, their simultaneous presence brings into evidence a system of opposition of female/male, or teaching/meditating, and thus of activity/passivity. Moreover, at the level of visual iconography, the two *mudrās* of teaching and meditation occurred simultaneously within intricate compositions at an earlier period in Gandhara, where evidently the gesture of meditating was perceived as of being of a higher ontological level, being displayed by Buddha images in the upper part of steles where the central Buddha was depicted as teacher.³² Another situation of encountering simultaneously the two gestures is noticed in the iconography of Vairocana who displays the gesture of meditation in the *Mahākaruṇāgarbhamaṇḍala* and the gesture of teaching in the *Vajradhātumaṇḍala*.³³

That Amitābha and Prajñāpāramitā actually form a couple is sustained when considering the iconographic programme of some manuscripts where two other couples are present, Sambara and Vajravārāhī, Heruka and Nairātmyā who are variously distributed (appendix 3.6-8).³⁴ Indeed, one couple can be seen on one single folio (appendix 3.7), the two male deities Sambara and Heruka are distributed on the reverse of a folio which is followed by the folio on the obverse of which their Prajñās are painted (appendix 3.6), or only one deity is painted on the reverse and obverse of two folios following each other, which has for result that a female and a male face each other as is the case for the three couples, thus including Amitābha and Prajñāpāramitā, in the Paris manuscript (appendix 3.8).

But is it indeed Amitābha who is here depicted? Is it not possible that the criteria which help to recognize this Jina were only used for indicating that it is "the" Buddha, whoever he is and at the level of the Dharmakāya, thus beyond history, who is here depicted? In the strict iconographic system of the period, only one event of the canonical set of eight major ones, shows the Buddha meditating and receiving the offering of *madhu* from the monkey at Vaiśāli, an iconography which is eventually enlarged by the presence of the begging bowl on his lap: this iconic rendering of the scene is encountered as such in sculpture whereas in painting, the event is depicted in a narrative manner. Another even more rare depiction of the meditating Buddha shows him below Mucilinda. Thus, on the whole, and at that late period of Indian Buddhism, images of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni while meditating remain practically unknown. Whereas symbols referring to moments of his life where he actually taught can be accumulated within one single image, which results in an unhistorical depiction, or in an abstract image of the Buddha as Teacher,³⁵ could it be possible that it is the image of a Tathāgata which would have been here retained in order to illustrate the Buddha at the level of the Dharmakāya? No other Tathāgata is illustrated, and, besides, Amitābha would not occupy here his own quarter, the West, symbolically located at the end of the text, but the eastern quarter which coincides with the beginning of the text. In the absence of further evidence, this remains for the moment a hypothesis, but even if proved true, it does not allow to reject the other interpretations suggested above.

The presence of the Prajñāpāramitā and Amitābha on the board and on the first folio of the text respectively shows that the iconography illustrated on the board and the text constitutes here a fully comprehensive programme. Although it is often underlined that the text had no bearing on the illuminations distributed on some of the folios, it is only true inasmuch as one looks for passages of this (philosophical) text which is the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* which would be illustrated, and this is utmost rare: to my knowledge, only one manuscript includes a set of six illuminations illustrating the quest of Sadāprarudita, which is also the only narrative material available in this text (Pls. 1.9-1.11).³⁶

As a matter of fact, the justification for the illustrations is found within the text itself: as we observed in an earlier publication, the reading of the text developed from the beginning at the East through the Zenith and found its end in the West.³⁷ But the text unfolds itself also within the frame of the historical Buddha's life which is made present through eight particular events. Looking even summarily at the distribution of these scenes within the manuscripts (see below appendix 3), we notice that they are usually seen in the external spaces on the introductory and concluding folios. At this level, the structure reminds of the one encountered in the elaboration of three-dimensional images (and of cloth-paintings and murals, taking into consideration early Tibetan and Burmese testimonies from the 11th to the 13th century): what is at the lowest level of the image or the most away possible from the central image, is what is closer to our own material reality; it is smaller than the central image; it can narrate an event whereas the central image remains static. The point is not here to discuss the presence or absence of the Dharmakāya in the central image, but rather to underline that artists knew how to indicate an ontological or hierarchical difference. Considering the distribution of the eight events on the folios of a manuscript, we notice that the presence of movement which their illustration implies occurs doubly: at the left and right edges of the folios, and at the beginning and end of the text, i.e., far away from the centre of the folios (occupied usually by Bodhisattvas, seen frontally) and far away from the centre of the text which they frame.³⁸ Another iconographic programme, illustrated for instance on the Vredenburg folios, is the creation of *maṇḍalas*, distributing on a set of successive folios the various Bodhisattvas who are supposed to be distributed around a central image.³⁹ When considering for instance the first two folios, we notice the presence of Amitābha in the central field of the first folio and of two Bodhisattvas in the side illuminations and three on the second folio: in this case, these five Bodhisattvas might be understood as subsidiary to the Tathāgata. Similarly, the eight great Bodhisattvas are distributed in the side fields of the two folios at the beginning and of the two at the centre of the text, showing first that the illumination of a particular manuscript should be considered in its totality in order to get a more proper understanding of its programme, second that the complete text is unfolding itself between these illuminated folios which constitute the basic limits of a *maṇḍala*. Another similar structure was noticed on the Mumbai manuscript.⁴⁰ The illuminations, whatever they are, frame the text. They hold an intermediary function between the philosophical and hence not accessible to representation contents of the text, and the human in quest of the Prajñāpāramitā.⁴¹

It is within this context also, that we may understand the depiction of the life on one full board in the case of the Vredenburg manuscript, with the first sermon at Sārnāth occupying the central field and thus being symmetric to the Prajñāpāramitā. Simultaneously, just like the goddess formed a couple with Amitābha, we must admit that the Buddha teaching at Sārnāth forms a pair with Vasudharā who sits at the centre of the last folio (Pls. 1.4, 1.6). Like the goddess distributes (material) richness, the Buddha makes the (spiritual) gift of the *Dharma*.⁴²

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this short paper was essentially to reintroduce in the field of knowledge the two boards which belong to the manuscript from which the folios of the Vredenburg manuscript were extracted. All aspects of a proper study could not be considered here, due to the fact, for instance,

that the boards were published in black and white, or that iconographic details could not be properly observed on the published photos. Let us hope, however, that this short notice might help to trace the present place of preservation of the two boards and the remaining folios.

APPENDIX 1. ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAMME OF THE VREDENBURG FOLIOS

The programme of the folios is here reproduced after J.P. Losty's paper:

1. Samantabhadra / *Amitābha* / Mañjuśrī (folio 1, reverse)
2. Maitreya / *Avalokiteśvara teaching* / Avalokiteśvara (folio 2, obverse)
3. Vajrapāṇi / Vajrasattva / Kṣitigarbha (folio 89, reverse)
4. Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkambhin / Mārīcī / Akāśagarbha (folio 90, obverse)
5. Tārā / Avalokiteśvara / Ucchuṣmajambhala (folio 178, reverse)
6. Mārīcī / Vasudharā / Parṇaśabarī (folio 179, obverse)

Ref.: Vredenburg 1920; Losty 1990 (detailed study of the iconography).

Further, the manuscript or isolated folios or illuminations are reproduced or mentioned in Archer 1960, pl. 1-2; Saraswati 1977, ills. 155 & 202; Saraswati 1978, no. 12, p. 45; *The Arts of Bengal* 1979, cat. 45; Saraswati 1981, no. 10, p. 245; Losty 1982, cat. 6, p. 32 & col. pl. I; Zwalf 1985, cat. 157, p. 116 & pl. 9; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 19 & pl. 9; Guy 1982, p. 20; Lévêque/Ménart 1967, p. 61; Bussagli 1969, figs. 1-2.

APPENDIX 2. ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAMME OF SOME SETS OF BOOK COVERS

Only the broad lines of the iconographic programme are given here; the programme is read from left to right (for the viewer). The central scene is indicated through italic characters.

1. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, manuscript dated in the regnal year 4 of Gopāla, inv. 20.589

1. Mañjuśrī teaching to monks (?), gods and Bodhisattvas / standing Tārā / *enlightenment of the Buddha* / Māyā giving birth / the Tārā teaching to monks (?), gods and Bodhisattvas.
2. Samantabhadra on his elephant surrounded by Bodhisattvas / four standing Buddhas / *the Prajñāpāramitā teaching* to monks, gods and Bodhisattvas / three standing Buddhas and Maitreya / Mañjuśrī on his lion surrounded by Bodhisattvas.

Ref.: Coomaraswamy 1923, pl. XXXII; Sawamura 1926, pl. 11; Saraswati 1971, no. 15, p. 245; Anand 1973, p. 57; Saraswati 1978, no. 17, pp. 46-48; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, fig. 22; Bautze-Picron 2000, figs. 11-14; Bautze-Picron forthcoming-a, figs. 23-28.

2. Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, dated in the regnal year 4 of "Gomindrapāla", i.e., probably Govindapāla (& appendix 3.4)

1. Bejewelled seated Buddha (*dharmacakramudrā*), three further Buddhas with various gestures / *the Prajñāpāramitā teaching*, with two female attendants / three Buddhas with various gestures, the last of the row (right side) displaying the *bbūmiṣparśamudrā* / Maitreya.
2. Vairocana / Ratnasambhava / Akṣobhya / Amitābha / *Amoghasiddhi* / Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkambhin (gold, sword) / Kṣitigarbha (blue, "blue jewel" on lotus) / Akāśagarbha (red, "gold jewel") / Samantabhadra (white, sword). Whereas the identification of the first and fourth Bodhisattvas is evident, the identification of the two central ones can be done by reference to known sets of the Aṣṭamahābodhisattvas, a comparison which excludes any other proposal for these two Bodhisattvas. Further, their respective colours help to locate them in space, and their particular distribution tallies with the one mentioned in the *maṇḍala* of the *Aṣṭamahābodhisattvamaṇḍalakaśūtra*.⁴³ The major four Bodhisattvas are depicted on the folios of the manuscript (see appendix 3.4).

Ref.: Saraswati 1971, pl. 23. See below (3.4) for further references to the folios.

3. Zürich, Rietberg Museum, dated in the regnal year 13 of Madanapāla (ca. 1155)

1. Final decease / great miracle / birth / enlightenment (*bejewelled Buddha*) / descent from the heaven of the 33 gods / taming of the wild elephant / offering of the *madhu*.
2. Buddha / Buddha / jewelled Buddha (*dbarmacakramudrā*) / green-skinned monk / *bejewelled Buddha* (*dbarmacakramudrā*; first sermon) / enlightenment / first sermon / jewelled Buddha (*dbarmacakramudrā*) / Buddha / Buddha.

Ref.: *Asiatische Malerei* 1994, pp. 12-13.

4. Paris, Collège de France

1. Candraprabhāvadāna / Manicūdāvadāna / idem / Jimūtavānajātaka / *Bodhisattva meditating and being aggressed* / Vyāghrījātaka / Vessantara / Maitribala / Sibi.
2. Locanā / Pandarā / Vairocana / Ratnasambhava / *Amitābha* / Akṣobhya / Amoghasiddhi / Māmākī / Tārā.

Ref.: Filliozat n.d., p. 255; Bautze-Picron forthcoming-b.

APPENDIX 3. ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAMME OF SOME MANUSCRIPTS

We will not present in detail the iconography of these manuscripts; just mentioning similarities which they bear with the Vredenburg manuscript. The only manuscripts to have been retained here are those where the illuminations are distributed on the model of the Vredenburg manuscript, i.e., paintings on the initial, central and final folios, and where similarities in the iconographic programme have been noticed. Basic publications actually dealing with the manuscripts are mentioned, but the bibliographical references are not aimed at being exhaustive, in particular concerning the secondary sources which include at a random illustrations of the manuscripts considered here.

1. Bodleian Library, Oxford, inv. MS Sansk.a. 7(R), dated in the regnal year 15 of Rāmapāla (ca. 1095)

1. Birth / *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* / enlightenment (folio 1)
2. First sermon / *Mañjuśrī teaching* / great miracle (folio 2)
3. Maitreya / Vajrasattva / Vajrapāṇi (folio 92)
4. Candraprabha / Buddha seated in *pralambāsana*, teaching to a Bodhisattva (Maitreya ?)⁴⁴ / Jālinīprabha (folio 93)
5. Taming of the wild elephant / Green-skinned monk flanked by two further monks⁴⁵ / descent from the heaven of the 33 gods (folio 187)
6. Offering of the *madhu* / Buddha teaching⁴⁶ / final decease (folio 188).

The eight main events of the Buddha's life are distributed in the outer vignettes of the two opening and two closing folios of the text – as it is usually the case in the other manuscripts listed here.

Ref.: Stooke 1948; Conze 1948 (reprinted with modifications in Conze 1975); Mallmann 1965. Moreover, Rawson 1961, pp. 81 & 85; Saraswati 1977, pl. 201; Saraswati 1978, no. 10, p. 43; Losty 1982, cat. 5, pp. 31-32 & col. pl. IV; Zwalf 1985, cat. 156 (on p. 106); Losty 1990, p. 197, fig. 12.

2. New York, Asia Society, inv. 1987.1, dated between Vigrabapāla's and Gopāla's reigns

1. Birth / *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* / enlightenment
2. First sermon / *Mañjuśrī* / great miracle
3. Descent from the heaven of the 33 gods / Avalokiteśvara / taming of the wild elephant
4. Offering of the *madhu* / Tārā / final decease

Ref.: Huntington/Huntington 1990, cat. 58, pp. 185-9; Bautze-Picron 1999, pp. 182-83; Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 118, "Manuscript 8".

3. *Detroit Institute of Art, dated 1157-58, inv. 27.586*

1. Birth / *Amitābha* / enlightenment
2. First sermon / *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* / great miracle
3. Descent from the heaven of the 33 gods
4. Taming of the wild elephant
5. Female deity (white lotus) / offering of the *madhu* / ? (Vajrapāṇi ?)
6. Avalokiteśvara / final decease / Tārā

Ref.: Lee 1942; Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, pl. 13.

4. *Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, dated in the regnal year 4 of Gomindrapāla, i.e., probably Govindapāla (& appendix 2.2)*

1. Birth / enlightenment / first sermon
2. Offering of the *madhu* / great miracle / taming of the wild elephant
3. Descent from the heaven of the 33 gods / final decease / Avalokiteśvara
4. Maitreya / Mañjuśrī / Vajrapāṇi

The set of the four major Bodhisattvas depicted here is completed by the set of the "minor" painted on one of the boards (appendix 2.2).

Ref.: Krishna 1977, pp. 443-44 and fig. 3; Saraswati 1971, no. 20, p. 246 & pls. 22 (correct the identification), 24 and at the end of the volume (publicity pages); Saraswati 1977, manuscript VI, col. pls. 207-212, 214, 267; Saraswati 1978, no. 14, p. 45, Moreover, Woodward 1981, pl. A on p. 23; Huntington 1986a, fig. 3; Huntington 1986b, figs. 5 & 12. See above (2.2) for further references to the boards.

5. *National Museum, New Delhi*

Although only three of the painted folios have been preserved, we can reconstruct the following sequence:

1. Birth / *Amitābha* / enlightenment
2. First sermon / *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* / great miracle
3. Taming of the wild elephant / offering of the *madhu* / descent from the heaven of the 33 gods.

The first two folios open probably the text; the third one is likely to be one of the concluding ones.

Ref.: Banerjee 1974; Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 118, "Manuscript 6".

6. *Mumbai, Asiatic Society, inv. 210*

1. Enlightenment (bejewelled Buddha) / *Amitābha* / birth (folio 1, reverse)
2. Great miracle / *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* / first sermon (folio 2, obverse)
3. Sambara / Piṅḍikrama Akṣobhya / Heruka (folio 106, reverse)
4. Vajravārāhī / Sparśavajrā / Nairātmyā (folio 107, obverse)
5. Taming of the wild elephant / Avalokiteśvara / descent from the heaven of the 33 gods (folio 221, reverse)
6. Offering of the *madhu* / Mārīcī / final decease (folio 222, reverse).

Ref.: Gorakshkar/Desai 1987; Newman 1990 (for the proper identification of the deities on the central folios, and a detailed study of their iconography). For the date, see Bautze-Picron 2000, pp. 117-18.

7. *London, The British Library, inv. Or.14282*

1. Vajrapāṇi / *Amitābha* / Mañjuśrī (folio 1, reverse)
2. Avalokiteśvara / *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* / Avalokiteśvara (folio 2, obverse)
3. Mahāśrī-Tārā / Vajra-Tārā / Varada-Tārā (folio 109, reverse)
4. Mahākāla / Tārā / Mahākāla (folio 110, obverse)
5. Vajravarāhī-Nāḍiḍākinī / Ekajaṭā / Ūrddhvapadī Vajravarāhī (folio 228 reverse)
6. Nairātmya / Vajravālānārka / Heruka (folio 229 obverse)

Ref.: Losty 1989, pp. 89-96 & figs 1-9; Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 118, “Manuscript 4”.

8. *Paris, Musée Guimet, inv. MA 5161*

1. *Amitābha* (folio 1 reverse)
2. *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* (folio 2 obverse)
3. Hevajra (folio 210 reverse)
4. Nairātmyā (folio 211 obverse)
5. Sambara (folio 272 reverse)
6. Vajrayoginī (folio 273 obverse)

Ref.: Béguin 1990, cat. 1; Heller 1999, pl. 38; Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 118, “Manuscript 3” (concerning the date).

9. *Rajshahi, Varendra Research Museum, inv. 851*

1. *Amitābha* (folio 1 reverse)
2. *Prajñāpāramitā teaching* (folio 2 obverse). Only these two folios are here relevant (in all, 49 folios bear, each of them, one illumination, and the twelve missing folios were most probably also illustrated; as it is clear from their numbering, they complemented the still present folios – two painted folios always face each other, forming a pair with a male and a female images, the female image being represented upside down, with, for consequence, that both figures are in fact embracing each other when the manuscript is closed; see Siddhanta 1979, pp. 385-86).

Ref.: Siddhanta 1979, pp. 385-400; Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 118, “Manuscript 5”.

NOTES

1. Losty 1990, p. 190: the seventh folio ‘is an isolated leaf from chapter five’ (of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikaprañāpāramitā*), bearing non illustration and which, per chance, was sold by the initial owner to Vredenburg. For further references to the Vredenburg folios, see Bautze-Picron 1999, p. 194, ‘9’, 2000, p. 118, ‘manuscript 7’, and below appendix 1. All illustrations accompanying the present article are copyright Joachim K. Bautze; figs. 1-4 are after Sawamura 1926, pls 9-10.
2. Vredenburg 1920, pp. 9-10. See p. 9 for the passage reproduced by Losty 1990, p. 190. Vredenburg acknowledged the help of Alfred Foucher who provided him with a proper iconographic identification of the scenes.
3. He also does not mention in the text of his paper that the illuminated folios are in his possession; the information appears on the leaves with the legends to the colour plate (‘Collection E. Vredenburg, Esq., Calcutta’).
4. Losty 1990, p. 189.
5. For which manuscript, see more particularly Foucher 1900.
6. Sawamura 1926, p. 120. Coomaraswamy 1927, p. 165 mentions that a manuscript is in the possession of Sentaro Sawamura. Could it be that the Japanese scholar had bought the book covers and the text from A. Tagore? The fact is that Sentaro Sawamura, while writing about the boards and manuscript, describes them as being ‘our’ boards. The same is assumed by N.R. Ray in the chapter on painting which he wrote for the ‘History of Bengal’ (p. 549).

7. Sawamura 1926, p.122; Vredenburg 1920, p. 9. This reminds of the distribution of four *Krodhas* on the first two folios of the Boston manuscript: the central image of the first folio shows the Buddha at the moment of his enlightenment (without the actors of the event, but being attended by two Bodhisattvas) whereas the central image on the second folio is Mañjuśrī (three-faced: central face white, right face dark blue, left face rubbed out but perhaps white; six-armed: bow and arrow, *utpala* and sword in right and left upper hands, the third pair in front of the breast with probably the *vajra* and the bell, see Mallmann 1986, p. 254). Further images on the first folio, left vignette: Hevajra trampling on the four Māras (idem, pp. 184-5), right vignette: Bhūṭaḍāmara killing Aparājita (idem, pp. 102 & 122-23). Second folio, left vignette: Yamāntaka on the buffalo, right vignette: Sambara trampling on Bhairava and Kālarātrī (idem, pp. 188-89).
8. Sawamura 1926, p. 121 (6.8 x 49.3 cm.); Losty 1990, p. 190 (6.2 x 54 cm.).
9. Idem.
10. Sawamura 1926, p. 123.
11. The first cover shows: the offering of *madhu* / the enlightenment / the birth / the first sermon; the second one: the taming of the wild elephant / the great miracle / the descent from the heaven of the 33 gods / the final decease (Béguin 1990, cat. 1). For further examples, of various periods and different geographic origins, see Pal/Meech-Pekarik 1988, figs. 7-9, 24, 28, pl. 14.
12. Further comments, with bibliographical references, are made to this type of patched dress by Gorakshkar/Desai 1987, p. 365 (and notes 10-12).
13. Sawamura 1926, pl. 11; for further references to the Boston book covers, see Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 112 and note 76, and pls. 11-12; Bautze-Picron (forthcoming-a), figs 23-28 and passim.
14. *Aṣṭasābasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, trans. Conze, pp. 203.
15. As formulated by Conze (1975, p. 120; see also 1948, p. 10): '... this conception (of the Buddhas of the past, present and future) ... reminds the reader of the truly grandiose idea that this transcendental wisdom was taught by the Buddhas of the present period, and will be taught forever and ever by the Buddhas to come. What is true must be true always and everywhere.' See, for further references, Bautze-Picron (forthcoming-a) note 86.
16. Mārīcī can also be coupled with Parīśābarī (Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 114 and pls. 7 & 9 illustrating a pair on a book cover; Bautze-Picron 2001, pp. 275-76, 279-80 & figs. 23-24, 25-26, 27-28 illustrating three such pairs painted in manuscripts, figs. 23-24 showing the pair in the Vredenburg manuscript, folio 179 – description in Losty 1990, pp. 194-95), but she can also appear twice in the same image (Bautze-Picron 2001, figs 9-10 and pp. 270-72). In all those various examples, the goddess is seen standing; less known is her aspect in a seated position (*ibid.*, fig. 21 and pp. 272-75).
17. Concerning the goddess and her relation to the enlightenment, see Bautze-Picron 2001, concerning the light at the moment of the enlightenment, see Bautze-Picron (forthcoming-a).
18. Bautze-Picron 1999, p. 186.
19. *Aṣṭasābasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, trans. Conze, pp. 201-203.
20. Losty 1982, p. 32 who observes about the Vredenburg folios that this series 'unlike all the other similar cycles ... lacks an image of Prajñāpāramitā herself, and also any of the scenes of the life of the Buddha ...'; see also Losty 1990, pp. 195-96. Besides the examples listed in the appendix, see Bautze-Picron 1999, p. 187 (Harivarman period, Varendra Research Museum, Rajshahi).
21. Bautze-Picron 1999, pp. 186-87: the pattern is at the best evident in this manuscript of Harivarman's period. The three Tathāgatas are integral part of the three-fold cosmological *maṇḍala* which the *yogin* visualizes in his body, see below note 29.
22. Rhi 1991, p. 124.
23. Gorakshkar/Desai 1987, p. 365, write that the dress 'with its very close parallel lines is quite unusual and different from what we see at Nalanda or anywhere else in Bihar' (See their pl. Iib).
24. Losty 1989, p. 87, fig. 2 (with apparently the robe golden- or yellow-coloured). The Jina in the National Museum manuscript (appendix 3.5) wears also a yellow robe (Banerjee 1974, pl. XI, fig.2 & p. 34), but it is impossible to recognize whether the folds were indicated or not.
25. Béguin 1990, p. 18 for a reproduction of the Buddha. He wears the same folded robe in the manuscript preserved at the Rietberg Museum, Zurich (where the five Buddhas of the direction are distributed on different folios).

26. A most unusual example is observed on a board preserved at the British Library, where a set of six scenes illustrates the life of the Buddha. The central panel shows the enlightenment which is flanked by two depictions of the Buddha meditating, but while the scene at the proper right can be identified with the Buddha being protected by Mucilinda, the image at the proper left, which is also smaller, shows 'a' meditating Buddha backed by a large golden-coloured aura. Moreover, large concentric folds are drawn on his dress whereas all other Buddha images wear a plain robe. Here again, I would suggest to recognize Amitābha, whose infinite light would be here indicated through the presence of the large golden aura (Zwalf 1985, cat. 49).
27. One should not be surprised at that place: the history of Buddhist art in India shows more of these memories of places, the murals on the pillars of cave 10 at Ajanta for instance alternate standing Buddhas shown in the Sarnath stylistic idiom (smooth lines, plain and diaphanous dress) and Buddhas represented in the northern (Gandharan) fashion (heavy forms, folded and thick robe); another example is shown by a double-faced preserved in the Mahasthangarh site museum, North Bangladesh, on which both ways of illustrating the dress, with or without folds, are depicted.
28. Bautze-Picron 1999, pp. 186-87, with further references; Mallmann 1964, pp. 38-40 & 1986, p. 94.
29. And similarly, these Jinas occupy the Zenith, the Centre and the Nadir respectively; see Snellgrove 1959, pp. 28-29, p. 38, notes 1-2; Mallmann 1964, p. 39. One should notice that this location is also related to delusion or attachment, *rāga*, one of the three root evils, which is not without evoking the Indian tradition of the *rāgas* as melodies. Mallmann 1986, p. 94, note 3 already observed that the Jina is always positioned at the throat by the *yogin* while meditating, 'an organ of the word (mouth, throat, tongue)'.
30. Forming a pair with the *vajra*; the upper hands hold, each, a *padma*, the lower right and left hands the rosary and the water vase. In this image also, the Tathāgata has three faces (*Hōbōgirin* 1981, p. 29).
31. Kinnard 1999, p. 127; see also Bautze-Picron forthcoming-a, passim and note 87, the Prajñāpāramitā can be flanked by images of the birth and enlightenment of the Buddha, two further images of light.
32. Most of them are reproduced by Rhi 1991, pls 3, 38, 40, 42, 43, 45, 48, 54, 55.
33. Tajima 1959, p. 64 (Vairocana in *samādhi* in the first *maṇḍala*) and p. 173 (showing the *jñānamuṣṭimudrā* in the second one).
34. For a detailed analysis of this iconography, consult Newman 1990.
35. Images of the teaching Buddha, even when following strict iconographic rules, cannot exclusively be understood to depict a specific event of the Buddha's life, as formulated by Kinnard (1999, p. 101), 'to see such an image very much involves seeing wisdom' (or *prajñā*).
36. This is the manuscript preserved in The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston [further references in Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 113, note 76; Bautze-Picron (forthcoming-a) note 75]. The story is narrated on the two central folios, unfortunately much rubbed, in particularly the second folio, and is translated (for the scenes illustrated) by Conze 1970, pp. 200-215; the identification of the scenes is here given from left to right. First folio: 1) Sadāprarudita cuts his arm in front of Indra disguised as a young man whereas the merchant's daughter intercedes; since this offering is made within the quest of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the manuscript is painted, lying on a stand in the upper part of the illumination (fig. 9). 2) She invites him to follow her to her parents' house. He carries the manuscript (fig. 10). 3) Both stand (the Bodhisattva, holding the manuscript) or kneel (the young woman) in front of the merchant (fig. 11). Second folio: 4) The father, an attendant (?), his daughter and Sadāprarudita still holding the manuscript are walking towards their left (i.e., the central painting). 5) They all kneel in front of Dharmodgata who sits on a throne and expounds the *Dharma*. 6) Two male figures stand at the foot of stand on which lies the manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*; they are most probably Sadāprarudita, at our left, with hands joined in the gesture of veneration, and Dharmodgata, at our right, showing the gesture of argumentation; paraphernalia belonging to ritual is distributed at the foot of the stand.
37. Bautze-Picron 1999, p. 186.
38. A similar situation was already recognized by John Newman (1990, p. 123) in his analysis of the central folios of the manuscript preserved at the Asiatic Society of Mumbai (appendix 3.6): 'we can conjecture that the "author" of this iconographic scheme imagined *upāya tantra* in some sense giving birth to *prajñā tantra*...', where the first class of *tantras* is made present through Akṣobhya and his consort, the second one being introduced by Heruka and Sambara and their respective consorts. Concerning the 'centre', I would like to remind that the three Tathāgatas Akṣobhya, Vairocana and Amitābha are all superimposed at the centre of the universe in the cosmological visualization made

by the *yogin* within his own body (see note 27). Thus, their presence in the Harivarmadeva manuscript preserved at Rajshahi (Bautze-Picron 1999) does not only imply the idea of movement in horizontal space, from East to West, but would also indicate that the text, of which they are practically the spine, and beyond the text, the Perfection of Wisdom itself, is at the centre of the universe.

39. As noticed by Losty 1990, p. 196 who has given a detailed analysis of the illustrated folios. Thus the Bodhisattvas of the first two folios are painted around Amitābha. Another example of intricate compositional structure is illustrated by a pair of boards preserved at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, see Bautze-Picron 2000. Inasmuch as they introduce a centralized composition, these various examples show how a manuscript and its boards are more than a written text which would be adorned with images: text and images constitute in fact a *maṇḍala*.
40. See the remarks introduced by Newman 1990.
41. Bautze-Picron 2000, p. 113 concerning the understanding of the position of specific images at the edges of the boards kept in Los Angeles, which simultaneously reflect the limit between the sacred and profane spaces (i.e., the boards and the external empty space to which we belong) and the link between the more central divine images and the human world.
42. On this aspect, see Ohnuma 1998. Losty 1990, p. 197 also underlines how specific deities painted on the last two folios present the function of sustaining the donor of the manuscript in his spiritual quest, to ensure his material welfare and to protect the manuscript itself.
43. Bautze-Picron 1997, pp. 13-14, 19-20, 47, 55: after Visser 1913, pp. 15-16.
44. Stooke 1948, p. 7 recognizes here Indra, an identification which has not been questioned since then. However, we may ask how the god could be introduced in one of the central and main illuminations of the manuscript. The Buddha sits in the 'European manner', a position which is also related to Maitreya; the two Bodhisattvas of the Moon and the Sun flank the scene, stressing the eternal nature of the enlightenment. Being paired in fact with 'Sumero Vajrasattva', who is painted on the other central folio (for the proper identification, see Mallmann 1965, pp. 224-46), and who is not only a Buddha, but who would also sit in this case on the Sumeru (the information is provided by the legend to an illumination published by Foucher 1900, pl. VI.6 and pp. 122-23, 189 & 209, also quoted by Mallmann 1965, p. 224 and note 25), we can surmise that it is not a simple event of the Buddha's life which is here depicted, but probably the transmission of the *Dharma* to the future Buddha.
45. Again, Stooke's identification (1948, p. 7) must be corrected (his identification is based on a further wrongly identified illumination published by Ghose 1929, '3' on plate facing p. 83: what is here depicted is the taming of the wild elephant). The central figure sits in an easy attitude, being venerated by the two monks; he displays the *vitarkamudrā*, not the gesture of teaching. Since he does not have the *uṣṇīṣa*, he is definitely no Buddha, and since this illumination follows the central one where I suggested to recognize the Buddha and Maitreya, would it be possible to identify here the Bodhisattva? Or could he be one of the main disciples of the Buddha?
46. In the prolongation of what stands in the previous two notes, I would suggest to recognize here the Buddha of the future as the teacher: the scene is painted between the two scenes which conclude the Buddha's biography, the stay at Vaiśālī where he decides that the time has come for him to depart from this world, and the *parinirvāṇa*. Since, moreover, on the first two folios, the biographical scenes flank images of deities, since also the first central folio retains Vajrasattva, the Buddha directly related with the centre, one can exclude the possibility of having scenes drawn from the life in the central panels of the three last folios (a central one, the final ones). Moreover, the presence of the eight scenes in the side vignettes and their chronological distribution implies the flow of life which runs on either side of the central column whereas the central scenes refer to abstract concepts, to deities, to the central point of the universe, to the supreme wisdom. Visual correspondences can be observed between these images: the Prajñāpāramitā sits in front of her attendant, like the Buddha sits in front of Maitreya (?), Mañjuśrī and the monk have a similar bending of the body towards their right and a similar position of the left leg.

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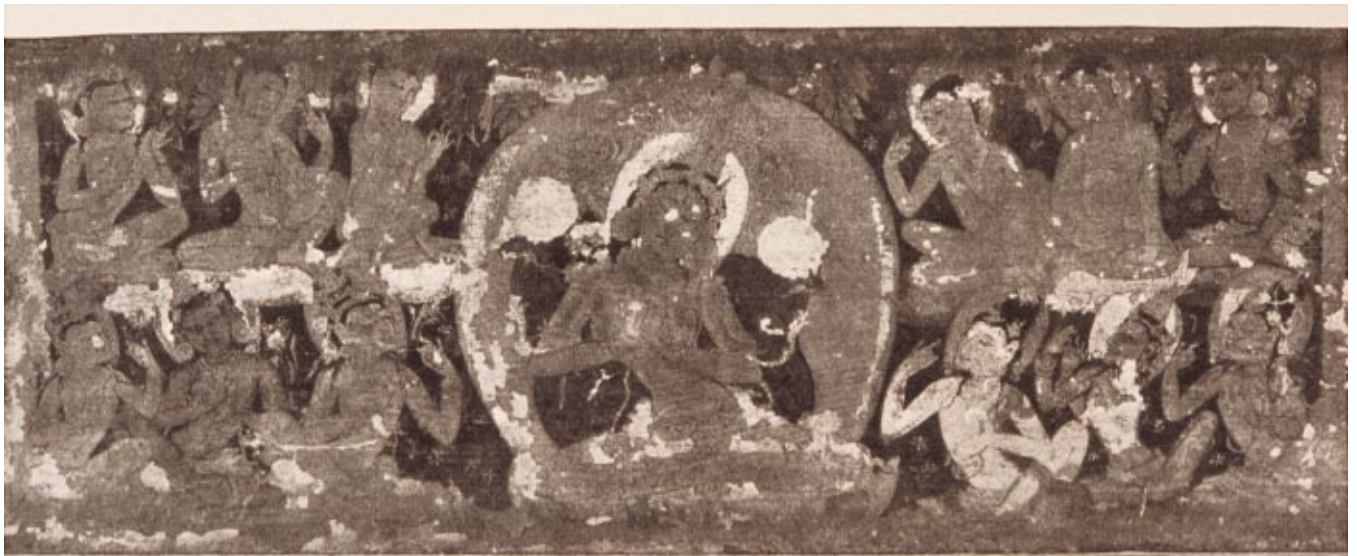
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Pl. 1.1. Seven Buddha's of the past and Maitreya, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.2. One of the eight major events of Buddha's life, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.3. Seven Buddha's of the past and Maitreya, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.4. One of the eight major events of Buddha's life, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.5. The simultaneous presence of Amitabha and Prajnaparmita, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.7. The five Tathagatas, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.6. The goddess forming a pair with Amitabha, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.8. A group of Buddhas of the past, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.9. The quest of Sadaprarudita, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.10. The quest of Sadaprarudita, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.



Pl. 1.11. The quest of Sadaprarudita, a folio from the Vredenburg manuscript.