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ATHANASIUS, ANTONY, AND THE BUDDHA

*Preamble*

This study introduces parallels and asks what is to be made of them. The temptation of St Antony reminds one of the “temptation” of the Bodhisattva, Śākyamuni Gautama, the future Buddha. St Athanasius’ account of the former and Sanskrit works on the latter have much in common. Moreover the demons in the works of Hieronymus Bosch (d. 1516) and Peter Bruegel (c. 1562) seem to recall *inter alia* the experiences of Antony as depicted by Athanasius. This curiosity I relegate to an Appendix here. No doubt similar imagery about demons can be expected to arise in different cultures, but identity of peculiarities raises the question whether they are related. This paper asserts no dependence. The facts speak for themselves. For it does not to do assume that works composed originally in Sanskrit were always unknown in the West.

Athanasius’ *Life of Antony* (fourth century) is famous <sup>1</sup>. It is a work of piety and literary (specifically rhetorical) quality, widely

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1. Hereafter “V.A.” G. J. M. Bartelink, ed., trans., *Athanese d’Alexandrie, Vie d’Antoine*, Sources Chrétiennes 400, Paris, Le Cerf, 1994, pp. 142-9, 156-63, 192-207, 240-3, 272-9. Translations: *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 2nd ser., ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, IV, *St Athanasius*, repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, pp. 195-221; R.T. Meyer, *St Athanasius, the Life of Saint Antony*, Ancient Christian Writers, 10, New York: Newman Press, 1950, pp. 22-65.

translated and diffused<sup>2</sup>. Being a Greek, born and educated in Alexandria, Athanasius could not produce a treatise without both a literary background and an awareness of what Alexandria stood for, between East and West<sup>3</sup>. He was not confined to the Bible, which he quotes liberally. His influence, deriving from his theological position, was augmented by peregrinations which incidentally introduced monachism in the West. The supposed difficulties of the religious solitary loom large in that *Life*. Antony (? 251-356), himself the patron of the earliest monasteries, was a younger contemporary of Athanasius (c. 296-373). Did they sometimes converse in Coptic (did Athanasius know any?), for Antony was not well seen in Greek<sup>4</sup>? Both were violently opposed to Arianism (arising in 318). Imperial and ecclesiastical power tended to favour the latter against “orthodoxy”<sup>5</sup>.

Athanasius’ life was devoted to defeating the “heresy” of Arius, his contemporary, who taught that Christ was subordinate to the Father and therefore not of the same substance with him<sup>6</sup>, nor co-eternal. The Son was neither truly of the nature of the Father nor truly of his Wisdom. We are not concerned with the charms of Arianism, then or now. Athanasius needed notable ascetical support in his combat. Monks wielded great influence then<sup>7</sup> as later in Constantinople. Antony, unlearned, was presented by Athanasius as a persistent (V.A. 68-9; 82) preacher of orthodoxy, a rival of Arius who was himself an ascetic. Throughout the *Life* Athanasius insists<sup>8</sup> that Antony defeated *visible*

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2. For Antony in the Golden Legend see Jacobus de Voragine, *Die goldene Legende der Heiligen*, Leipzig, 1912; trans., *The Golden Legend* in the “Temple Classics” series, London: Dent, 1896.

3. M. Rostovtzeff pointed out the vital part played by Alexandrian merchants in the exchange of goods between the Roman Empire and China. Wheeler confirms this: Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *Rome Beyond the Imperial Frontiers*, London: Bell, 1954, pp. 170-1. Cf. E. de la Vaissière, *Histoire des marchands Sogdiens*. Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 2002.

4. V.A. 1; 72 (need for interpreters); 73. Frend (below n. 6, p. 577). For their friendship see Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical history* II. 17.

5. Arianism and opposition to it are analysed originally by E. Leach, “Melchisedek and the emperor: icons of subversion and orthodoxy”, in Sir Edmund Leach and D.A. Aycock, *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth*, Cambridge University Press, 1983, pp. 67-88.

6. W.H.C. Frend, *The rise of Christianity*, London: D.L.T., 1984, pp. 492-501. 502-3. 524-5.

7. Frend, *Rise*, pp. 575, 758.

8. A. de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du Mouvement monastique dans l’antiquité*, I, Paris: le Cerf, 1991, pp. 58-60. In as much as half the work (p. 59).

and *audible* demons, associates of the Devil, by asserting his status as a servant of Christ <sup>9</sup>, professing his faith in him and in the Cross <sup>10</sup>. Christ defeated the demons by his incarnation and his death <sup>11</sup>. Nowhere does Athanasius suggest that the church-and-state conspiracy against Trinitarianism was devilish (though the demons appeared as monks and even sang psalms (V.A. 25.1,3; 40); and recommended fasts (27)), but readers could read between the lines.

### *Antony's Demons*

Athanasius's work has three main components: (1) allegedly autobiographical material from Antony; (2) an extensive sermon fathered on Antony by the author, embellished with biblical citations; and thirdly reports of Antony's visitors to whom his lifestyle was disclosed. Repetition enhances the theme, viz, steadfastness in the face of persecution, in this case designed to break a solitary's resolve as an ascetic.

Athanasius makes great play with Antony's contest with the demons. His hero boasted of actually being physically assaulted by them. Popular demonology, especially in Egypt, ancient home of multiple demons, would take his success as proof of virtue. Antony shared some of his hallucinations with Pachomius (c. 290-346), founder of monasticism <sup>12</sup>; and Pachon, too, suffered from animals <sup>13</sup>. We need not discuss them as data, but the forms they take provide the parallel we are studying. The prowling of inquisitive wild animals is credible as also tales of his virtually taming some and dispelling others (V.A. 50.9; 51.5 [cf. Jas 4.7; Job 5.23]; 52.3), and desert sands do emit sounds. But we are not confined to rational encounters, since Athanasius continually narrates unnatural encounters.

While Antony himself never claims his demons were (1) visible, (2)

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9. V.A. 52.3; 53.2.

10. V.A. 9.10; 40; 22.4; 23; 53.2.

11. V.A. 28-30.

12. Bartelink, *Antoine*, p. 157, n. 2.

13. Palladius, *Lausiatic History*, § 23, trans., R.T. Meyer, *Ancient Christian Writers* 34, Westminster, MD and London: Longmans, Green, 1965, p. 187.

audible, and, more especially (3) military<sup>14</sup>, but were, on the contrary, *passions* having their seat in the soul, Athanasius proceeds from the hypothesis that the Devil and his agents were external to their victim and even tangible by him. This is the decision on Athanasius' part which creates our parallel, going well beyond St Paul's metaphors at Romans 8.35-37, etc.

Antony was, Athanasius says, beaten by demons (V.A. 8.2). The Devil kept a watch on him perpetually (cf. LXX Ps 34.16) (V.A. 7 [1 Pet 5.8]; 52.1 ὑαρατηρεῖτο). The Devil appeared like a black boy (V.A. 6.1 a catamite)<sup>15</sup>, or seductive woman (5.5). He was a master of disguises – and so are his demons (V.A. 25.1 ὑρὸς ὑάντα μεταβάλλεσθαι καὶ σχηματίζεσθαι, cf. 23.3). They have many “ruses and machinations” (V.A. 22.4; 52.1). Women, wild beasts (bears, leopards, bulls, snakes, asps, scorpions, wolves, lions – fit or unfit for the desert), and creatures with gigantic bodies (μεγέθη σωμάτων), appeared to the solitary to disturb his meditation, in vain, since he was always alert (νήφων [1 Thes 5.6; 2 Tim 5.6; 2 Tim 4.5; 1 Pet 5.8] τῇ διανοίᾳ). He could tread on scorpions and snakes (V.A. 24.5; cf. LXX Ps 40.13; Luke 10.19). A demon of great size was accompanied by many sub-demons (V.A. 53.3 σὺν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ δαίμοσιν). Devils became a *multitude of soldiers* (23.3 ὑλῆθος στρατιωτῶν) threatening him (39.3 ἀύειλοῦντες ὡς στρατιῶται μετὰ ὑανοῦλίας). Visitors (cf. Eph 6.12) could attest the sounds of tumult, voices, the clangor of weapons (V.A. 51.3 κτύων οὐλῶν: cf. V.A. 39). I emphasize the military aspect of the Devil's activity, which has a slight biblical parallel (cf. LXX Ps 26.3 ὑαρατάξηται ὑαρεμβολή)<sup>16</sup>. The Devil failed to overcome him (μαχόμενον), while sparks in the sky (52.3) completed his display.

The Devil's debates with his demons (V.A. 9.4; 23.6; cf. Exod 15.9), apparently superfluous in a *Life of Antony*, require explanation. No military array had been needed to arrest or execute Christian martyrs. True, intimidation was employed, for Arians plundered churches (V.A. 82) – yet the source of this remarkable and deliberate choice of image remains at large.

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14. Antony, *Letters* VI.49-51. S. Rubenson, *The Letters of St Antony*, Lund: University Press, 1990, p. 87. n. 5. It is Athanasius (obviously) who cites 2 Kings 19.35 at V.A. 29. Cf. Qur'an 17:64.

15. See Bartelink (n. 1 above), p. 147, n. 2.

16. Cf. LXX Gen 32.2; 33.8 Liddell-Scott-Jones, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. ὑαρεμβολή IIb.

Of great significance was the demon who appeared as part man (above) and part ass (below) (V.A. 53.2). Greeks knew of tritons, centaurs, hippocamps, chimeras, and the man-headed bull of the coinage of Hyria, Nola and Naples<sup>17</sup>; and of course Egypt was familiar with gods with the *heads* of a bull, ram, dog, ibis, hawk, jackal, lioness and crocodile: but not of human forms above and animal below. Giants (V.A. 66) are ubiquitous.

All these abnormal manifestations were routed by Antony's calling upon Christ and making the Sign of the Cross<sup>18</sup>. The Undivided Trinity was superior to all other powers as the Bible was shown to promise in such cases. Antony could, it seems, control his own pathology.

### *The Bodhisattva's Demons*

We cannot believe that a man born and educated in Alexandria, home of at least one Library, was ignorant of the life-story of the founder of the greatest monastic order (the *saṅgha*) then existing – nor of his trials before he became a Buddha. The Bodhisattva (hereafter “Buddha”) was, according to old legends (much earlier than Christianity) continually dogged by Māra<sup>19</sup>, who ever seeks opportunities<sup>20</sup>, the Buddhists' Satan. Māra deserves great attention because of his prime rank in Buddhist mythology<sup>21</sup>. If the Buddha died about 380 BC (H. Bechert) the legend had developed mightily by 150-100

17. D.R. Sear, *Greek Coins and their Values*, London: Seaby, 1978, 1994, 2002, nos. 294-313, 553-4, 556-7, 561. Cf. Hom., *Il.* 6.179-182; *hymn* VII.44-47.

18. See n. 10.

19. Sn 446. Ananda W.P. Guruge, “The Buddha's encounters with Māra, the Tempter: their representation in literature and art”, *Indologica Taurinensia* 17-18 (1991-2), pp. 183-208.

20. SN V. 146, trans., Woodward (1979), p. 126. He denies the Buddha's freedom: *ibid.* I. 105, trans., C.A.F. Rhys Davids (1979), I, p. 131.

21. Even Māra's request at MPNS, DN xvi 3.7-9 = II. 104-6 (cf. Yang-Gyu An, *The Buddha's Last Days*, Oxford, Pali Text Soc., 2003, pp. 92-5). SN V. 259-63, trans., Woodward (1979), V, pp. 232-4. E. Windisch, *Māra und Buddha*, Abh. phil.-hist. Cl., Sächsisch. Ges. d. Wissenschaften, 15, Leipzig, 1895; M. Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature* II, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint, 1977, index, “Māra”; T.O. Ling, *Buddha and the Mythology of Evil*, London, 1962. J.W. Boyd, *Satan and Mara*, Leiden: Brill, 1975. A. Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha... à la conversion de Śāriputra et de Maudgalyāyana*, Paris: E.F.E.O., 1963, pp. 141-2, 245-6, 249, 395.

BC, for sculptures at Sāñcī (c. 50 BC)<sup>22</sup> make it certain that the *Māra-vijaya* (“Buddha’s victory over Māra”) had been popularly known and rejoiced in at least a century earlier. Any biography of the Buddha, and there were many, would be certain to include a *Māra-vijaya*, systematizing dispersed accounts of Māra’s hostility to the Buddha and to his adherents<sup>23</sup> or possible followers. The chance was always open that later authors would embroider the fantasy as originally uttered. Fundamentally, Māra would assume any shape(s), visibly, to terrify the Buddha<sup>24</sup>.

Biographies of the Buddha in Sanskrit could be translated into Greek.

The expertise existed as did the curiosity to do this<sup>25</sup>. Western enquirers knew where to look for such information. There was the *Māhāvastu*<sup>26</sup> and the *Buddha-carita*<sup>27</sup> attributed to Aśvaghōṣa, and

22. Sir John Marshall, *The Buddhist Art of Gandhāra*, Cambridge University Press, 1960, repr. New Delhi, 1980, p. 7. M. M. Hallade, *The Gandhāra Style and the Evolution of Buddhist Art*, London: Thames & Hudson, pp. 126, 148; pls. 79, 93, 94, 114. There are no less than two *Māra-vijayas* at Sāñcī: Marshall, fig. 7 (pp. 10, 11, 161); fig. 67 (p. 48) (AD 25 – after AD 60), figs. 114, 119 (pp. 86, 92) (AD 140-215). At Sāñcī Māra is crowned Greek-fashion: Marshall and Foucher, *Monuments of Sāñcī*, Calcutta, 1940, II, pl. xxix, cited by E. Lamotte, *Histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1976, p. 449.

23. MN I. 332-6, trans., I.B. Horner (1976), I, pp. 395-9. Dhammapada Commentary IV.69, trans., Burlingame, III, p. 234. Lamotte (last note), p. 229.

24. SN I. 103-4, trans., C.A.F. Rhys Davids (1979), I, pp. 129-30.

25. The following prove Greek flexibility: É. Benveniste, “Édits d’Asoka en traduction grecque”, *J.A.* 252 (1964), pp. 137-57; G. Pugliese Carratelli and G. Garbini, *A Bilingual Greco-Aramaic Edict of Aśoka*, Serie Orientale Roma 29, Rome: IsMEO, 1964; D. Schlumberger, “Une seconde inscription grecque d’Asoka”, *C.R.A.I.* 1964, pp. 126-40; C. Galavotti, “The Greek version of the Kandahar bilingual inscription of Aśoka”, *EW* 10 (1959), pp. 185-92; K.R. Norman, “Notes on the Greek version of Aśoka’s twelfth and thirteenth Rock Edict”, *JRAS* 1972, pp. 111-18. For Zarathustra’s works in Alexandria see Hermippus of Smyrna at J. Bidez – F. Cumont, *Les Mages hellénisés*, 2 Vols, Paris, 1938, I, 85ff at 87; II, 9 fr. B2.

26. Edited by É. Senart, *Le Mahāvastu* II, Paris, 1890, pp. 237-40; trans., J.J. Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists 18, London: Pali Text Soc., 1949-56, II, pp. 224-7. H. Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989, pp. 17, 130, 131, n. 2, 134. Winternitz (n. 21 above), pp. 239-47, esp. p. 242.

27. Published by E.B. Cowell, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1893; trans., E.B. Cowell, Sacred Books of the East 49, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894; E.H. Johnston, *The Buddha-carita or Acts of the Buddha*, Lahore, 1935-6, repr. 1973. On Aśvaghōṣa see Winternitz (n. 21 above), pp. 256-76; H. Nakamura (n. 26 above), pp. 133-4; Lamotte (n. 22 above), pp. 653, 726.

the *Lalita-vistara*<sup>28</sup>. Subject (as always with Buddhist literature) to interpolations, the original *Mahāvastu* can be placed about the second century BC; the Buddha-carita in Kaniṣka's reign, therefore before AD 150; and the *Lalita-vistara* ("Detailed Account of the Sport [of the Buddha]") about AD 200. Not only did the world centre of "philosophy" need the best of these, probably the *Lalita-vistara*, but Christian, especially Syrian missionaries targeting the Seleucid empire (including India)<sup>29</sup> would have regard to information about the Māhāyana to adapt their gospel to ears acquainted with the Buddha's<sup>30</sup>.

The Buddha's search for Enlightenment required a solitary existence conducive to contemplation, meditation, not free from hallucination (if it were encouraged by starvation). It became clear that his success was to be at the expense of natural appetites, a virtual mastery of Mother Nature. Those appetites could be personified – a literary trick much favoured by Greeks – to picture them as enemies of all forms of asceticism and in particular of the Buddha's own achievement of freedom. The Buddha seems to have imagined Māra's having broken lances in combat with himself, Māra remaining master of the world of the appetites and the pleasures of the senses. First orally, then in writing, that fight began to be described in detail. Māra's disguises and devices began to be illustrated. He used to retire, when once recognized, downcast, though only temporarily (cf. Luke 4.13).

### *The Māra-vijaya in the Mahāvastu*

The text is sometimes obscure. We are not entirely helped by the author's having used, from memory, the *Māra-saṃyutta* of a still older

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28. Published by P.L. Vaidya, *Lalita-vistara*, Buddhist Sanskrit Series 1, Mithila, 1958, ch. 21, pp. 218-25; trans., P.F. Foucaux, *Annales du Musée Guimet* VI, vol. I, pp. 260-82.

29. Missions existed as far as India: Pantaenus (d.c. 190; teacher of Clement of Alexandria), at Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* I. 462.

30. Cf. R. Malek, ed., *The Chinese Face of Jesus Christ* I, Monumenta Serica Monograph Series L/1, Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica & China-Zentrum, 2002 (Nestorian and Manichaean evidence).

collection, the *Sutta-nipāta* <sup>31</sup>. I use Jones' translation of the *Mahāvastu* as basis for my excerpt.

“From beneath the bodhi-tree <sup>32</sup>, before I yet had won my immortal state, I saw (*dr̥ṣṭvā*) Namuci's <sup>33</sup> armed (and harnessed) army (*senāṃ sannadhām*) with their banners flying (*utsṛta-dhvajām*).

“I shall advance to the fight; I shall not retreat to manoeuvre for position (*sthānārtham upāviṣe*). By and by I shall repel thine army (*senāṃ te*).

“Thy first army is called Lust, and the second Discontent (*arati*); the third is called Hunger and Thirst, and the fourth Craving (metaphorically “thirst”).

“The fifth is called Torpor and Indolence, and the sixth Timidity; the seventh is Doubt, and the eighth is Pride.

“Then there are Greed, and Fame, Reverence and falsely-won Glory.

“This is Namuci's harnessed army with banners flying (*senā sannadhā ucchrita-dhvajā*). Many a recluse and Brahmin are seen steeped (drowned?) therein.

“None but a hero overcomes this (army); or conquers without pain. But by wisdom I shall smash it as water destroys an unbaked vessel.

“Winning control over thy shafts (*śalyam*), with mindfulness well-founded <sup>34</sup>, living with an access of valour, I shall win over even thine own disciples (?) <sup>35</sup>.

“Foolish, stupid people give themselves to indolence, but I shall go, in spite of thee, to the place where sorrow is ended.”

Then, overcome with grief, Māra's lyre slipped from his armpit, and the disconsolate fiend forthwith vanished from sight.

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31. Sn 425-49, trans., K.R. Norman, *The Group of Discourses II*, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1992, pp. 45-7.

32. Māra's non military attacks began before the Bodhisattva found that tree, but the point is insignificant from the literary point of view.

33. For Māra's names see Buddhaghosa, *Sumaṅgala-vilāsini*, 555.

34. Mindfulness crushes Māra's host: SN V. 99, trans., Woodward (1979), V, p. 83; cf. *ibid.* p. 169, trans., p. 150.

35. Senarto printed (p. 240 <sup>13</sup>) *viharanto vineṣyam śrāvakām pi tu*.



In the Jātaka-book Māra tempts the Bodhisattva with a promise of sovereignty, and later attempts to frighten him with his personal army (*Māra-bala*, *Māra-parisā*), with every kind of weapon (i. 72<sup>3</sup>, 73<sup>12-13</sup>, 74<sup>4</sup>), colours, faces (i. 72<sup>5</sup>) and all possible frightening devices<sup>36</sup>. The Buddha meditates on the Ten Perfections and thus resists him<sup>37</sup>, as he resists “evil thoughts” prior to the Enlightenment. Buddhist tradition is clear that when Māra prepares to possess the mind of a person he *shows a visible frightening form or makes a fearful sound*<sup>38</sup>, so that people forget themselves.

I would emphasize that from the earliest connected account of Māra’s “temptation” of the future Buddha his assault is described in military terms. Nevertheless the armies represent moral failings by way of an ancient metaphor<sup>39</sup>. “Appetites”, ancient nuns agreed, “are like spears and javelins”<sup>40</sup>. Here, as yet, the *appearance* of the “army” is not needed to frighten the Buddha. The latter is not unmindful. Athanasius decided to depict Antony’s demons as (1) visible, (2) audible, and (3) military: while the *Mahāvastu* version was being compiled a similar decision was made about Māra and his host. The *Sutta-nipāta* version, by comparison, does not describe the forces of Māra as visible or audible – metaphor remains simple.

One wishing to know the resources of that tempter of Christ (Matthew 4.1-11) could not fail to be interested in Māra (who has the whole world as his parish: Job 1.7) and his fruitless “machinations” –

36. Jātaka, ed. Fausböll, I, 63, 71-5, trans., T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, rev. edn., London & New York, 1925, pp. 175, 190-6.

37. Jātaka I, 171, 176, see T.W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, London: Trübner, 1880, p. 234, also 54-8, 241.

38. Buddhaghosa, *Sumaṅgala-vilāsini*, ed. Stede, 1971, p. 555, trans., Yang-Gyu An (n. 21 above), p. 90. This is a commentary on DN xvi.3.5 = II.104. See also *ibid.*, p. 590, trans., p. 175. “Possession”: Buddhaghosa, 540.

39. SN IV. 39-40, trans., Woodward (1980), IV, p. 19. The realm (*paññatti*) of Māra is sense-consciousness and mind-consciousness. One who has “conceits” is Māra’s bondsman: *ibid.* IV. 202, trans., p. 134. Māra is a metaphor. So *ibid.*, IV. 90, trans., 56-7. Māra’s noose is delight in cognizable objects. It is a matter of *psychomachie*, so Bareau (n. 21 above). For Māra is Prince of this World, a death-dealer: H. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, London & Edinburgh: Williams & Norgate, 1882), pp. 59, 309-12.

40. *Therī-gāthā*, verse 58, trans., C.A.F. Rhys Davids, *Psalms of the Early Buddhists I*, *Psalms of the Sisters*, London: Oxford University Press, 1909, p. 44. Cf. SN I, 128, trans., Rhys Davids, *Kindred Sayings I* (1979), p. 161. For another military metaphor see Dīgha II.107; Saṃyutta V.263.

the Buddha's concentration could no more be shaken than Antony's, the model monk's. True, a difference emerges in that, whereas Antony thought he was flogged by the demons, the Bodhisattva felt none of the shafts aimed at him; he failed to become a victim, though monks of other sects or Brahmins had succumbed.

### *The Māra-vijaya in the Buddha-carita*

XIII.18 Then Māra called to mind his own army (*sainyaṃ*), wishing to work the overthrow of the Sākya saint (*muni*) and his followers swarmed around, wearing different forms and carrying arrows, trees, darts, clubs and swords in their hands;

19. Having the faces of bears, fishes, horses, asses, camels, of tigers, bears, lions and elephants – one-eyed, many-faced, three-headed with protuberant bellies and speckled bellies;

20. Blended with goats, with knees swollen like pots, armed with tusks and with claws, with headless trunks (*kavanda*) in their hands, and assuming many forms, with half-mutilated faces and with vast mouths;

21. Copper-red, covered with blood-red spots, with dangling wreaths, with long pendulous ears like elephants, clothed in leather or unclothed;

22. Having half their faces white or half their bodies green-, red-, and smoke-coloured, yellow and black – with arms reaching out longer than a serpent, with belts jingling with rattling bells.

23. Some were tall as palm-trees, grasping spears – others were of the size of children with projecting teeth, others birds with the faces of rams, others with men's bodies and cats' faces...

26. One danced, shaking a trident, another made a crash, dragging a club, another bounded for joy like a bull, another blazed out flames from its body-hair...

34. Then Māra commanded his excited army (*camū*) of demons (*bhūta*) to terrify him (the Bodhisattva); and forthwith his host (*senā*) resolved to break down his fortitude (*dhairya*) with their various powers.

35. Some with many tongues hanging out and shaking, with sharp-pointed savage teeth and eyes like the disk of the sun, with wide-yawning mouths and upright ears like spikes – they stood round trying to frighten him...

44. Others spat out serpents from their mouths as from decayed trunks of trees; but, as if held fast by a charm (*mantra*) they neither breathed nor discharged venom nor moved near him...

49. But a woman, Cloud-dark, bearing a skull in her hand, in order to bemuse the mind of the great sage, flitted about unsettled and stayed not in one spot, like the mind of an inattentive student of sacred texts...

52. Others, wearing the forms of hyenas and lions, loudly uttered fierce yells, which caused all beings around to quail with terror, as thinking that the heavens were smitten with a thunderbolt and were bursting...

55. The less the saint feared the frightful hordes of that multitude, the more did Māra, the enemy of the righteous, continue his attacks in grief and anger...

66. "Him whose one desire is to deliver mankind bound in mind by the fast snares of illusion – thy wish to overthrow him is not worthy, wearied as he is for the sake of loosening the bonds of the world."

70. Listening to his (the heavenly shape's) words, and having seen the unshaken firmness of the great saint, Māra departed dispirited and broken in purpose with those very arrows by which, O world, thou art smitten in thy mind.

71. With their excitement at an end, all their fatigue fruitless, and all their stones, straw, and trees thrown away, that host (*camū*) of Māra's fled in all directions, like some hostile army (*camū*) when its camp has been destroyed by the enemy.

It is reasonable to ask whence Aśvaghōṣa obtained all this imagery? We recollect that Indians were ready to hear of *makaras* (sea monsters)<sup>41</sup>, elephant-headed lions and winged lions, quadrupeds with human faces<sup>42</sup>, and of ghosts (*pretas*) having pigs' heads on men's bodies, and so on<sup>43</sup>. It was not necessary to have recent news from Egypt of animal-headed gods.

Aśvaghōṣa's work was overtaken by the *Lalita-vistara*. Notoriously important in the history of Buddhist art (it is illustrated at

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41. The great *stūpa* at Amarāvati had scores of these, including one with a horned lion's head.

42. R. Knox, *Amarāvati*, London: British Museum, 1992, pp. 115, 142, 162.

43. Dhammapada Commentary III. 410-71, trans., Burlingame, III, Harvard Oriental Series 30, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1920, repr. 1979, pp. 153-9.

Borobudur), it exaggerates the awfulness of those battalions. Their ability to transform themselves is dwelt upon (p. 221<sup>21</sup>), their association with snakes and poisons, their variety of weapons (common or rare), and their body-armour (p. 221<sup>22</sup>). They have malformed limbs and flaming eyes; bellies, feet and hands distorted; with frightful teeth and tongues; eating human flesh, notably the lake-dwelling, desert-haunting monsters (pp. 221<sup>26-7</sup>; 223<sup>3</sup>). They are of many colours (specified); with eyes distorted or looking backwards (p. 221<sup>28</sup>); some mounted on flaming mountains; with ears of goats, pigs, elephants, boars – or without any; some, with broken noses, are a mass of bones (p. 222<sup>3-4</sup>); some with stomachs like pots; with feet like skulls, dried up; the nose, hands, and feet, eyes and heads cut off (p. 222<sup>5</sup>). Some, eager to drink blood, cut off each other's heads (p. 225<sup>5</sup>). Some have the faces of a wolf, jackal, pig, ass, ox, elephant, hare, rhinoceros, etc. Some have forms like a lion, tiger, bear, monkey... fish, tortoise, rook, vulture, owl, etc; some having dual forms (p. 222<sup>9-10</sup>). Some have one head, or a thousand, or none at all; so with arms and feet. Brandishing every weapon (specified), they danced and menaced the Bodhisattva. Some have garlands of severed fingers, or skulls. Some have kettles on their heads, mounting various animals (p. 222<sup>16-17</sup>). Some have heads below and feet above (p. 222<sup>17</sup>). Some have the hair of an ox, ass, boar, goat, etc. Some swallow balls of fire and exhale flames. Causing black clouds, some make noises and cause avalanches of rocks (cf. V.A. 9.5 σείεσθαι). Demon-forms, male and female, beg the Bodhisattva to flee. Millions of military demons complement Māra's army (*senā* 222<sup>30</sup>). Māra takes counsel, to no avail: the Earth guarantees the Bodhisattva's truth; Māra is baffled. His army flees. The attempted seduction of Gautama by Māra's daughters (also in ch. 21) ends with their acknowledging his freedom from the passions. Thereupon the Bodhisattva has defeated Māra, his devices and his hordes, as a single hero might defeat an enemy host (ch. 21, v. 156). One may compare Judges 6.14-16.

### *The Parallel*

Antony had not the ability to consult a Greek *Life* of the Buddha, and certainly no inclination. He did not need visible demons! Athanasius, on the other hand, had, like missionaries, access to

libraries, and had motives both to hear reports of their contents, and to pursue them. That he ever had personal contacts with Buddhists cannot now be shown. Arianism was to his mind a heresy: its success proved its demonic power. We may safely assume the existence in Alexandria of *curiosa* including (if they were up-to-date) the *Lalita-vistara*. The Buddha, in flight from the “pleasures of the senses”, was tempted by Māra as Christ was by Satan. Antony imagined, so we are told, Satan coming in person and complaining of unsympathetic handling (V.A. 41)! Propagandists for orthodoxy were interested in Satan’s world power. Heterodoxy needed anti-ascetical doctrines and Māra was full of these. Behind the mask of Antony’s demons as they luxuriate in Athanasius’ *Life* of him lurk anti-trinitarian forces. Whereas Antony himself refused to describe his demons (V.A. 21), Athanasius has decided to make them visible, audible, and *military*, a decision which coincides with an earlier stage of the Māra myth, the stage to be seen on Buddhist monuments like Sāñcī. That stage was wholly in accord with Indian taste, for nowhere else did one find females trying to seduce ascetics as a matter of course<sup>44</sup>. *Apoc.* 9.7-11 does not supply this image.

The parallel between Athanasius’ Antony and the Buddha is more complete than between Antony and Christ, targets of “temptation”. It calls for further exploration. If to *talk* of India was to call up the recondite and far-fetched<sup>45</sup>, Athanasius knew that Greeks took pains to collect Asian “knowledge” (V.A. 20). Knowledge of the Buddha and his monks was widespread<sup>46</sup>. Origen (c. 185-254) alluded to them<sup>47</sup>. As a religious teacher, says Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215), the Buddha was honoured as a god because of his extraordinary sanctity or rather august status (σεμνοτής)<sup>48</sup>. If his biography was worth study Māra’s visible, audible and military demons could enter Western literature.

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44. Vinaya-pitaka, Sutta-vibhaṅga, *pārājika* I, 10, 11-12, 17-21, trans., I.B. Horner, *The Book of the Discipline*, London: Pali Text Society, 1949, pp. 56-60.

45. Lucian, *Rhetorum praeceptor* 18, trans., A.M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library, *Lucian* IV (1925, repr. 1969), p. 158.

46. Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c.215), *Stromateis* I. 305D.

47. *Contra Celsum* I.24. Jerome (Migne, PL 23, p. 273) knew at least a part of the Buddha legend.

48. See n. 46 above.

## Appendix

Demons emerging from decayed trunks of trees (*Buddha-carita* XIII.44) will at once alert students of Hieronymus Bosch, *some of whose demons correspond to the demons of the Māra-vijaya*. Schongauer had treated the Temptation of Antony (c. 1475) in a medieval manner (like devils at Autun): devils infest the saint like a rash. In the work of Bosch<sup>49</sup> visible and audible demons, mixed human and animal, fantastic, mechanical, inconceivable except by a genius, cumulatively divert Antony from his meditation. The pig-headed priest and manipulative women at the “black mass” (or healing by “holy vintage” on Ascension Day: so L. Dixon) are highly ambivalent. An assault on Antony’s pig comrade is equally ineffective, however<sup>50</sup>. Unexampled animal shapes appear in other scenes, e.g. *St John on Patmos* (cf. Rev 9, 7-10), not all of them negative in meaning. Theology, popular piety, Bible, Paracelsus, dreams, psychology and alchemy, medieval monsters and grotesques<sup>51</sup> and Dutch superstitions, maxims and proverbs, with reports even of the West Indies (circumstantial evidence only) – all are supposed to inspire Bosch’s

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49. W. Fraenger, *Ein Dokument semitischer Gnosis bei Hier. Bosch*, Berlin, 1950; M.J. Friedländer, *From Van Eyck to Bruegel*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1956, 1981, pp. 56-63; C. de Tolnay, *Hieronymus Bosch*, London: Eyre Methuen, 1966, pp. 134-63; C. Linfert, *Hieronymus Bosch*, London: Thames & Hudson, pp. 61-3, 75-87, 89-91, 101, 106, 119-20; C.A. Wertheim-Aymès, *The Pictorial Language of Hieronymus Bosch*, Horsham (Surrey): New Knowledge Books, 1975, pp. 11, 45-90, 106-7 (on this pig see pp. 75, 77-8, 81, 116), H.T. Musper, *Netherlandish Painting from Van Eyck to Bosch*, New York: H.A. Abrams, 1981, pp. 42-8, esp. 42, 118; J.-G. Muller, *Bosch*, New York: Amiel, ND; W. Fraenger, *Hieronymus Bosch*, London: Bracken Books, 1989, pp. 305-8, 343-420. Marina Warner, *Fantastic Metamorphoses, Other Worlds*, Oxford, 2002, ch. 1 referring at p. 217 to J.L. Koerner, “Hieronymus Bosch’s World picture”, in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*, ed. Caroline A. Jones, et al., New York, 1998, pp. 297-323. Laurinda Dixon, *Bosch*, New York & London: Phaidon, 2003 (alchemy).

50. The Prado *Temptation*. The demon in the water may want to swallow the pig, Antony, or both: both are indifferent; the mechanical slaughtering device near the pig does not disturb it.

51. Classical grotesques were commonplace in Bosch’s time. Carlo Crivelli, *Annunciation* (1486) and Ghirlandaio, *Nativity of the Virgin* (c. 1490) demonstrate them. As between monsters and grotesques see Benvenuto Cellini, *Autobiography* (many editions), I.§31. The Chester cathedral misericords include a male and female griffin with human faces and headgear.

inventions<sup>52</sup>; but the scope of his demonic activity has never been explained<sup>53</sup>, and perhaps never will be.

Admittedly, Bosch knew Ps 26.3: *si consistant adversum me castra, non timebit cor meum; si exurgat adversum me praelium, in hoc ego sperabo*, and he will have studied Athanasius' *Life*. He would not need the *Māra-vijaya*: if he did he would not admit it. No doubt he would take seriously Job 41. 10-13 (the Devil's eyes, and his fire-ejecting mouth)<sup>54</sup>; but this provides only one of Bosch's images. He could, too, compare the Vulgate of Job 41.19, 23-24 (V.A. 24) and Athanasius' versions of such texts, and follow either version. Yet Invention takes on a life of its own: models are not copied if one *invents*. However, the *warfare* theme which Athanasius projects in the *Life* blossoms luxuriantly in Bosch's *Temptations of St Antony* at Lisbon and in the Prado.

Could Bosch have known of the *Māra-vijaya* itself? He died in 1516. His *Temptations* are dated 1500, but that is conjecture. By 1505-7 Portuguese adventurers had established themselves in Ceylon. Thomas More takes advantage of this to lay the foundations for his *Utopia*<sup>55</sup>. The Portuguese interests were nominally in mission and merchandise. Buddhist monks could have explained the *Māra-vijaya* to them: they had a motive to explain, and their hearers to grasp the explanation<sup>56</sup>.

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52. See n. 49 above, especially Fraenger. None is to be dismissed as guesswork (e.g. the cephalopod is a sodomite?), yet none is less than far-fetched.

53. See n. 49 above, especially Fraenger (1989). H. Read, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Arts*, London, 1966, p. 114; Laurinda S. Dixon at J. Winson, ed., *Art*, Detroit: St James' Press, 1990, p. 169; H. Brigstoke, ed., *Oxford Companion to Western Art*, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 78-9 ("defies any rational description or explanation"). J.-G. Muller denies Bosch used any literary model. Art historians regard Bosch as a standing challenge. My attention has been drawn to J.M. Massing, "Étude iconographique de l'agression de Saint Antoine de Grünewald", *Cahiers alsaciens d'archéologie d'art et d'histoire*, 19 (1975-6); Schongauer's "Tribulations of St Anthony": its iconography and influence on German art", *Print Quarterly*, 1 (1984); "Schongauer, Bosch, Grünewald et les autres: de quelques 'Tribulations de saint Antoine' et de leurs influences", in *Le beau Martin*, Colmar, 1994. But Schongauer does not anticipate Bosch. Their styles are poles apart. T. Falk and T. Hertle, *Martin Schongauer* (1991).

54. See Bartelink (n. 1 above), on V.A. 24.1.

55. J.H. Lupton, ed., *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More*, Oxford, 1895, p. 27; E. Surtz, *St. Thomas More, Utopia*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1964, pp. xi, 12.

56. Images moved in both directions. Both Botticelli and Leonardo (the Benois Madonna) showed the Virgin suckling the baby Jesus. Hindus depicted Yashoda and Krishna so: see a copper sculpture from Tamil Nadu, Aravidu period (late sixteenth

But Prof. Jorge Flores suggests to me that the Portuguese were then absorbed by the cinnamon trade and strategical interests. There is no direct proof that an account of the *Māra-vijaya*, so well known in every Buddhist land<sup>57</sup>, actually reached the Low Countries before 1516. By Bruegel's time, half a century later, one might not say the same with confidence, but even then evidence is lacking: Bosch himself inspired Bruegel. However, we have here another parallel, which is as curious as it is mysterious<sup>58</sup>.

On the other hand Matthias Grünewald's *Isenheimer Altar* at Colmar (earlier than 1516?) provides a "Kämpf des hl. Antonius mit den Dämonen" which is comparable with Bosch's work and may illuminate it<sup>59</sup>. These artists evidently had a common, but novel inspiration.

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century) illustrated at pl. 164 (see p. 184) of G. Michell, *Hindu Art and Architecture*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

57. For example A. de Silva-Vigier, *The Life of the Buddha Retold from Ancient Sources*, London: Phaidon, 1953, pll. 70, 71, 72, 73; Sir John Marshall, *The Buddhist Art of Gandhāra* (n. 22 above), pp. 10, 11, 16 (fig. 7) 48 (fig. 67) (all before c. AD 150); M.M. Hallade, *The Gandhāra Style* (n. 22 above), pp. 126, 146; pll. 79, 93, 94, 114. R. Knox, *Amarāvātī* (n. 42 above), pp. 53-4, 131, 149, 158.

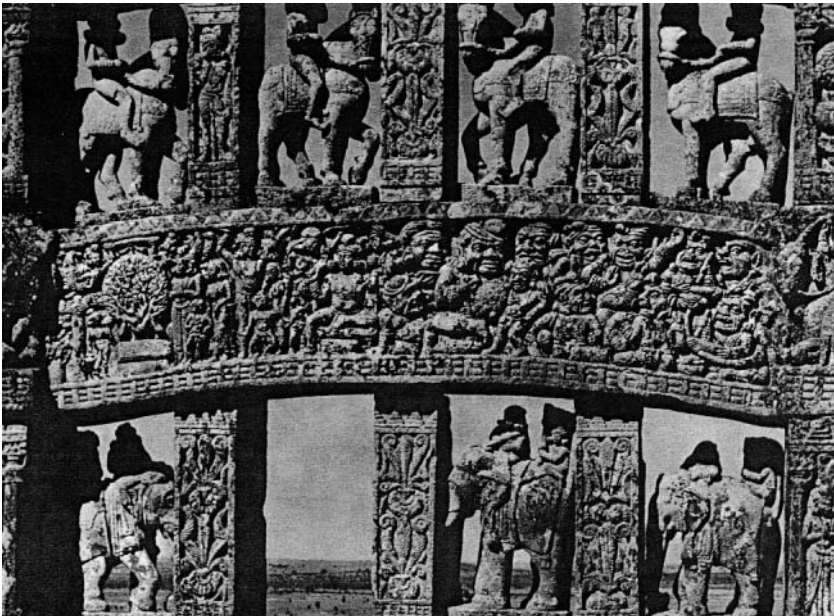
58. I acknowledge help from Mr Peter Drinkwater, Mr Dick Robinson, Dom Dunstan O'Keefe, O.S.B., Dr. Simon Lawson, and Dr W. Pruitt.

59. See n. 53 above.





*Fig. 1: Assault and defeat of Māra. On the Western Gateway of the Great Stūpa of Sāñchī.*



*Fig. 2: The army of Māra. Sandstone, 1st century BC, Sāñchī, India.*

