



INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SANSKRIT STUDIES

Founded by Oscar Botto

Edited by Comitato AIT

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Indologica Taurinensia was founded in 1973 by the eminent scholar Oscar Botto; it publishes articles, reviews and research communications concerning India, Central Asia and South-East Asia.

In 1976 the International Association of Sanskrit Studies selected it as its Official Organ (then Journal) on the occasion of the 30th International Congress of Human Sciences of Asia and Northern Africa (Mexico City, August 3rd-8th, 1976). It publishes also the report of the World Sanskrit Conferences and the minutes of the meetings of the I.A.S.S. (International Association of Sanskrit Studies). In 1996 it was acknowledged as a “Journal of High Cultural Value” by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities.

It is edited by the non-profit Editorial Board “Comitato AIT”, that in the year 2016 was awarded the prize “Ikuo Hirayama” Prize by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres of the Institut de France, Paris, for its publishing activity.

INDOLOGICA TAURINENSIA

THE JOURNAL OF THE
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SANSKRIT STUDIES

VOLUME XLIII-XLIV

2017-2018

EDIZIONI AIT

Publisher:
Comitato AIT
corso Trento 13
10129 Torino (Italy)
Email: irmapiovano@hotmail.com; indologica@asiainstitutetorino.it
www.asiainstitutetorino.it
Printer: Edizioni ETS, Pisa (Italy)
Annual Subscription (1 issue): €40,00
Desktop publishing: Tiziana Franchi
Electronic version: www.asiainstitutetorino.it/indologica.html
Sole Agents: Comitato AIT

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Corso Trento 13 – 10129 Torino (Italy)
C.F. 97651370013 – R.E.A. Torino, n. 1048465 – R.O.C., n. 14802

Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Torino N. 4703 del 21/7/1994
I.S.N.N. 1023-3881

The printing of this volume of *Indologica Taurinensia* has been realized thanks to the contribution of the Embassy of India in Rome to celebrate the 70th anniversary of Italy-India relations.

The AIT – *Asia Institute Torino* would like to express its most sincere gratitude to the Ambassador, H.E. (Mrs.) Reenat Sandhu.

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**A SELECTION OF THE PAPERS PRESENTED AT
THE MEETING OF THE ASSOCIAZIONE ITALIANA
DI STUDI SANSCRITI**

(Rome Sapienza 26th-28th October 2017)

edited by

Raffaele Torella, Marco Franceschini, Tiziana Pontillo,
Cinzia Pieruccini, Antonio Rigopoulos,
Francesco Sferra

Editorial

The *Associazione Italiana di Studi Sanscriti* (AISS) was established in the mid-1970s, founded by Oscar Botto, as the national counterpart of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies (IASS) founded in Paris in 1973. The first conference of the AISS was held in Turin on October 17, 1980, and from then onwards its meetings have been held fairly regularly every two years, each time at a different University where Sanskrit and South Asian studies are taught. The AISS has painstakingly published the proceedings of the conferences as well as summaries of the activities and research projects carried on in the main Italian Universities, thus documenting the developments of Sanskrit and South Asian studies in the last forty years. Recently, an official website of the AISS has been created which offers information on the activities of the *Associazione* and the principal Indological events taking place in Italy as well as abroad:

<http://www.associazioneitalianadistudisanscriti.org>.

The most recent conference of the AISS was held at the University of Rome Sapienza on October 26th-28th, and saw the participation of numerous Italian scholars working at Italian and foreign Universities, along with the participation of a few invited scholars from the Jagiellonian University of Cracow. The first day and part of the second were devoted to the presentation and brief discussion of thirteen papers freely investigating a wide variety of Indological topics. In the final seminar, titled “India and its encounter with the other” fourteen papers were presented and discussed. The articles comprised in this volume were selected by the AISS Board: R. Torella (President), M. Franceschini, T. Pontillo, C. Pieruccini, A. Rigopoulos, F. Sferra, and submitted to the standard process of double-blind peer review.

Raffaele Torella

CINZIA PIERUCCINI

HUNTING, FARMING, AND PROTECTING ANIMALS.
REMARKS ON *MIGADĀYA* AND *MṚGAVANA*

These pages are to be seen as continuation of the research I have so far made on some places which the literary tradition associates with the life and preaching of the Buddha. The general assumption I have previously advanced is that certain places situated on city limits and connected by the texts with accounts of the Buddha's wanderings and preaching, normally referred to as "parks" or "groves" in translation and on which the canonical texts offer only scant details, apart from their names, location and in various cases owners, are to be considered areas primarily and originally associated with economic and productive activities.¹ Here, returning in part to and developing some observations previously presented, my aim is to propose some hypotheses on the places where the Buddha would linger and preach, which the Pāḷi Canon calls *migadāya*, focusing, of course, especially on the famous site of Isipatana. Investigation on the absolute and relative chronology of the sources I will use is beyond the scope of this paper; at any rate, these sources are the most ancient available on the subject. Of course, as a whole, the form in which they have come down to us is much later than the period to which the life of Siddhārtha is attributed. Nevertheless, we may reasonably

¹ See Pieruccini Forthcoming (2018), also for further details on the methodology, and bibliographical references on the actual pleasure parks and gardens situated outside cities, later attested mainly by *kāvya*. Here we return to and elaborate upon a number of observations contained in that article.

expect that from this analysis some indications will emerge on the use of certain extra-urban areas, if not precisely in the times of the Buddha, at least around the last century BCE and the first centuries CE.

1. Buddhist sources

As we know, after the Enlightenment, the Buddha went to a place on the city limits of Vārāṇasī, or better, according to the Pāli form used in the Canon of Sri Lanka, Bārāṇasī. Here the Buddha delivered his first sermon, known as the setting in motion of the wheel of the Law (SN V.56(12).11; M I.6),² and is said to have offered various other teachings subsequently. A common formula to introduce the location, with reference to the Buddha or the presence of other monks, is *bārāṇasiyaṃ [...] isipātane migadāye*, i.e., according to a standard translation, “at Bārāṇasī in the Deer Park at Isipātana”.³ The variants of this formula provide the same geographical indications, and no further details. As we know, this place corresponds to present-day Sarnath, near the modern city of Varanasi.⁴

“Deer Park” is, in fact, the customary translation for the Pāli *migadāya*, corresponding to Skt. *mṛgadāva*, a spelling that also appears as a variant in Pāli. The Pāli terms *dāya* / *dāva* / *dava* and the Sanskrit terms *dāva* / *dava* are etymologically connected

² With a few exceptions that will be specified in the bibliographical references together with the abbreviations, the Pāli and Sanskrit texts are examined and quoted here according to GRETIL and the numbering of the passages given there. In the numbering and in the quotations of the texts I introduce some minimal, standardizing formal adjustments. As for the Pāli Canon, I follow the PTS edition, input by the Dhammakaya Foundation, Thailand, 1989-1996.

³ Thus, for instance, Bhikkhu Bodhi in his translation of the *Samyutta Nikāya* (Bhikkhu Bodhi 2000), where the formula occurs 24 times.

⁴ It is commonly accepted that the name Sarnath comes from Sāraṅganātha, “Lord of deer”. “General Cunningham suggests that the modern name Sārnāth is derived from ‘Sāraṅganātha’ meaning ‘Lord of the Deer’, i.e., Gautama Buddha. It is interesting to observe that Sāraṅganātha is also an epithet of the Brahmanical deity Siva, and the name is still borne by the little Mahādeva shrine situated half a mile east of the Buddhist remains of Sārnāth” (Sahni 1933, p. 1, *sic*).

with fires (Skt. root *dū-*)⁵ that densely wooded areas are, of course, subject to. However, Buddhist tradition also reinterprets *dāya* as deriving from the root *dā-*, “to give”, insofar as it refers to a place “given” to animals to live there in safety; see below. We will deal with the “deer”, *miga* / *mṛga*, shortly. As for *isipātana* (and variants), the post-*suttas* textual traditions interpret the name with reference to the “fall” or “descent” into this place of Paṅcēkabuddhas / Pratyēkabuddhas, a category of enlightened beings, thus equating the word, basically and most meaningfully, with Skt. *ṛṣipātana*.⁶ However, Colette Caillat (Caillat 1968) has convincingly argued that the term is, rather, to be seen as equivalent to Skt. *ṛśya-* or *ṛṣyavṛjana*.⁷ This latter compound may well, as Caillat suggests, be translated as “enclos, parc, domaine des antilopes” (*ibid.*, p. 181), and so the two compounds, *migadāya* and *isipātana* – despite the fact that the latter became a place name – would basically have the same meaning.

Deer, antelopes, and elsewhere also gazelles: these are the terms normally used to translate Skt. *ṛśya* / *ṛṣya* and *mṛga*. The definitions offered by Monier-Williams (*s.v.*, standardising the spellings) are, respectively, “*ṛśya* or (in later texts) *ṛṣya*, *as*, m. the male of a species of antelope, the painted or white-footed antelope”, and “m. (prob. ‘ranger’, ‘rover’) a forest animal or wild beast, game of any kind, (esp.) a deer, fawn, gazelle, antelope, stag, musk-deer”. Close analysis of the meanings of these terms is offered by Francis Zimmermann. He remarks that *ṛṣya* can have been used for specific reference to the nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*, Zimmermann 2011 [1982], p. 82). Far more important is the term *mṛga*, which, as Monier-Williams shows, and as all Sanskritists know, is a very common

⁵ Cf. the PTS Pali-English Dictionary and Monier-Williams Dictionary, *s.v.*

⁶ Cf. the well-known passage MV I.357-359: here five hundred Pratyēkabuddhas choose to ascend into the air and be consumed in fire, and their relics then “fall back” to earth: *ṛṣayo ‘tra patitā ṛṣipātanaṃ*, MV I.359. The place is defined here as “a great forest” (*mahāvanakhaṇḍaṃ*) at a *yojana* and a half from Vārāṇasī (MV I.357). On sources connecting the Paṅcēkabuddhas with Isipātana, cf. Caillat 1968, p. 178; Levman 2014, pp. 395-396; and, also for fuller treatment of the Paṅcēkabuddhas, Kloppenborg 1974; Norman 1983; Levman 2014, 191-196.

⁷ Cf. also Levman 2014, pp. 394-396.

term covering a great range of meanings. According to Zimmermann, and slightly simplifying his analysis, *mṛga* has, on the one hand, a meaning in terms of “mental category”, and so is applied both to all quadrupeds and, specifically, to game, or even all wild animals, including predators. On the other hand, at the level of “biological reality”, it refers to the antelope (“game par excellence”), or the antelope “considered as the model of a class, *mṛga-jāti*, which includes *Antilopinae*, *Tragelaphinae*, and *Cervidae*” (*ibid.*, p. 88). Hence, as Zimmermann points out, depending on the context the term may also be translated correctly as gazelle (for example, “woman with the eyes of a gazelle”, *mṛgadṛś*), or as deer.

In the depictions of the preaching in the “Deer Park”, Indian Buddhist art offers significant evidence as to how the category of the *mṛgas* was conceived. These, in fact, appear in depictions of the Buddha’s preaching, typically in pairs at the foot of the throne upon which the Enlightened One is seated. Alternatively, in so-called aniconic Buddhist art, where the Buddha is not represented anthropomorphically, they may be depicted by the empty throne or the wheel of Dharma with the same meaning, *i.e.* evoking the *migadāya*. Analysing a series of reliefs of this type, from Greater Gandhāra to Andhra Pradesh, Alexandra van der Geer has identified these animals – with more or less certainty – as various horned herbivores, namely the *Antilope cervicapra*, the blackbuck, the *Gazella bennetti*, the chinkara, the *Axis axis*, the spotted deer or chital, and the *Boselaphus tragocamelus*, the nilgai.⁸ The first two appear more often, but in any case it does not seem possible to associate preferences with specific areas or periods. In short, the sculptors who set about evoking the preaching of the Buddha evidently had an empirical conception of the *mṛgas* in terms of *mṛga-jāti*. Note, however, that in the reliefs examined by van der Geer various other *mṛgas*, such as the sambar (*Cervus unicolor*), or the barasingha or swamp deer (*Cervus duvauceli*), which might by rights appear in the images, do not figure at all.

⁸ van der Geer 2008, pp. 59-60, figs. 22-25; pp. 276-277, figs. 344-347; pp. 70-71, fig. 47; pp. 117-118, figs. 113-114.

Let us now return to the *migadāya*. Although undoubtedly the most famous, the Isipatana “Deer Park” is not the only one recorded by the Pāli Canon as visited by the Buddha; mention may also be made of the *migadāyas* of Kaṇṇakatthala near Ujuṇṇa in Kosala,⁹ of Añjanavana near Sāketa, again in Kosala,¹⁰ of Bhesakalāvana on Mount Suṃsumāragira in the country of the Bhagga,¹¹ and of Maddakucchi near Rājagaha.¹² The *migadāya* would, then, appear to be a place belonging to a particular typology unless, of course, these other *migadāyas* are to be seen simply as ideal replicas inspired by the great prototype of Isipatana. At the same time, if the *migadāya* is a typology of place, we might wonder whether all the depictions of the preaching of the Buddha involving the representation of *mṛgas* refer solely to Isipatana.

In the Buddhist interpretation of the *migadāya* certain accounts in the *Jātakas* (*Jātakatṭhavaṇṇanā*) are of particular importance. These accounts express some of the fundamental values of Buddhism, namely *ahiṃsā*, nonviolence, and compassion, *karuṇā*, towards living beings, and specifically towards animals. In the account of the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka*, to satisfy the appetite for meat of the king of Bārāṇasī, who interrupts their work every day to send them hunting, his subjects decide to supply an enclosed park (*uyyāna-*) with water and grow fodder there, and then drive a great number of *migas* to it and shut them in. They belong to two herds whose leaders are, respectively, Nigrodha, the future Buddha, and Sākha, the future Devadatta. The two deer are so magnificent that the king immediately grants them immunity. The king then goes hunting in the park but, to prevent unnecessary wounding of animals, Nigrodha suggests to Sākha the expedient of arranging for the

⁹ Cf. in particular the *Kaṇṇakatthalasutta*, MN II.4.10(90) (*ujuṇṇāyaṃ [...] kaṇṇakatthale migadāye*).

¹⁰ Cf. e.g. SN I.2.2.8.1; V.46(2).6(6).1 (variant: *añcanavane*); V.48(4).43(3).1 (*sāketē [...] añjanavane migadāye*).

¹¹ Cf. e.g. SN III.22(1).1(1).1; IV.35(1).131(8).1 (*bhaggesu [...] suṃsumāragire bhesakalāvane / bhesakalāvane migadāye*).

¹² Cf. e.g. SN I.1.4.8.1; I.4.2.3.1 (*rājagahe [...] maddakucchismiṃ / maddakucchimhi migadāye*).

life of a deer to be offered spontaneously to the king's kitchens every day, supplied in turn by each herd. But when it is the turn of a pregnant doe, while Sākha takes an inflexible position the generous Nigrodha goes to offer himself in her place. The king is moved, and not only spares him and the doe, but finally grants safety to the animals of every kind.

A somewhat similar account appears in the *Nandiyamiga Jātaka*,¹³ where, in much the same way, for the use of the king of Kosala his subjects enclose the *migas* in the *uyyāna* called Añjanavana, which we have already met as a *migadāya* of Sāketa – again in Kosala – visited by the Buddha. Here the future Buddha is the generous deer Nandiya, who first allows himself to be captured to save his parents, and then showing no fear offers himself to the arrow of the king, who, however, does not succeed in shooting it. And again the account ends with the king granting immunity to all the animals.¹⁴ Finally, an account close to that of the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka*, with the theme of the two herd leaders and the pregnant doe, is to be found in the Sanskrit *Mahāvastu* (I.359-366). Here the noble herd leader is similarly called Nyagrodha, the sovereign is Brahmadata king of Kāśī, but the “park” strategy makes no appearance, for the proposal to offer a victim a day for the royal kitchens is made in consequence of the sovereign's hunting in the forest (*vanaṣaṇḍa*, *vanakhaṇḍa*), during which many *mṛgas* are uselessly wounded and a great many of them fall prey to the other animals. Above all, however, the text identifies this wood where the deer are finally granted immunity precisely as the *mṛgadāya* of Ṛṣipattana (MV 1.366; this is the spelling here), *i.e.* Isipatana, and interprets the term *mṛgadāya* as meaning “gift to the *mṛgas*”, deriving the term *dāya* from the root *dā-*, “to give”.¹⁵

¹³ The text of this *Jātaka* itself contains explicit reference to the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka*.

¹⁴ As for the stanzas, as well-known the most ancient parts of this category of texts, in the *Nigrodhamiga Jātaka* they show no trace of the episode recounted in the parts in prose; some traces emerge in the stanzas of the *Nandiyamiga Jātaka*, at least insofar as they mention Añjanavana.

¹⁵ MV I.366: *mṛgāṇāṃ dāyo dinno mṛgadāyo ti ṛṣipattano*. However, in the *Mahāvastu* the spellings are usually *ṛṣipātana*, *ṛṣivadana* and *mṛgadāva*. Cf., again, Caillat 1968 and Levman 2014, pp. 395-396.

The same line seems to be followed by Buddhaghosa, who sees a *migadāya*, at Isipatana or elsewhere, as a place which he defines *ārāma*, or *uyyāna*, or again *ramaṇīyo bhūmibhāgo*, offered to the *migas* to dwell there in *abhaya*, *i.e.* in complete safety.¹⁶ Visiting the place of the Buddha's first sermon, the Chinese pilgrim Faxian (400 ca.) notes in his accounts of travels that “[t]here are always wild deer reposing in it for shelter” (Beal 1884, vol. 1, p. LXVII). In turn, the pilgrim Xuanzang (first half of 7th century) associates the site with the episode – which he briefly recounts – of the deer that are offered immunity thanks to the generosity of the Bodhisattva deer volunteering to take the place of the pregnant doe. As we have seen, this association is made in the *Mahāvastu*, and as in this text, also in Xuanzang the events occur in the forest; here, too, moreover, the meaning of the place name is given as “the forest given to the deer” (cf. Beal 1884, vol. 2, pp. 50-51).

It is, of course, obvious that these accounts which interpret the *migadāya* as a place where the deer are offered safe refuge reflect a conception, and a situation, clearly characterised in ideological terms: it is, in fact, a place where *ahiṃsā* reigns. At least as from the times of Aśoka, who had one of his inscribed pillars raised there, Isipatana became a major centre of worship and monastic residence. The archaeological remains show particular flourishing during the Gupta period; Xuanzang describes the place as rich in *stūpas*, and mentions a thriving community of monks residing there (cf. Beal 1884, vol. 2, pp. 45 ff.). However, if the *migadāyas* actually existed in the times of the Buddha or, better, as might be inferred, existed even before his preaching, then clearly we cannot see them as sites inspired by nonviolence, for this attitude towards animals derives from the movement of the *śramaṇas*, or in other words from Buddhism itself and the other new religious trends of the

¹⁶ *migānaṃ abhayadānavasena dinnattā migadāyasāṅkhāte ārāme*, SPK III.296, quoted in Levman 2014, p. 396, with reference to Isipatana; *uyyānaṃ [...] migānaṃ pana abhayavās' athāya dinnattā: migadāyo ti, vuccati*, SV, p. 349, with reference to Khema, “Quiet”, considered as an ancient name for Isipatana; [...] *ramaṇīyo bhūmibhāgo. So migānaṃ abhay' athāya dinnattā: migadāyo ti, vuccati*, SV, p. 471, with reference to Kaṇṇakatthala.

time. It is indeed noteworthy that through the narrative structure the two Pāli *Jātakas* bring together two types of “park”: one for animals to be captured, and another where the animals are granted safety.

2. In the *Arthaśāstra*

In some passages, the *Arthaśāstra* mentions *mṛgavanas*; Skt. *vana* is generally translated as “forest”, “wood”, “grove”, and we can obviously consider the compound essentially equivalent to the Pāli *migadāya*.

Before examining the passages it is, however, necessary to dwell more specifically on the meaning of the terms *vana* and *araṇya*, which we will also be encountering soon.¹⁷ Etymologically, and in the first place, *araṇya* designates territory other than the disciplined area of human activity: the wilderness, desert, forest, while *vana* is used eminently for a wild place where trees grow. Nevertheless, in the late Vedic and Brahmanical literature the two terms become largely interchangeable, at least from the point of view of their religious significance, which is that of a “forest” as the place favoured for practice of asceticism, self-sacrifice and spiritual questing.¹⁸ In much Sanskrit literature the “forest”, in general, is the realm of the unknown, of danger and the unfathomable, populated by fierce animals, fearsome creatures and “savages”. And yet, in the use we encounter in these pages, as well as in other compound words which in Pāli literature define some other places frequented by the Buddha,¹⁹ *vana* has a sense that we might describe as humanised; in fact, while still representing an area characterised by vegetation and external to human

¹⁷ On the forest and in general its role in ancient India, see, at least: Mayrhofer 1956-1980, s.v. *āraṇaḥ*, *āraṇyam*, *vānam*; Zimmermann 2011 (1982), *passim*; Sontheimer 1987; Malamoud 1989, Chapt. 4; Thapar 2001.

¹⁸ A good example is Manu VI.1-4.

¹⁹ See Pieruccini Forthcoming (2018).

settlements, at the same time it remains in constant contact with human activities.²⁰

Let us begin with the passage that describes the park reserved for the pleasure of the king and other “reserves”, all, of course, according to the approach taken in this text, conceived as the result of direct intervention by the sovereign, or in other words the fruit of state centralisation. Here is Patrick Olivelle’s translation:

2. He [the king] should allot wild tracts (*araṇyāni*) to recluses for Vedic study and Soma sacrifice [...] where all mobile and immobile creatures have been granted immunity (*abhaya-*) from harm.

3. He should get an animal reserve (*mṛgavanam*) [...] established for the king’s relaxation (*vihārārtham rājñah*) – a reserve with a single gate, protected by a moat, and containing shrubs and bushes bearing tasty fruit, trees without thorns, shallow ponds, tame deer and other game (*dāntamṛgacatuspadaṃ*), vicious animals with their claws and fangs removed, and male and female elephants and elephant cubs for the use in the hunt.

4. At its border or as dictated by the lay of the land, he should get another animal reserve (*mṛgavanam*) established where all the animals are treated as guests (*sarvātithimṛgam*).

5. He should also establish a forest for each product classified as forest produce, as well as factories attached to the produce forests (*dravyavana-*) and foresters living in the produce forests.

(AŚ II.2.2-5, transl. Olivelle 2013, pp. 101-102; my additions in brackets).²¹

²⁰ Cf. Zimmermann 2011 (1982), p. 50.

²¹ *pradiṣṭābhayasthāvarajāṅgamāni ca brahmasomāraṇyāni tapasvibhyo [...] prayacchet / 2 / [...] ekadvāraṃ khātaguptam svādupalagulmaguccham akaṅṭakidrumam uttānatoyāśayam dāntamṛgacatuspadaṃ bhagnanakhadaṃṣṭravayālam mārgayukahastihastinikalabham mṛgavanam vihārārtham rājñah kārayet / 3 / sarvātithimṛgam pratyante cānyan mṛgavanam bhūmivaśena vā niveśayet / 4 / kupyapradīṣṭānām ca dravyāṇām ekaikaśo vanāni niveśayet, dravyavanakarmāntān aṭavīś ca dravyavanāpāśrayāḥ / 5 /*

Elsewhere Olivelle defines the *mṛgavanas* as “game reserves [...] for the royal hunt” (Olivelle 2002, p. 35), and this meaning for the term is often taken for granted. The interpretation can apply to the first *mṛgavana* cited here, although the text makes no explicit reference apart from the mention of elephants destined for this purpose. Hunting is, of course, the sovereign’s classical pastime, but the description of the place evokes a greater assortment of pleasurable attractions and, effectively, a sort of park.²² It is worth noting that reference here is clearly to an enclosed area, given the mention of the one entrance and the moat (*ekadvāraṃ khātaguptaṃ*). The second *mṛgavana* evoked in the passage, in AŚ II.2.4, also gives rise to some significant questions. Let us compare the translation by R. P. Kangle, accentuated by his additions in brackets:

And he should establish on its border or in conformity with the (suitability of the) land, another animal park where all animals are (welcomed) as guests (and given full protection).

(AŚ II.2.4, transl. Kangle 1992 [1963], p. 59).

The point lies in the translation of the expression *sarvātithimṛgaṃ*; Olivelle remarks (note to AŚ II.2.4) that the compound is of doubtful interpretation. In a note to the passage, Kangle glosses: “this appears to be a sort of zoological garden” (Kangle 1992 [1963], p. 59). Olivelle holds that Kangle is probably exaggerating, but he adds “this may be a park with tame animals that people were forbidden to hunt” (note to AŚ II.2.4). In any case, the term *atithi* evokes the sacredness of the guest, and thus the utmost respect for those considered to be so.

Elsewhere, in fact, the *Arthaśāstra* mentions places of this kind, where the animals are guaranteed protection, calling them *abhayavanas*, the “woods of no fear”, without associating them with the needs of Vedic ascetics and sacrifices. For wild places reserved for the latter purpose, the passage quoted above uses,

²² While a similar, extremely pleasant place is undoubtedly a hunting park in the later Kāmandaka’s *Nīṭisāra*: on the subject see Singh 2016, pp. 324-326.

instead, the term *araṇya* (AŚ II.2.2; cf. III.9.26), although also connecting them with *abhaya*. Now, if we examine the occurrences of the terms *vana* and *araṇya* in the *Arthaśāstra*, we can see a clear-cut distinction in their use; they are certainly not interchangeable. In the case of *araṇya* reference is undoubtedly to the wilderness; as for the term *vana*, we will shortly be coming to it.

On the *abhayavanas* we read in particular:

The Superintendent of Abattoirs should impose the highest fine for tying up, killing, or injuring deer, game animals, birds, or fish that are legally protected from harm and that are living in sanctuaries (*abhayavana-*) [...].
(AŚ II.26.1, transl. Olivelle 2013, p. 157, my additions in brackets).²³

A couple of other mentions of the *abhayavanas* in the *Arthaśāstra* fully bear out the protected status granted to the animals in these places.²⁴ We may certainly conclude that also the *mṛgavana* of AŚ II.2.4, where animals have to be treated as guests, has to be considered an *abhayavana*.

Instead, elsewhere in the *Arthaśāstra* we find perfectly clear reference to a *mṛgavana* as a place where the *mṛgas* held there are destined to supply meat and skin:

Between a deer forest and an elephant forest (*mṛgahastivanayoḥ*), deer are abundant, provide benefits

²³ *sūnādhyakṣaḥ pradiṣṭābhayānām abhayavanavāsīnām ca mṛgapaśupakṣimsatyānām bandhavadhahimsāyām uttamam daṇḍam kārayet* [...].

²⁴ Apart from the passage quoted above, where it appears twice in relation to a variation in the fine, the compound *abhayavana-* recurs in II.26.4 and III.10.31. In II.26.4, in the context of the tributes he is to exact, the order is for the Superintendent of Abattoirs to free in such places a sixth of the birds and *mṛgas*, which are normally killed and “not enclosed” (*aparigrhītānām*, II.26.3), should they be captured but still alive. In III.10.31 it is recommended to drive away without harming (*yathāvadyās*) the *mṛgas* of *abhayavanas* or “enclosed” found to be grazing where they should not. Cf. also II.26.14: if they become dangerous, the animals of every sort living in *abhaya* (*abhayacāriṇaḥ*) must be killed or led outside the protected areas (*guptisthānebhyo*).

with an abundance of meat and skin, cause little trouble with regard to fodder, and are easily controlled. (AŚ VIII.4.44, transl. Olivelle 2013, p. 342, my additions in brackets).²⁵

In the passages quoted so far, we have seen mention of produce forests (*dravyavana-*) and, here above, elephant forests. In the *Arthaśāstra* *vana* has in fact the meaning of a very clearly delimited and regulated place for production and breeding:

Forest preserves (*vanaparigraho*) for game animals, deer, produce, and elephants – these constitute “forest” (*vanam*). (AŚ II.6.6, transl. Olivelle 2013, p. 109, my additions in brackets).²⁶

In AŚ II.17 we find a detailed list of the products supplied by the *vanas*: trees, animals, metals, and so on. As for the animals, the *Arthaśāstra* attributes particular importance to the *vanas* for elephants, which the first passage quoted above then goes on to deal with.²⁷ Recurrent in the text is the compound *dravyahastivana*, which seems to sum up the main purposes of the *vanas*: “produce and elephant forest”.²⁸

To summarise, then, the *Arthaśāstra* seems to indicate various categories of *mṛgavanas*: places where animals are kept for the sovereign’s pleasure and which probably also constitute his personal hunting reserves, places where, by contrast, the animals are granted safety and protection, and then sorts of farms for the purpose of produce. Note that these different categories can go under the same name thanks also to the polysemy of the term *mṛga*, emerging clearly in the passages

²⁵ *mṛgahastivanayoḥ mṛgāḥ prabhūtāḥ prabhūtamāmsacarmaupakāriṇo mandagrāsāvakleśīnaḥ suniyamyāś ca.*

²⁶ *paśumṛgadravayahastivanaparigraho vanam.* *Paśu* might be translated differently (“cattle”).

²⁷ Specifically on elephants in the *Arthaśāstra* cf. Olivelle 2016.

²⁸ Detailed analyses of the *dravyavanas* and the *hastivanas* of AŚ VII.11.13-16 and VII.12.6-12 confirm that these are the two fundamental categories. There is also one occurrence of the compound *mṛgadravavyavana* (AŚ IV.10.4).

quoted from the *Arthaśāstra*, where the term evidently is not only meant to apply to deer and suchlike.

Some further remarks have to be made on the two *mṛgavanas* of AŚ II.2.3-4. Zimmermann erroneously bundles them together in his discussion, taking the whole passage to describe a place where animals – the dangerous ones having been made harmless – are allowed to enjoy *abhaya*, and having in mind an institution similar to the Achaemenid imperial park mentioned by Xenophon (Zimmermann 2011 [1982], p. 61). The Achaemenid imperial park, *i.e.* the celebrated *parádeisos*, according to the term with which, as from Xenophon, the Greek authors reproduced the original Persian designation meaning “enclosed garden”, is, however, explicitly taken by Xenophon to have to do with the sovereign’s hunting activities.²⁹ Actually, if anything, it is only the *mṛgavana* of AŚ II.2.3 that shows some affinity with the Achaemenid institution. This park for recreation and, presumably, hunting could in fact come within the area of the influences exerted by the Achaemenid world on the early Imperial patterns in India, long suggested by scholars. As said before, the *mṛgavana* of AŚ II.2.4 has to be considered, instead, an *abhayavana*.

Now, the concept of nonviolence applied to animals and the wish to protect them according to these principles came about, as we have said and as is widely recognised, with the movements of the *śramanas*, which gave rise to Buddhism, Jainism, and certain Brahmanic-Upanishadic currents. The Pāli Canon evidences use of the “parks” situated on the city limits being made not only the Buddha and his monks, but also by the wandering ascetics of other currents, as places for religious discussion and rest. It is in fact precisely in such “parks” that the textual tradition traces the origins of the first Buddhist monasteries.³⁰ In principle, we cannot rule out the possibility

²⁹ Cf. *Anabasis* I.2.7: ἐνταῦθα Κύρω βασιλεία ἦν καὶ παράδεισος μέγας ἀγρίων θηρίων πλήρης, ἃ ἐκεῖνος ἐθήρευεν ἀπὸ ἵππου, ὅποτε γυμνάσαι βούλοιο ἐαυτὸν τε καὶ τοὺς ἵππους: “Here Cyrus had a palace and a great park (*parádeisos*) full of wild animals, which he used to hunt on horseback whenever he wished to exercise himself and the horses” (my translation). On the Achaemenid *parádeisos* important studies are Lincoln 2003 and 2012.

³⁰ See Pieruccini Forthcoming (2018).

that, in the *Arthaśāstra*, the *abhayavanas* represent a concession to the principle of nonviolence and hospitality towards religious wanderers; in short, we might conjecture a form of official protection for certain places of this type as religious areas. Nevertheless, interpretation along these lines does not appear to be borne out by the passages in which the *abhayavanas* are mentioned in the text. On the other hand, the text is quite explicit about the need to protect living creatures in the wild areas reserved for the Vedic ascetics, in accordance with the well-known ideal of pacification of all the natural world which applies to the forest places inhabited by *ṛṣis* or *vānaprasthas*.³¹

Possibly closer to the point is a brief note by T. R. Trautmann, who, while considering the *mṛgavana* mentioned in AŚ II.2.3 a “kind of pleasure-grove”, and referring in general to places where hunting appears to be banned, holds that “[w]e should probably infer from this that hunting was going on at a scale that caused animal numbers to decline, and that kings took steps to protect animals because of it” (Trautmann 2012, p. 103). Although the idea of real ecological decline might be somewhat exaggerated, it is not entirely implausible to conjecture the existence of repopulation farms situated preferably “at the border” of the royal hunting and pleasure park.

3. Conclusions

The questions to raise at this point are obvious. In the first place, can we find correspondence between one of the *Arthaśāstra* typologies and the *migadāyas* which tradition associates with the episodes in the Buddha’s life? An answer that immediately comes to mind takes us in the direction of the *abhayavanas*, but, as we have seen, tempting as the hypothesis may be, the evidence does not suffice for a sure interpretation.

³¹ Let us remark that the *Arthaśāstra* mentions also the *tapovana*, “ascetic grove”; the term appears a couple of times with reference to disputes over the limits (AŚ III.9.23), or a fine for cutting vegetation (AŚ III.19.29).

Secondly, given all the sources dating back to periods subsequent to the dissemination of Buddhism, one cannot help wondering what a *migadāya* might have been in the times of the Buddha, if we interpret his visits to such places as facts of some historical value. Here, rather than parks dedicated anachronistically to *ahimsā*, it would be more natural to picture some sort of reserve – for recreation, for stock raising, or even for the sovereign to go hunting, the latter being a possibility that emerges in the tales of the *Jātakas*. But it is also possible that in situating his first sermon at Isipatana, and repeating the scene with other sermons held here and in other *migadāyas*, the redactors of the texts had the precise intention of conveying, between the lines, a message of peace-making with the animal world. Whether or not this was in fact the intention, the setting shows great symbolic potential, which appears to have been well developed in the later Buddhist tradition. Like the pacified nature of the forest retreats of *ṛṣis* or *vānaprasthas* – a theme which runs through all Brahmanical literature – the *migadāyas* offer Buddhism the possibility to conceive of spaces in which total harmony is achieved between man and the animal world. In these terms, too, the transformation evoked by the *Jātakas* seems to be the most significant indication. Thus, whatever their origins may have been, the *migadāyas* ultimately emerge as a component of the Buddhist message of nonviolence and compassion.

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Last access to web sources January 2018.

- AŚ *Arthaśāstra*
 M *Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga*
 Manu *Manusmṛti*
 MN *Sutta Piṭaka, Majjhima Nikāya*
 MV *Mahāvastu*
Nandiyamiga Jātaka
Nigrodhamiga Jātaka
 SN *Sutta Piṭaka, Saṃyutta Nikāya*
 SPK *Sāratthappakāsinī*. Ed. by F. L. Woodward. 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society – Milford 1929-1937 (cf. Levman 2014).
 SV [*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*] *The Sumaṅgala-Vilāsinī, Buddhaghosa's Commentary on the Dīgha-Nikāya, Part II (Suttas 8-20)*. Ed. by W. Stede, from Materials Left Unfinished by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter. London: Pali Text Society – Luzac & Company 1931.
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