

A FEW GOOD WOMEN: A STUDY OF THE *LIU DU JI JING* (A SCRIPTURE ON
THE COLLECTION OF THE SIX PERFECTIONS) FROM LITERARY, ARTISTIC,
AND GENDER PERSPECTIVES

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Ching-mei Shyu

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This dissertation explores one of the Chinese *jātaka* collections, the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (A Scripture on the Collection of the Six Perfections) from literary, artistic, and gender perspectives. When I compare the features of the *Liu du ji jing* and those of other *jātakas* with Indian non-Buddhist narrative literature, I discover that they share a great deal of common ground—the linguistic, cultural, and stylistic milieu that nurtured them during their period of active development until they matured in relative isolation as distinct genres. Through centuries of constant development and reformulation, the *jātaka* became a genre in its own right, although its distinctive traits as a genre changed over time in response to the changing contexts of Buddhist teachings, resulting in works as different as the *Pāli Jātaka*, *Cariyāpiṭaka*, *Jātakamālā*, and the *Liu du ji jing*. In addition to their literary presentation, the *jātakas* and the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* were also propagated in visual art at Indian *stūpas*, but there they served a devotional rather than a didactical function. Given the sequence in which individual *jātaka* scenes are arranged and the inaccessible location of these scenes within the *stūpas*, it is unlikely that this artwork was intended to be read or understood by the viewer. Finally, I analyze and discuss the social and religious status of women as they are represented in the *jātakas* and what this tells us about the various Buddhist attitudes toward them. Here, the contrast between the way women

are portrayed in the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Pāli Jātakas* is significant. Unlike in any of the *Pāli jātakas*, in three stories of the *Liu du ji jing*, “Buddha” was a woman (in a past life) four times. We will find that the *Liu du ji jing* is among the few Buddhist scriptures with a positive attitude toward women, and thus, in the eyes of its authors at least, there were *a few good women*.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ching-mei Shyu, often known by her religious name, Chikai, was born in Tainan City, Taiwan. Before coming to pursue her doctoral degree in Asian Religions in the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University, as a Buddhist nun, Chikai spent three years in a Buddhist seminary at the Yuan Heng Temple in Kaohsiung, Taiwan; two years in her home temple, Fu Xing Temple, also in Kaohsiung; another two years finishing her BA in Religious Studies at Arizona State University; and another two years completing her MA in Asian Religions at University of Hawai'i.

After having spent years learning a wide range of Buddhist teachings and practice, she decided to take the step forward to deepen her knowledge of other religions and of Buddhism in various aspects. She was not encouraged, but criticized, by people who thought coming to the United States to study Buddhism was useless and would not contribute to her practice of Buddhism. But Chikai insisted on coming anyway. With a degree in fashion design, she spent two years studying different religions, both Western and Eastern, as a student majoring in religious studies. After having finished her undergraduate education, as an MA student, she developed a great interest in Chinese Buddhist textual studies under the guidance of Professor Jan Nattier at the University of Hawai'i. After having finished her master's degree, she was pleased to attend Cornell University for her doctoral degree. At Cornell, with Professor Daniel Boucher's guidance and assistance, she further expanded her interest in the range of perspectives that characterize her dissertation: Indian narrative literature, Indian Buddhism, Indian Buddhist art, women in Buddhism, and Mahāyāna Buddhism. Chikai is now about to complete her doctoral degree and reach her goal of becoming a Buddhist scholar after having spent twelve years in the United States. Using her years of training, she is striving to make a significant contribution to the field of Buddhist Studies.

To my mother, Sunu L. Shyu, my life-time supporter and believer

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teacher and considerable person that I was not able to find in my big stack of books. Although Professor Christopher Minkowski is not at Cornell now, at my final stage of writing this dissertation, he still tries to be, and is, very supportive and helpful anyway he can.

While in Japan, Professor Hubert Durt, as my advisor at the International College of Advanced Buddhist Studies, assisted me in achieving a wider perspective on the *jātaka* literature in terms of history, culture, religion, and language. Furthermore, I am grateful for the hospitality and assistance of Professors KARASHIMA Seishi, Jan Nattier, John R. McRae, and Stefano Zacchetti at the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University, Hachiōji. I particularly owe a great deal to Professor Nattier for her guidance, encouragement, and insight on every aspect of my research and life from the first day I met her. Words cannot express my debt of gratitude to her. Applying the karma theory to my relationship with Professor Nattier, I must have earned uncountable good merits in many of my previous lives to be able to have her in my life and to receive constant assistance from her as I did for last ten years.

There are families and friends to whom I would also like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude. My grandmaster Ven. Yuanhui and master Ven. Jianci have been very supportive of my twelve years of staying in the United States. My mother, Sunu Shyu, is always on my side no matter where I am or when I need her. Her ongoing support and encouragement is the cornerstone of my life. My sisters, Janet and Amy Shyu, encouraged me via the Internet every time I was frustrated with my work and depressed by the long periods of sunless days in Ithaca. I would like to thank Lu-Ya Chang and her husband Vincent Lin for their help during the many times when I encountered technical computer problems. With their expertise with computers and their patience and kindness, they resolved my problems every time. I am also grateful

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INTRODUCTION

Ever since I was a little girl, I have always liked stories. Visiting my grandmother, a housewife and a great storyteller, was the most memorable time of my childhood. We used to walk together to a market in the morning. On the way I was always enthralled by her interesting stories connected to everyone and everything we encountered. Embedded in my grandmother's stories were valuable lessons. As simple and ordinary as the stories seemed to be, they described the course of events for a wide range of individuals in our community. I still find myself caught up in the many questions presented by those stories. Through her storytelling, the points my grandmother tried to relate to me became more readily accessible and harder to forget. And through these stories, each with their own narrative background, plot, and characters, I became familiar with the world of significance that underlay them; I came to appreciate aspects of my Taiwanese cultural universe—the daily habits, family values, history, community, politics, religion, and economy—all of which constituted Taiwan's dramatic transition from Japanese to Taiwanese rule in the early twentieth century. My grandmother's stories created a moral web around every part of her social environment.

So too do the stories of the former lives of the Buddha or *jātaka* tales the subject of this discussion weave a rich tapestry of cultural, historical, and human information behind them—stories with a wide range of ramifications for Indian and Buddhist studies. The *jātakas* are a series of stories that recount how the Buddha-to-be perfects himself through the Bodhisattva career, sacrificing himself (or herself in only a few cases) over numerous lifetimes for the sake of all sentient beings. In these stories, the Bodhisattva has diverse existences; he appears in the form of men, women, and even animals.¹ However, many of these stories were suggested by scholars to be originally

¹ In none of these instances of the earlier *jātakas*, but later ones, is the Buddha identified in his previous

ancient Indian popular fables and were well known among people— many share a great deal of similarities with Indian popular stories and many lack any Buddhist features apart from the fact that the major figure of the stories is the Buddhist Bodhisattva.² It is worth considering that Buddhism adapted these popular tales and inserted them into its own religious context, forming a collection of stories of the previous lives of Śākyamuni Buddha.

Once assimilated into the Buddhists' teachings, the term "*jātaka*" came to refer exclusively to tales of the Buddha's former lives, but originally "*jātakas*" referred to the birth stories, or any important stories, of venerable persons, predating (and perhaps anticipating) the Buddha. I concur with Maurice Winternitz who wrote that Buddhists "sometimes invented pious legends, but more frequently they took fables, fairy tales, and amusing anecdotes from...[popular] literature, altering and adapting them for the purpose of religious propaganda."³ Reiko Ohnuma argues further. She writes:

From the very beginnings of the Buddhist tradition, the Buddha himself and the earliest Buddhists occasionally used traditional and popular/familiar tales and stories drawn from ancient Indian folklore and oral tradition to introduce their sermons, illustrate certain points, or explain unfamiliar concepts. At some point in time—perhaps based on the notion that knowledge of his previous lives was an essential component of the Buddha's enlightenment—some of the most exalted heroes of such stories came to be identified as past births of the Buddha himself.⁴

In the process, the *jātakas* became significant in several respects. They are one of the oldest collections of Indian popular stories reflecting a wide range of aspects of long history of ancient India.⁵ That is to say, the *jātaka* literature not only contains a wealth

birth with an animal. He is identified only with famous sages and teachers of olden times (Rhys Davids 1971, 196).

² In chapter 1, I discuss the extent to which Indian Buddhist narrative can be distinguished from non-Buddhist Indian narrative.

³ Winternitz 1908-1926, vol. 7, 491.

⁴ Ohnuma 1997, 19.

⁵ Rhys Davids (1971, 189) further points out: "[The *jātaka* book] is so full of information on the daily habits and customs and beliefs of the people of India, and on every variety of the numerous questions

of Buddhist teachings, it also provides evidence about the daily life and modes of thought in ancient India, evidence that is essential to both Buddhist studies and the study of ancient Indian popular tales and society.⁶

On the basis of the characteristics they share with other narratives, which throughout their history and development, the older stories were preserved, reshaped, and modeled in a Buddhist guise. Storytellers, presumably Buddhist monks and/or propagandists, replaced the major characters in the Indian popular tales with the Bodhisattva and changed narrative elements in order to render them effective pedagogic vehicles for Buddhist teachings. These *jātakas* are available today as tales disseminated orally in many Buddhist countries, preserved in various printed editions of the Buddhist canon, and depicted iconographically at cult centers. In addition to appearing in *jātaka* collections, many *jātaka* stories are also found in other types of Buddhist literature, particularly in the *Sūtra* and *Vinaya Piṭakas*. Besides those found in Buddhist literature, it is possible that some *jātaka* stories were lost during their transmission while others were disseminated only through oral recitation and have not been incorporated in any of the Buddhist canons. According to K. R. Norman, “There is also a collection of 50 *jātaka* stories current in South-East Asia, generally referred to as ‘apocryphal’ because they are not canonical.”⁷ Peter Skilling prefers the term “non-classical” instead of “non-canonical.” He writes: “Non-classical *jātakas* are ‘birth-stories’ modeled on the classical stories but, unlike the latter, transmitted outside of the canon and only in certain regions.”⁸

that arise as to their economic and social conditions, that it is of the utmost importance to be able to determine the period to which the evidence found in this book is applicable.”

⁶ Chavannes (1910-1934, xvi) suggests that Buddhism does not actually invent the stories but derives them from the folklores of both India and other cultures, such as the Greek.

⁷ Norman 1983, 177.

⁸ Skilling 2006, 130. Skilling (ibid., 131) further suggests that “Non-classical *jātakas* may be transmitted separately, in their own right, and remain independent or ‘uncollected,’ or they may be collected with other texts into analogies.”

CLASSICAL JĀTAKAS COLLECTIONS

Indic *Jātaka* Collections

The canonized or classical *jātaka* collections are prodigious and appear in various different languages. How many collections are there contained the *jātakas*? There are the *Pāli jātaka*, *Cariyāpiṭaka*, and *Buddhavaṃsa* in the *Pāli* canon, several *Jātakamālās* in Sanskrit, and several collections in Chinese and other languages. The tradition as recorded in the Sinhalese chronicles claims that the Theravādin canon was written down in Sinhala around the first century BCE, but unfortunately that version is not extant today. The current *Pāli jātaka* collection, *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*, is a commentary retranslated from Sinhala into Pāli during the fifth or sixth centuries CE, possibly by Buddhaghosa. The *Cariyāpiṭaka*, consisting of thirty-five *jātakas*, catalogued into seven perfections, in the *Khuddaka-nikāya* of the *Tipiṭaka*, is another collection, but its date of composition is controversial. In addition, one of the *Jātakamālās*,⁹ consisting of thirty-four stories, is a work of Āryaśūra, dated to approximately the sixth century CE and is categorized to suit the four perfections of generosity, morality, forbearance, and exertion. I further discuss these collections of the *jātakas* in Chapter 1.

Chinese *Jātaka* Collections

In the Chinese *jātakas*,¹⁰ there are at least nine *jātaka* collections claimed to be translated from Indic to Chinese from as early as the third century CE, but some of them are considered as authentic while others remain in question. In Chinese Buddhist

⁹ There are other versions of the *Jātakamālā*, such as Haribhaṭṭa's and Gopadatta's, but for this dissertation I just include Āryaśūra's.

¹⁰ I intend to include an overview of the Chinese *jātaka* literature with greater bibliographic detail in the near future for a project investigating the correspondence of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* with other *jātaka* collections, in both Indic and Chinese languages. Therefore, for now I just briefly mention these Chinese *jātaka* collections as they exist in the *Taishō*. For more detailed information and references, see Chavannes 1910. Chavannes translated five hundred *jātakas* from Chinese into French, including a summary of each story in each *jātaka* collection and extensive notes and reference.

texts, many of the translations from the earlier period of Chinese translation of Indian Buddhist scriptures, from the mid-second century through the mid-third century CE, have been lost and many others assigned to this initial period in the later *Taishō* canon are of doubtful authenticity. The *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集, (*A Collection of Records Concerning the Rendering of the Tripitaka*), the most extant reliable source for identifying authentic Chinese Buddhist translation, was compiled by Sengyou 僧佑 (completed ca. 515 CE). In other words, scholars in the field of Chinese Buddhist studies usually depend on the *Chu san zang ji ji* to determine the authenticity of the scriptures in the *Taishō* canon. In the case of authentic texts, it indicates that they were translated from some Indic or central Asian language, not fabricated in China.¹¹

Authentic Translations

1. The *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (T. 152), translated by Kang Senghui 康僧會 (?–280) in the third century CE. Among the Chinese collections of the *jātakas*, the *Liu du ji jing* is considered the earliest authentic translation.¹²
2. The *Sheng jing* 生經 (T. 154), rendered into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa in the year 285, carries sixty-two stories in five fascicles.¹³
3. The *Xian yu jing* 賢愚經 (T. 202) contains sixty-nine stories in thirteen fascicles and is attributed to Huijue and others 慧覺等 in the year of 445.
4. The *Da zhuang yan lun jing* 大莊嚴論經 (T. 201), a work by Aśvaghōṣa, with the translation attributed to Kumārajīva, contains ninety stories in fifteen fascicles.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of Chinese Buddhist bibliographical catalogues and the *Chu san zang ji ji*, see Tokuno 1990, 31-74 and Link 1960 and 1961.

¹² However, the *Xing qi jing* is not mentioned in the *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集, so is not considered as an authentic text; even though it is dated earlier than the *Liu du ji jing*.

¹³ The *Taishō* version of the *Sheng jing* contains fifty-five stories, but the last story consists of eight stories, so it ultimately contains sixty-two stories in total.

5. There are also many individual *jātakas* collected as separate texts in Chinese—these are mostly contained in the *Taishō Canon*, volumes 3 and 4.

Questionable Translations

1. The *Xing qi jing* 興起經 (T. 197), which contains ten stories in two fascicles, was translated by Kang Mengxiang 康孟詳 in the late second century CE, but is not mentioned in the *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集. Therefore, it is not considered authentic.¹⁴
2. Like the *Xing qi jing*, the *Pu sa ben yuan jing* 菩薩本緣經 (T. 153) is not mentioned in the *Chu san zang ji ji*, and like the *Liu du ji jing*, the *Pu sa ben yuan jing* emphasizes and elevates the importance of the practice of the perfections of the Bodhisattva. However, unlike the *Liu du ji jing*, it includes only two perfections, *dāna* (generality) and *śīla* (morality).
3. The *Pu sa ben sheng man jing* 菩薩本生鬘經 (T. 160) is thought to be a translation of the *Jātakamālā* by Shao De 邵德 (960-1127) and gathers thirty-four stories in sixteen fascicles.
4. The *Pu sa ben xing jing* 菩薩本行經 (T. 155) contains twenty-eight stories in three fascicles, but its translator is anonymous.
5. The *Za bao zang jing* 雜寶藏經 (T. 203) consists of 121 stories attributed to Jijiaye 吉迦夜 and Tanyao 曇曜 of the Song dynasty. The *Za bao zang jing* is a rather complicated text, including not only *jātaka* tales but also *Avadāna* and other genres. By the time of Sengyou, it was lost, so the current *Za bao zang jing* is questionable.

¹⁴ The authority of the *Chu san zang ji ji* will be further discussed in this chapter.

When we consider the multiplicity of *jātaka* sources, the Chinese legacy surely provides an ample measure of materials. In terms of quantity, there are more *jātaka* collections in Chinese than in any other language. Moreover, versions of the same stories appear in different permutations by different translators from different time periods. In terms of antiquity, many *jātaka* stories and collections are rendered into Chinese as early as the third century CE. Thus, in a study of the history and development of the *jātaka* tales from textual, artistic, and thematic perspectives, the Chinese materials should not be neglected and deserve more attention than they have received. For this reason, I intend to study one particular Chinese collection of *jātaka* tales, the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (*A Scripture on the Collection of the Six Perfections*), as a preliminary step in a long-term research project that treats the *jātaka* tales in these languages and from these perspectives.

Unlike the intensively and broadly studied *jātakas* in Pāli and Sanskrit, the Chinese *jātakas* have not yet been fully explored. Almost a century ago Édouard Chavannes, pioneer scholar translated five hundred *avadāna/jātaka* stories from several collections of *sūtras*, *vinayas*, or *abhidharmas* from Chinese into French, produced a valuable annotations and a concordance.¹⁵ The extreme importance of the Chinese version of the *jātakas* and *avadānas* is, in Chavannes' words, “dans une grand

¹⁵ Chavannes translated collections of *avadāna* and *jātaka* tales, such as the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (1-88), *Jiu za pu yi jing* 舊雜譬喻經 T. 206 (89-155), *Ja pi yu jing* 雜譬喻經 T. 205 (156-195; 232-236), *Zhong jing zhuan za pi yu* 眾經撰雜譬喻 T. 208 (196-231), *Bai yu jing* 百喻經 T. 209 (237-333), *Shi song lu* 十誦律 T. 1435 (334-339), *Mo he seng qi lu* 摩訶僧祇律 T. 1425 (340-364), *Wu fen lu* 五分律 T. 1421 (365-371), *Si fen lu* 四分律 T. 1428 (372), *Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pi nai ye za shi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶雜事 T. 1451 (373-374), *Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pi nai ye po seng shi* 根本說一切有部毘奈破僧事 T. 1450 (375-390), *Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pi nai ye yao shi* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶藥事 T. 1448 (391-393), *Gen ben shuo yi qie you bu pi nai ye* 根本說一切有部毘奈耶 T. 1442 (395-399), *Za bao zang jing* 雜寶藏經 T. 203 (400-422), *Sheng jing* 生經 T. 154 (423-438), *Jing lu yi xing* 經律異相 T. 2121 (439-489), *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論 T. 1509 (490-492), *Chu yao jing* 出曜經 T. 212 (493-494), *Fa ju pi yu jing* 法句譬喻經 T. 211 (495-497), *Guo wang bu li xian ni shi meng jing* 國王不黎先泥十夢經 T. 148 (498), *Nai nu qi yu yin yuan jig* 奈女祇域因緣經 T. 553 (499), and *Tai zi xu da na jing* 太子須大拏經 T. 171 (500).

nombre de cas, antérieures aux textes qui ont été effectivement conservés en Inde. Elles nous fournissent souvent la date exacte et certaine qui est le *terminus* avant lequel le conte existait sous forme écrite.”¹⁶ Chavannes was the first scholar to realize the value of the Chinese version of the Buddhist *avadānas* and *jātakas*, but besides his work little has been done on the Chinese texts in the West.

In the field of *jātaka* literature, scholars have not only generally neglected the value of the Chinese *jātaka* collections but have also underestimated the importance, in particular, of the *Liu du ji jing*. The *Liu du ji jing*, organized in accordance with the six *pāramitās* or perfections, yields valuable insights into Buddhism, which I further discuss in Chapter 1. With its unique organization in terms of the six perfections of the Mahāyāna school, we might ask why the *Liu du ji jing*, a scripture of *jātakas* related to Mainstream Buddhism, arranges the stories using a format reflecting Mahāyāna doctrines. We are almost certain that the *Liu du ji jing* is attributed to Kang Senghui 康僧會. But did the scripture come to Kang Senghui as a whole, requiring only translation, or did he compile it from various texts circulated and translated independently, which he then incorporated into a single scripture? Did Kang Senghui intentionally integrate the six perfections into the scripture through careful ordering and editing of the stories as he translated? Did he himself add the prefatory section to each perfection in the scripture, which the fact that none of the *jātaka* collections have prefatory sections seems to indicate? I address all these questions in Chapter 1 while exploring the nature of the *Liu du ji jing*. Here I discuss only the life and career of Kang Senghui.

¹⁶ Chavannes 1910-1934, xvii. Throughout our discussion, I confirm Chavannes’s prescience about the value of the rich Chinese resources for the study of the *jātakas*.

KANG SENGHUI AND HIS WORK

Who is Kang Senghui? What does the tradition claim he is? What sources claim this? What was he said to have done? What do we know what he did? How much can we know about him from either secular or Buddhist record? There is fairly detailed information on the life of Kang Senghui in Sengyou's *Chu san zang ji*¹⁷ and Huijiao's 慧皎 *Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳¹⁸ and in Kang Senghui's own autobiographical remarks, such as in his prefaces to the *An ban shou yi jing* 安般守意經¹⁹ and to the *fa jing jing* 法鏡經.²⁰ Kang Senghui's biographies contain no record of his birth, but only of his death in 280 CE. Kang Senghui was of descendant of Kangju 康居 (Sogdiana?),²¹ but his ancestors stayed in India for many generations before his father moved to Jiaozhi 交趾, which today is in northern Vietnam, where he was born. The Buddhist center in China shifted from Luoyang to Jianye in the late Han period, and Kang Senghui arrived in Jianye in the year 247.²² Kang Senghui is described as the first monk propagating Buddhism in southern China in the third

¹⁷ T. 2145, 55. 96a29-97a17.

¹⁸ T. 2059, 50. 325a13-18 and 325b4-326b13. For a French translation of the biography in the *Gao seng zhuan* with detailed annotation, see Chavannes 1909.

¹⁹ It is preserved in the *Chu san zang ji*, 55. 42c29-43c3 and 43b24-43c3.

²⁰ T. 2145. 55.46c.

²¹ According to his biographies, Kang Senghui's ancestors were from Kangju, which is generally identified with Sogdian, but scholars such as Étienne de La Vaissière (2005, 72) suggest that this might refer to western foreigners, not only Sogdians, including those from mainland and insular Southeast Asia. According to La Vaissière (2005, 38), from 2 BCE to 4 CE, "Kangju extended from Ferghana to the Amu Dary near Merv and therefore encompassed Sogdiana."

²² After the decline of the Han dynasty, there were two major Buddhist centers in the Three Kingdoms Period: one was in Loyang 洛陽, of the northern Wei Kingdom, while the other was in Jianye 建業, of the southern Wu Kingdom. There were several Buddhist translations made in the northern Wei Kingdom attributed to foreign translators, such as Dharmakala 曇柯迦羅, An Xuan 安玄, and Yan Fotiao 嚴佛調. Not only had some translations been made in the Wei Kingdom, but an important contribution was the practice of including praise (*fan bai* 梵唄) in Buddhist ritual, begun by Cao Zhi 曹植, a son of Cao Cao. By the Three Kingdom periods, Buddhism had not become widely known beyond northern China until Zhi Qian introduced it into the Wu Kingdom. As a result of Zhi Qian's efforts, southern China became a major center of Buddhism in that period. In southern China, the Wu Kingdom, in a consolidated political situation, developed intensive Buddhist study and made great progress in translation, especially with Zhi Qian establishing the basis and Kang Senghui building on it. This was Buddhism's first arrival in southern China.

century CE and as a converter of emperors to Buddhism. From Chinese Buddhist scriptural catalogues, we learn that Kang Senghui was not only a translator but also a commentator, composer, and missionary. In recognition of these achievements, Zürcher has christened Kang Senghui “the sinicized Sogdian preacher.”²³

How Prolific and Important Was Kang Senghui as a Translator?

Kang Senghui started his translation career in the southern Chinese Kingdom of Wu in the third century CE. According to the *Chu san zang ji ji*:

六度集經九卷 (或云六度無極經或云度無極集或云[8]雜無極經)
吳品五卷 (凡有十品今闕) 右二部。凡十四卷。魏明帝時。
天竺沙門康僧會。以吳主孫權孫亮世所譯出。²⁴

The *Liu du ji jing*, nine fascicles (it is also called the *Liu du wu ji jing*, the *Du wu ji* or *Za wu ji jing*); the *Wu pin*, five fascicles (there were ten chapters in all, but today they are not all extant). These two titles to the right, fourteen fascicles in total at the time of Wei Mingdi [227-239], were translated by an Indian śramaṇa, Kang Senghui under Wu rulers, periods of Sun Quan [222-252] [and] Sun Liang [252-258].

Based on the information provided by Sengyou above, both the *Liu du ji jing* and *Wu pin* by Kang Senghui were produced in the third Century CE, but inconsistencies appear in two lines of this description. Sengyou says that two titles were rendered in the reign of Emperor Ming of Wei (227-239)—but how could they also have been rendered in the time of Sun Quan (222-252) and Sun Liang (252-258)? There is no overlap between Emperor Ming of Wei and Sun Liang. That must be some mistake. Fortunately, in the section of his biography in the *Chu san zang ji ji*, Kang Senghui is said to have arrived in Jianye 建業 in the year 247 (赤烏十年), before producing his

²³ Zürcher 1959, 36.

²⁴ T. 2145.55. 7 a25-b1.

translation. Making the best sense we can of the contradictory evidence, we must assume that the translations could only have been produced in southern China at the time of the Wu Kingdom, in the second half of the third century CE, between the years of 247 and 258, not in the time of Emperor Ming of Wei. Scholars in the field of early Chinese Buddhist translations have not yet discovered any other supporting data, but Chavannes (1910-1934, ii) claims that Kang Senghui started his career and activities in Buddhism after arriving in Jianye in 247 CE, during the time of Sun Quan. But we still do not know why Sengyou suggests that Kang Senghui was translating during the time of Emperor Ming of Wei.

As stated in the *Chu san zang ji ji*, Kang Senghui produced two translations, the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Wu Pin* 吳品, but only the former was extant at the time of Sengyou and is also extant today. Without doubt, the *Liu du ji jing* is the only extant and available text reliably attributable to Kang Senghui. But what is the *Wu pin*, also known as *Dao pin* 道品 or *Xiao pin* 小品? Is it another translation of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā prajñāpāramitā* (*Daśasahasrikā prajñāpāramitā*)²⁵ or *Xiao pin bo re* 小品般若, as NANJIO Bunyiu, Chavannes, and E. Zürcher suggest? Zürcher further indicates that it is related to the *Da ming du jing* 大明度經 (T. 225), which is another version and translation of the *Aṣṭasahasrikā prajñāpāramitā*.²⁶ These scholars' suggestions are very interesting, yet require further study. According to Zürcher, two very early commentaries are presumably connected with Kang Senghui, the commentary on the *Yin chi ru jing* 陰持入經 (T. 1694) and "the anonymous glosses which are contained in the first chapter of Zhi Qian's [*Da ming du jing* 大明度經] T. 225. They are very probably a product of the same school as the work of T. 1694." Following Zürcher's argument, it is likely that *Wu pin* was also called *Xiao pin* (T.

²⁵ Chavannes quotes from Najio's catalogue and suggests that it is a translation of the *Daśasahasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, but we have no proof of it (NANJIO 1883, 4-5; Chavannes 1909, 210 note.5).

²⁶ Zürcher 1959, 53.

2059:50. 326a21) or *Dao pin* in the *Gao seng zhuan*. Interestingly, the *Xiao pin* also refers to the shorter *Prajñāpāramitā*, like the *Da ming du jing*, whereas the *Dao pin* sometimes refers to the *Dao xing jing*, another translation of the *Aṣṭahasrikā prajñāpāramitā*. Since there is no preface on the perfection of wisdom in the *Liu du ji jing*, my first suspicion was that the first chapter of the *Da ming du jing* might have something to do with it. But, in order to confirm this, I plan to conduct further research in the near future on the connection of these terms in the *Da ming du jing*, the *Liu du ji jing*, and Kang Senghui's other works.

The *Taishō Canon* (a modern, oft-used edition of the Chinese Buddhist canon) contains two collections ascribed to Kang Senghui, the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Jiu za pi yu jing* 舊雜譬喻經 (T. 206). It is worth mentioning that both the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Jiu za pi yu jing* are associated with the *avadāna/jātaka* genres. However, the *Jiu za pi yu jing* is not mentioned in Sengyou's *Chu san zang ji ji*, but is mentioned for the first time in the biography of Kang Senghui in the *Gao seng zhuan*, by Huijiao.²⁷ So should the *Jiu za pi yu jing* be attributed to Kang Senghui or not? Chavannes seems to suggest that the *Jiu za pi yu jing* is attributable to Kang Senghui, but views its authenticity as a *jātaka* collection with skepticism. In Chavannes' words: "On peut même dire qu'ici le traducteur, non seulement a choisi les textes lui-même, mais encore les a arrangés à sa guise en les écourtant fort."²⁸ It seems to Chavannes that the *Jiu za pi yu jing* is a counterfeit scripture, composed in China by Kang Senghui, in which the stories are translated with a certain degree of modification. I agree with Chavannes's claim that the *Jiu za pi yu jing* is a forgery and suggest that that is probably why it is not listed in the *Chu san zang ji ji*.

²⁷ T. 2059. 50. 326a21.

²⁸ Chavannes 1910-1934, iv; 1909, 210.

But there are two types of evidence generally used by scholars in the field of early Chinese Buddhist textual studies to evaluate the authenticity of scriptural attributions: external and internal.²⁹ For external evidence, we often depend on Sengyou's *Chu san zang ji ji*, and in this case, we find that the *Jiu za pi yu jing* is not on Sengyou's list of Kang Senghui's translations, which suggests that Huijiao mistakenly assigned the scripture to Kang Senghui. In addition to external evidence, sometimes internal evidence, such as the vocabulary and style of the texts in question is available. Without going through the whole collection in these two scriptures, the fact that there are two stories in the *Jiu za pi yu jing* that parallel stories 20 and 21 in the *Liu du ji jing* invites the possibility that the *Jiu za pi yu jing* was translated by the same person who translated the *Liu du ji jing*. However, analyzing them side by side, I notice a great deal of difference between the texts in the two collections. For instance, story number 20 of the *Liu du ji jing* and number 2 of the *Jiu za pi yu jing* are very similar in content,³⁰ but their styles and terminology indicate they must be the work of different translators.³¹ The terminology and style in the *Liu du ji jing* is antiquated

²⁹ Zürcher 1996, 2.

³⁰ This assumes that both stories come from the same, or very nearly the same, original, but that the translator of T. 206 decided to condense some tiny details from its original. It is also possible that these two stories, although very similar in content, in fact come from different originals.

³¹ As for the terminology and the style, the two stories are quite dissimilar. T. 152, story no. 20 (hereafter T. 152-20) is more stylish and has more classic Chinese elements. For example, *zi* 子, *ye* 也, *yi* 矣, and so on, occur throughout the story, whereas T. 206, story no. 2 (hereafter T. 206-2) has more vernacular elements such as *bian* 便, *yan* 言, *ze* 則, and *yu* 與, which are widely used in the story. Do the two stories share any vocabulary? Yes, some. For instance, the terms “*ganlu haoguo* 甘露好果” and “*furen youji* 夫人有疾” only appear in the *Taishō* four times in the same story (our story) in four different versions: T. 152, 206, 2122, and 2123. This result tells us that there is a correlation among these four versions, and it is more likely that the latter three copied T. 152 more or less faithfully since Kang Senghui's T. 152 is considered the earliest *jātaka* tale in the Chinese Canon. But, as in the case of T. 206-2, its translator seems to have stopped copying T. 152-20 after two lines since there is no other terminology shared by both stories. Aside from these two terms shared by both texts, their terminology is very dissimilar.

Furthermore, when the term “hunter” is rendered in T. 152-20, it is consistently expressed using *lieshi* 獵士 (vol. 3: 13a18; 13a20; 13b10; 13b15; 13b28), and throughout T. 152, Kang Sengui applies *lieshi* or *lie* to refer to a hunter. However, in T. 206-2, there are variations for the term “hunter,” such as *lieshi* 獵師 (vol. 4: 511a27-28; b06), *sheliezhe* 射獵者 (a29), and *shelieren* 射獵人 (a29). In addition, within the dialogues between the peacock and the king, the verb *yue* 曰 is applied in T. 152-20,

compared to that in the *Jiu za pi yu jing*. It is more likely that the translator of the *Jiu za pi yu jing* accessed and consulted the *Liu du ji jing* in the process of making his translation. In sum, having made only two translations (the *Liu du ji jing* and *Wu pin*), Kang Senghui may not have been a prolific translator, but the quality of his work is exceptional, as commented by Sinologist Yu Liming 俞理明, who claims that, owing to his enhanced understanding of Chinese culture and language, Kang Senghui was the first translator in Chinese Buddhist history to make Buddhist texts stylish.³²

Was Kang Senghui More Productive as a Commentator than as a Translator?

Besides being a translator, Kang Senghui was also a commentator. Kang Senghui wrote quite a few commentaries and prefaces, even though some of them unfortunately have been lost. Only his commentary and preface on T. 602 *An ban shou yi jing* 安般守意經 and the preface on T. 322 *Fa jing ji* 法鏡經 are extant. Kang Senghui's Buddhism was a continuation of the northern school of *dhyāna* of An Shigao 安世高. He described himself in the commentary of the *An ban shou yi jing* as receiving great benefit from Han Lin 韓林, Pi Ye 皮業, and Chen Hui 陳慧 of the school of An Shigao. With Chen Hui, Kang Senghui wrote a commentary to the *An*

whereas *bai* 白 is frequently used in T. 206-2. When the peacock gives a list of three mistakes they have made, as seen in T. 152-20, the terms used are *yizhe* 一者...*erzhe* 二者 and ...*sanzhe* 三者...(vol. 3: 13b10-11.), whereas in T. 206-2, they are expressed as *yiyue* 一曰...*eryue* 二曰 and ...*sanyu* 三曰 (vol. 4: 511a27-28).

As for style, neither T. 152-20 nor T. 206-2 apply the usage of four syllables as is common, but instead both randomly choose different numbers of syllables; there are some of four, five, six, seven, eight (even arguably four and four), or ten (five and five). But, in general, as mentioned above, the style in T. 152-20 is more like classic and ancient Chinese, whereas T. 206-2 is more vernacular and modern. Further, in T. 206-2, the translator has a habit of using a compound of *xiang* 相 + V, which is used in T. 206 approximately sixty-four times, but never occurs in T. 152-20. It appears in T. 206-2, for examples as *xiangyu* 相與 (vol. 4: 511a13), *xiangqu* 相取 (vol. 4: 511a15), *xiangsha* 相殺 (vol. 4: 511a15), *xiangsui* 相隨 (vol. 4: 511a05; 511a28). As far as we can see, the texts must have been translated in different periods of time. Therefore, while T. 152 can be attributed to Kang Senghui without a doubt, T. 206 must be assumed to have been translated by someone else who worked later than Kang Senghui.

³² Yu Liming 1993, 19.

ban shou yi jing.³³ In regard to this work, Zürcher comments, “Kang Senghui’s preface to the *An-pan Shou-i ching* [*An ban shou yi jing*] in CSTCC [*Chu san zang ji ji*] VI, is one of the most important documents of third-century Chinese Buddhism.”³⁴ Although Zürcher did not explain why he made this comment, I suspect that it was because it indicates a certain literary activity and because we can use it to determine some facts about the state of Chinese translation at that time. In Arthur Link’s words, “[r]eference is therefore made to the *An-pan-shou-yi ching* preface wherever it seemed relevant to....K’ang Seng-hui’s introduction to the Perfection of *Dhyāna*.”³⁵ That is, the parallel between the prefaces of the *An ban shou yi jing* 安般守意經 and the Perfection of *Dhyāna* indicate identical authorship.

Zürcher further explains that “From a doctrinary [doctrinal?] point of view, the most interesting documents are no doubt the introductory sections to five of the six parts of K’ang Seng-Hui’s *Liu-tu-chi-ching* [*Liu du ji jing*].... the section on the *Prajñāpāramitā* has been lost, which was written by Kang Senghui himself.”³⁶ Judging from his interesting remarks on these sections, it is very likely that Kang Senghui wrote the prefatory material himself, especially the preface to the Perfection of Meditation in the *Liu du ji jing*. In addition, some suspect that Kang Senghui may have also been responsible for T. 1694 *Yin chi ru jing zu* 陰持入經注,³⁷ but this conjecture needs further investigation. Furthermore, Kang Senghui was also a composer, and according to the *Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳, he wrote Buddhist hymns,

³³ T. 602. 15. 163c03 as well as in the *Chu san zang ji ji* (T. 2145. 55. 43b27) and the *Gao seng zhuan* (T. 2059. 50. 324a28).

³⁴ Zürcher 1959, 338 n.160.

³⁵ Link 1976, 102. Link (1974, 209) elsewhere points out that “Seng-hui largely drew on one important passage describing the practice of *dhyāna* by the Bodhisattva in the *T’an-tzu jui-ying pen-ch’i ching* [太子瑞應本起經 T. 185]...and on his knowledge of An Shih-kao’s translation of the *Ta-an-pan shou-i ching*.”

³⁶ Zürcher 1959, 53.

³⁷ The determination that Kang Senghui is the translator of the *Liu du ji jing*, the *Yin chi ru jing zu*, and the mystery scripture of the *Wu Pin* (that connects with Zhi Qian’s *Da ming du jing*) needs further examination.

which are not extant today.³⁸ Overall, Kang Senghui is more a writer of commentaries, prefaces, and hymns than a translator. But, how does the fact that Kang Senghui is a writer help us determine the organization of the *Liu du ji jing*? As I discuss further in Chapter 1, I suggest that Kang Senghui, given his habit of and interest in writing, might have incorporated some of his own ideas and writings while translating and compiling the *Liu du ji jing*.

Was Kang Senghui a Significant Figure in the Imperial Court?

In addition to his work, according to the hagiography in the *Chu san zang ji ji*, Kang Senghui was a missionary and a very influential figure in the imperial court.³⁹ However, he is not mentioned in any of the official Chinese history records at all. If he were as important an advisor to the emperors as his hagiography states, the official Chinese histories would not have failed to mention him. I concur with Link and Zürcher that the biographical section of the *Chu san zang ji ji* is questionable because it doesn't cite any sources, and thus it is possible that it merely collected material from various earlier hagiographic collections.⁴⁰ In addition, as in Zürcher's words, "the life of Kang Senghui is obscured by legend and the story of Sun Hao [孫皓] and Kang Senghui seems to be apocryphal," and "Kang Senghui was attached to the court as a kind of Buddhist magician while Wang Yuan was on the Daoist side. Kang Senghui's activities as a translator were rather limited."⁴¹ Given the extant available evidence,

³⁸T. 2059. 50. b20-29. That is, when the *Gao seng zhuan* was compiled, the hymn composed by Kang Senghui was extant. But this record does not occur in the *Chu san zang ji ji*, so it is very possible his achievement as a composer of hymns is not veritable.

³⁹ Chavannes (1910-1934, ii) seems to have viewed the biography of Kang Senghui without much critical skepticism, so he characterizes Kang Senghui's actual interaction with, and effect upon, Emperor Sun Quan as follows: "Seng-houei était d'un tempéramen bien différent; cet apôtre zélé prétendit imposer sa foi au souverain lui-même; il provoqua un miracle pour se procurer une vraie relique dont les propriétés surnaturelles frappèrent Shuen K'iun de stupeur."

⁴⁰ Link 1960, 33.

⁴¹ Zürcher 1959, 52-53.

we can only be certain of Kang Senghui's achievements as the translator of the *Liu du ji jing* and the commentator of the *An ban Shou yi jing* and the *Fa jing jing*, but not that he was a very important figure in the Wu Kingdom, as his hagiography states. With only one translation extant, some might claim that Kang Senghui was not very prolific, and therefore should not be considered as significant as other translators who produced numerous translations. However, Kang Senghui is important for translating an important collection of *jātakas*, the *Liu du ji jing*, and producing some commentaries, which are very valuable for the study of Buddhism at a crucial time of Buddhism in China.

INFLUENCE OF THE *LIU DU JI JING* AND ITS SCHOLARSHIP

In the Buddhist Community

The influence of the *Liu du ji jing* is beyond question. It is frequently mentioned and quoted in a number of anthologies, such as the *Jing lu yi xing* 經律異相 (T. 2121), the *Fa yuan zhu lin* 法苑珠林⁴² (T. 2122), and the *Zhu jing yao ji* 諸經要集 (T. 2123). For instance, there are sixteen stories in the *Jing lu yi xing* derived from the *Liu du ji jing*.⁴³ The *Jing lu yi xiang*, the oldest and biggest extant Chinese Buddhist anthology, is a collection of 699 Buddhist stories, and every story is derived from one of a wide range of *sūtras*, *vinayas*, and *abhidharmas* of the Chinese Buddhist canon. The anthology was made under the auspices of the Emperor Liang (502-549), who assigned Sengmin 僧旻 to collect the stories in the year 507 and Baochang 寶唱 to compile them in the year 516. Because of its colorful presentation of a wide range of

⁴² There are more than ten stories quoted from the *Liu du ji jing*.

⁴³ T. 2121. 53. 1a16-21. The stories are in the eighth fascicle (nos. 4, 6, 10, and 20), the ninth fascicle (nos. 6 and 11), the tenth fascicle (nos. 3 and 11), eleventh fascicle (nos. 2, 4, 7 and 15), twenty-sixth fascicle (nos. 1 and 3), and the forty-fifth fascicle (nos. 2 and 12). For more information on this study, see Chen 1992, 745-757.

aspects and its division into thirty-nine sections,⁴⁴ it was once very popular and widely distributed in China. Some of the stories from the anthology were adapted into Chinese folklore and dramas.⁴⁵ Given the number of stories from the *Liu du ji jing* in this anthology, the *Liu du ji jing* probably was popular within the Buddhist community, or was at least of interest to the compilers, by the sixth century.

In the Field of Chinese Phonology and Linguistics

The *Liu du ji jing* is also important and valuable for the study of medieval Chinese literature. The terminology and phrases used in the scripture are frequently utilized by sinologists studying medieval China to determine Chinese phonology and linguistics. For instance, in the *Zhong gu han yu du ben* 中古漢語讀本 [A Reader in Medieval Chinese] Fang Yixin 方一新 uses one of the stories from the *Liu du ji jing*,⁴⁶ and LIANG Xiaohong 梁曉虹 uses this scripture in her discussion of the relationship between Buddhism and terminology in the Han Dynasty.⁴⁷ The *Liu du ji jing* is studied more by sinologists, who treat the *Liu du ji jing* as a rich source for the study of medieval Chinese linguistics and phonology, than by Buddhologists.

⁴⁴ The thirty-nine sections of the anthology are arranged according to types of occupations and types of realms of being: heaven realms, earth realms, buddhas, bodhisattvas, saṃghas, kings, empresses, princes, princesses, elders, upāsakas, upāsikās, rīṣis, Brahmins, householders, merchants, demons, animals, and hells. Under each section, there are also detailed sub-sections that contain very interesting stories.

⁴⁵ According to ZHANG Yu 張煜(2004, 159), the *Jing lu yi xing*, a storehouse of Chinese folklores compiled in the sixth-tenth and centuries, strongly influences the enterprise of Chinese narrative literature, which then incorporates Buddhist moral lessons into novels and folktales.

⁴⁶ FANG 1993. In addition, other modern scholars in China who are using the *Liu du ji jing* as the major source for their studies of earlier Medieval Chinese include CAO Xiaoyun 曹小云 (2001, 76-82); CHEN Xiulang 陈秀兰; YANG Xiaorong 杨孝容 (2003, 58-59); FANG Yixin 方一新 (1997); LI weiqi 李维琦 (1995, 39-43); XIA Guangxing 夏广兴 (2002, 106-111); and ZHU Qingzhi 朱庆之 (1996).

⁴⁷ LIANG 2001, 109-121.

In the Field of Buddhist Studies

There are only a few studies on the *Liu du ji jing* in both the West and East Asia. As mentioned earlier, the most valuable scholarship on the *Liu du ji jing* in the West was conducted by Chavannes. However, after Chavannes, little has been done in the West. My work of this dissertation is basically standing on the shoulders of this giant, Chavannes. Also, in Asia, there are only a few studies specifically on the *Liu du ji jing*, for instance, SHI Tianchang's 釋天常 studies on the problems of the compilation of the *Liu du ji jing*,⁴⁸ ZHANG Guzhou's 張谷洲 approach concerning Buddhist politics and its relationship with Confucianism in the *Liu du ji jing*,⁴⁹ and LIN Yanru's 林彥如 emphasis on the relationship between some stories in the *Liu du ji jing* and Chinese popular tales.⁵⁰ There are also a few scholars in Japan who have worked with a few stories from the *Liu du ji jing*, such as ITō Chikako, who has also written a couple of articles related to the scripture, such as a discussion on the nature and distinctive features of the *Liu du ji jing* as a version of the *jātaka*, the other-world philosophy in the *jātaka*, with a main focus on the *Liu du ji jing*, and the transformation in the *Liu nian shou ji bi zui jing* 六年守飢畢罪經 (the *Liu du ji jing*, number 53) on Śākyamuni's six years of asceticism through fasting.⁵¹

The *Liu du ji jing* deserves to be studied more for its content than it has been thus far. Employing a rather different approach from other scholars in the field, I discuss the *Liu du ji jing* in the context of *jātaka* literature from a literary, artistic, and gender perspective.

⁴⁸ SHI 1998.

⁴⁹ ZHANG 1999.

⁵⁰ LIN 2004.

⁵¹ ITō 1984, 1988, and 1997.

Chapter 1

From the literary perspective, the *jātaka* literature is in the category of Indian Buddhist narrative; therefore, in Chapter 1, as a foundation for a study of the *Liu du ji jing*, I begin with a discussion of the nature of narrative and then explore whether Indian Buddhist narrative in the ancient period has any features that distinguish it from Indian narrative literature generally. I find that Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative literature in ancient India shared a certain degree of similarity in their linguistic, cultural, and stylistic networks during their period of active development. The recognition that, to a considerable extent, early Indian Buddhist narrative literature overlaps with Indian non-Buddhist narrative literature is quite valuable when examining a wide range of aspects of the *jātaka* literature in general and of the *Liu du ji jing* in particular.

But, throughout centuries of transmissions and modifications, the *jātaka* has gradually developed its own genre, so I further discuss the genre of *jātaka* literature in Indic languages, exemplified in the *Pāli Jātaka*, *Cariyāpiṭaka*, and Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, and compare these texts to the *Liu du ji jing* in terms of their genre, style, form, and content. Most noteworthy is the style Ākhāya, which is a mixture of verse and prose. Regarding this style of verse, E. W. Cowell claims: "The language of the *gāthās* is much more archaic than of the stories; and it certainly seems more probable to suppose that they are the older kernel of the work, and that thus in its original form the *Jātaka*, like the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, consisted only of these verses."⁵² However, this style is hardly ever found in the collection of the *Liu du ji jing*, except for a few stories with a small portion of verse. What does this tell us? Did Kang Senghui, when translating the stories, exclude the verse intentionally? But if this is so, why then do a few of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* include some verses? Study of the *Liu du ji jing*

⁵² Cowell [1895] 2003, viii.

may provide reasons for thinking that in fact the prose narrative is older than the verse portions or coexisted with the verse portions in the earlier periods of the literature.

Chapter 2

In addition to textual *jātakas*, there are many tales carved or painted on the bas-reliefs, railings, or walls at the *stūpas* of famous Buddhist sites in India, such as Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Ajañṭā, Amarāvati, and Gandhāra. Some of these pictorial renditions were even older than the literary ones, such as those at Bhārhut and Sāñcī, and so on, which were built at the time of King Aśoka (third century BCE) or even earlier.⁵³ I devote Chapter 2 to these artistic presentations of the *jātakas*, paying special attention to various theories about the function(s) of the *jātakas* illustrated at these sacred sites. Some scholars suggest that they were produced for a didactic function; others argue that they were intended for devotional purposes. Through an analysis of the evidence provided on and within these historical sites, I am able to pursue my discussion beyond the limits of the present scholarly debate. For instance, if we apply Dehejia’s theory on the modes of visual narrative to these *jātaka* scenes, I find that they are incomprehensible. Because of the way they are depicted and the sequence in which the individual scenes are arranged, the stories are impossible to decipher reliably. For this reason, I argue that visual art at Indian *stūpas* should *not* be considered a form of *narrative*; there is not a communication between artists and viewers. So if it is not a narrative, then what is the purpose of the *jātaka* scenes presented at *stūpas*? I argue that they are for the purpose of devotion. In the course of Chapter 2, I also examine one of the most famous *jātakas*, the *Viśvantara-jātaka*, which is frequently illustrated at *stūpas*, from

⁵³ Ghosh 1967, 275. Aśoka not only built *stūpas*, but also extended them as recorded in the Nigalisāgar Pillar Inscription: “The Beloved of the Gods, the king Piyadassi [Aśoka], when he had been consecrated fourteen years, increased the *stūpa* of Buddha Konākamana to double its former size” (Thapar [1961] 1997, 261). This tells us that the fashion of building *stūpas* must have been practiced before the time of Aśoka.

both a textual and an artistic perspective. I clearly delineate the different effect the pictures and the narrative produce. There are two challenges facing a viewer who attempts to read or understand these *jātaka* scenes: their spatial arrangement in relation to each other and their sometimes inaccessible locations relative to the viewer. In other words, they are depicted in a non-narrative order or are placed where they are literally indiscernible to visitors to the *stūpa*. Following Robert Brown’s (1997) suggestion about the iconic function of the *jātakas*, a comprehensive evaluation of the evidence at these sites indicates that the *jātaka* scenes present this function quite differently than do their textual renderings.

Chapter 3

In the course of investigating the purpose of the *jātakas* presented at *stūpas*, in Chapter 2, we will find that, as indicated by a wide range of inscriptions, a significant number of women were donors who participated in, and contributed to, the creation and maintenance of these *stūpas*. This is in marked contrast to the role of women as depicted in the literary sources, in which women are rarely shown playing an active role. What roles do women play in the Buddhist community, and how are they depicted in Buddhist literature in contrast to epigraphical sources? With these questions in mind, in Chapter 3 I examine the *jātaka* tales to see what they might tell us about the status of women at the time they were composed and/or the attitude of their authors toward women. Many scholars in Buddhist studies would agree with Alan Sponberg’s statement that, “The most blatantly misogynous texts of the Pali literature are found in the *Jātaka* stories.”⁵⁴ But, I argue that this attitude toward women is not found in the *Liu du ji jing*. So, when scholars make such general claims, we need to ascertain the sources on which they depend. If they rely solely on the *Pāli*

⁵⁴ Sponberg 1992, 35 n. 29.

jātakas, then why are these stories so different from those in the *Liu du ji jing*? Why, despite belonging to the same *jātaka* genre, do they speak in such different voices regarding gender? I find that attitudes toward women in early Buddhist literature are often divergent and contradictory, and that these attitudes vary across different periods of Buddhist institutional development and various Buddhist sects. Therefore, I examine the attitude toward women as presented in the *Liu du ji jing* in light of these different contexts.

In the first part of Chapter 3, I discuss the ambiguous and interlinked meanings of the terms “sex” and “gender” and how they apply to our understanding of the attitudes toward women of the authors of Buddhist or Indian literature. Many aspects of the social, familial, cultural, and religious status of women are presented in the *Liu du ji jing*. I explore what this scripture indicates about the position of women in ancient India in their most common relationships within and outside of their families. For instance, in the *Liu du ji jing* there is a series of stories that describe the Bodhisattva’s relationship with his wife in his past lives; in many stories, Yaśodharā is a good companion to her husband on the Bodhisattva path, but in other stories the Bodhisattva is married to an evil wife such as Ciñcāmāṇavikā, who is a constant obstacle to her husband’s practice and even tries to destroy his life. I am interested, not only in how these two types of wife are depicted in the stories, but also in why depicting a character who was a good wife (or the opposite) became an essential feature of this genre. For example, did this focus reflect the gender of the intended audience of the tales?

In the second part of Chapter 3, I discuss how women are depicted in the *Liu du ji jing* from the perspective of the history and development of Buddhism. The attitudes toward women in different Buddhist literatures and schools exist in telling conflict with one another. According to Sponberg, “The voice one hears in reading these

Buddhist texts, however, is neither consistent nor univocal...but rather a multiplicity of voices.”⁵⁵ These inconsistent and contradictory opinions are probably connected to shifts in social or institutional circumstances. Thus we can address the question what institutional circumstances influenced the very different attitudes toward women that we find in the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Pāli jātakas*. The *Pāli jātakas* are famous for their misogyny. One well-known example is the *Kuṇāla-jātaka*, number 536 in the *Pāli jātakas*, which contains many misogynous passages. Yet its counterpart, number 62 in the *Liu du ji jing*, has no misogynous characteristics at all. Overall, the *Liu du ji jing* is a women-friendly text. Thus, scholars have prematurely labeled the *jātaka* genre as a whole misogynist, overlooking the contrary evidence from the *Liu du ji jing*.

In the third part of Chapter 3, I consider the claim made by many scholars that, in the *jātaka* tales, although the Bodhisattva appears in human as well as a variety of animal forms in his former lives, he never appears as a woman. However, he *does* appear as a woman four times in three stories of the *Liu du ji jing*. Why is the *Liu du ji jing* so different from other collections, particularly from the *Pāli jātakas*, with regard to the Buddha’s incarnation in female form? Does it mean that the author of the former collection suggests there is an equal opportunity for men and women to obtain Buddhahood? To answer these questions I examine one of the female Bodhisattva stories, namely story number 73, *Ran deng shou jue jing* 然燈受決經, in which a woman needs to transform her female body to a male one in order to receive the prediction that she will obtain Buddhahood in the future. Does this suggest that the author of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* tries to open the door of Buddhahood to women, although with some reluctance? Still, overall, the *Liu du ji jing* presents us with a new vision of Buddhists’ attitudes toward women: in its view, there were a few good women after all!

⁵⁵ Sponberg 1992, 3.

CHAPTER I

INDIAN BUDDHIST NARRATIVE LITERATURE AND THE *JĀTAKAS*

Narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history...at all times, in all places, in all societies; narrative starts with the very history of mankind.... Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural— Roland Barthes⁵⁶

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The ultimate goal of my research is to approach a broader study of the *jātaka* literature, not only from a literary, but also from visual and thematic perspectives. The latter will be explored further in the following chapters. Here I limit the discussion to Buddhist narratives from a historical viewpoint and in their generic relations to non-Buddhist narrative literature. In that regard, this chapter aims to explore the relations between several aspects of narrative literatures. Narratives are by no means exclusive to India or Buddhism; they are found throughout the history of world literature, bearing their own particular function in each of them. As Carol Lee well defines it: “Narrative is a universal genre of both oral language and written texts...[and] a powerful tool that although universal, unfolds and acts in culturally specific ways.”⁵⁷ Katherine Nelson further suggests that narratives are valuable as a cultural resource: “Narratives serve as a storehouse of shared knowledge and belief in human societies and as an essential source of cultural learning.”⁵⁸ The value of narratives to peoples and their cultures, therefore, is evident in their being transmitted from generation to generation as literature, art, drama, and other media. Thus, before discussing Indian Buddhist

⁵⁶ Barthes 1975, 237.

⁵⁷ Lee 2004, 39.

⁵⁸ Nelson 2004, 87.

narrative literature and *jātaka* literature in particular, I first discuss general theories of the nature of narrative.

Next, I examine what is distinctive and what is not about Buddhist narrative literature in India in the ancient period in terms of form and content. Because of the wealth and density of each of these overlapping traditions, it is more accurate to say, not that there is a *single* Buddhist narrative literature tradition in contrast to a *single* non-Buddhist narrative literature tradition, but rather a various Buddhist narrative literature tradition in contrast to an equally wide-ranging non-Buddhist narrative literature tradition. It would be impractical and perhaps impossible to include every extant and available example of Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative literature into this discussion. In that regard, applying Ayyappa Paniker's analysis of Indian narratology and style, language, and social context in the history and development of Indian narrative literature, I discuss how distinctive or nondistinctive of Indian Buddhist narrative from other narrative literatures in terms of form and content by examining a few texts from the Buddhist tradition, such as the *Pāli Jātaka* and *Cariyāpiṭaka* from the Pāli canon, along with Ārya Śūra's *Jātakmālā*, Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, and *Lalitavistara* in Sanskrit, and comparing these with a few non-Buddhist texts, such as the *Mahābharata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Pañcatantra*, as well as the Jain *Dharmabhyudayamabhākāvya* and *Samyaktvakaumudī*.

Following that, I discuss the genre of *jātaka* literature in the *Pāli* and other Indic collections. How has the *jātaka* literature become standardized within its own genre? How fixed are the genres of *jātaka* literature? Did the genres change over time? Do they have clear or unclear boundaries or demarcations? Is there evidence internal to the tradition that there was an explicit awareness of the fixity or boundedness of the genres? Do different collections of the *jātakas* form different genres? How much do

they share? In this section, I discuss these questions in order to grasp the history and development of the *jātaka* narrative literature in India in ancient times.

Finally, I compare the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經, a Chinese translation of a collection of *jātaka* tales, with other Indic *jātaka* collections. As discussed in the introduction to the dissertation, the *Liu du ji jing*, the earliest Chinese *jātaka* collection, can be a valuable source for examining the earlier structure and content of the *jātaka*. For instance, does the *Liu du ji jing* fit into the category of Indian *jātakas*? What is distinctive and what is not distinctive about the *Liu du ji jing* in relation to standard *jātaka* genres? Are there aspects of the *Liu du ji jing* that vary from the general genre of the *jātakas*? If so, do the differences suggest a new view of the study of Indian *jātaka* literature, for example, concerning the issues that have arisen around the relative antiquity of the verse versus the prose in the *jātakas*? Just because we cannot historically answer a question, it does not mean that it is not a compelling question. So we will most likely be unable to resolve all the questions we raise—those remaining without resolution at the end of this study will have been made ready for presentation to scholars yet to come.

1.2 WHAT IS NARRATIVE?

What is narrative? How much information can a narrative provide us? Is it just as simple as telling a story? Apparently, it is more than that because “storytelling is always after the fact and it is always constructed over a loss. What is lost...is the ‘origin’ which would explain everything. In all narrative transmission, each retelling of the history of events transforms that history into a new construct, displacing it further from its lost origin.”⁵⁹ In other words, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith suggests, in the process of transmission and narration, “[m]ost ... versions [of a story] seem to

⁵⁹ Duyfhuizen 1992, 216.

involve some sort of translated, transformed, or otherwise modified retelling of a particular prior narrative text.”⁶⁰ Thus, it is very common for many versions of single story to result from its repeated telling. Every individual narrator may modify and reconstruct the story in accordance with his or her preferences or purposes, so there are as many versions as there have been narrators. Although the nature of narrative as it is revealed by narratology is too complicated to review appropriately here, Gérard Genette enumerates the basic meanings of the term “narrative” this way: 1. most commonly, the word refers “to the narrative statement, the oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell an event or a series of events”; 2. The word may also refer “to the succession of events, real or fictitious...and to their several relations of linking, opposition, repetition, etc”; 3. It may even refer “to an event: not, however, the event that is recounted, but the event that consists of someone recounting something: that act of narrating taken in itself.”⁶¹ Simply put, a narrative contains an event or a series of events, a story, real or fictitious, which is told and retold through various means and actions in oral, written, pictorial, or dramatic form. In other words, a narrative is a communication operating via sight, sound, or both from an author/performer to a reader/audience.

There are three processes involved in any narrative. As Bernard Duyfhuizen explains: “The narrative of transmission includes the communicational structure of narrating (the situation of telling the story), narration (a particular narrator’s version of the story), and narrative (the interplay of the narrated events with the narrating situation and the narration produced).”⁶² These three transmissions must be in that precise order since a narrative has only been established after a story has happened or been created (narrating) and then told or performed by a narrator.

⁶⁰ Smith 1980, 215.

⁶¹ Genette 1980, 25-26.

⁶² Duyfhuizen 1992, 28.

A story can be conveyed in various ways: verbally or nonverbally, through words or images, through motion or statically. According to Seymour Chatman, a narrative is an organization that can take many different forms: “in written words as in stories and novels; in spoken words combined with the movements of actors imitating characters against sets which imitate places, as in plays and films; in drawings; in comic strips; in dance movements, as in narrative ballet and in mime; and even in music.”⁶³ Chatman further emphasizes: “[w]hether the narrative is experienced through a performance or through a text, the members of the audience must *respond* with an interpretation: they cannot avoid participating in the transaction.”⁶⁴ “[E]ach narrative has two parties: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of events...and a discourse (*discourse*), that is, the expression, by means of which the content is communicated. In simple terms, the story is *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*.”⁶⁵ In that regard, it is fair to say that a narrative contains a story and possibly many discourses because of its various means of expression and multiple narrators. As a result, there is no limit to the number narratives that appear as versions or variants of each other. Each version possesses its own unique quality “[s]ince all the formal properties of an individual narrative would be regarded as *functions of all these multiple interacting conditions* rather than as *representations* of specific, discrete objects, events, or ideas, the expectation of a conformity or formal correspondence between any of the properties of a narrative and anything else in particular simply would not arise.”⁶⁶ In short, the transaction of a narrative requires participation, interpretation, and communication between the storyteller and audience regardless of the medium through which it occurs. It is not a one-way transmission, but includes a certain degree of interaction.

⁶³ Chatman 1981, 117-118.

⁶⁴ Chatman [1962] 1978, 28.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁶ Smith 1980, 226.

However, there is no dialogue going back and forth between the teller and audience. A narrative is a communication, but not a dialogue: “Since the function of narrative is not to give an order, express a wish, state a condition, etc., but simply to tell a story and therefore to ‘report’ fact (real or fictive), its one mood, or at least its characteristic mood, strictly speaking can be only the indicative.”⁶⁷ That is why Didier Coste provides a detailed explanation of how narrative differs from a language:

[N]arrative could not be considered a “language,” for two reasons: it is manifested through many and perhaps all natural verbal languages as well as a vast array of other semiotic systems or “languages” in the extended sense of the word: the motion picture, the comic, photography, painting and drawing, mime and music, and so on, while all languages can also do, in parallel, something else than narrate, function as the media of meanings other than narrative; and second, there are plenty of things that “narrative” cannot do, at least directly, such as giving orders, making requests, asserting existence, settling claims and providing definitions, things that are common functions of all languages.⁶⁸

Language is one medium used to communicate a narrative, involving the author/teller/performer and audience. There are innumerable forms of narratives, but no matter which medium a narrative utilizes, narratives are present “in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history...at all times, in all places, in all societies; narrative starts with the very history of mankind...Like life itself, it is there, international, transhistorical, transcultural.”⁶⁹ When we read a narrative, we are not only reading a story itself, but also interpreting it according to its linguistic, historical, cultural, or even hermeneutic code, and every narrative version has been constructed and reconstructed in accordance with certain purposes or interests. Hence, through the

⁶⁷ Genette 1980, 161.

⁶⁸ Coste 1989, 34.

⁶⁹ Barthes 1975, 237.

study of a narrative, we are able to examine the cultural, religious, historical, artistic, social, and political background behind it, and thereby ascertain that there is so much more beyond the surface value of a narrative—and all of these elements are also in play in pan-Indian narrative.

1.3 INDIAN BUDDHIST NARRATIVE

In a narrative, the narrator and audience share particular cultural, social, religious, literary, and historical interests and motives via their interaction, communication, and participation. Indian narrative literature is no exception. However, as fascinating a culture and country as India is, its history is always problematic because of its ages-long aversion to historical recordkeeping and even to what might be called its ahistorical attitude. J. K. Nariman asserts that “the chronology of Indian literature is shrouded in almost painful obscurity and there are yet remaining unsolved most of the connected problems for the investigator.”⁷⁰ Furthermore, according to Maurice Winternitz, “Even today the views of the most important investigators with regard to the age of the most important Indian literary works differ, not indeed by years and decades, but by whole centuries.”⁷¹ Thus, without any reliable Indian historical record in studying Indian narrative literature, our way will constantly be blocked by inconsistency and controversy.

Fortunately, there are some sources of more dependable information, such as Indian archeological and inscriptional evidence that provide invaluable information, and Greek and Chinese historical records that include observations collected by visitors to the subcontinent. Edicts on pillars built by King Aśoka (third century BCE) and inscriptions associated with the sculptures and paintings at Buddhist pilgrimage

⁷⁰ Nariman 1972, 156.

⁷¹ Winternitz 1962, 22.

sites are further signposts for ascertaining the context and history of Buddhist narrative literature in the ancient period. As Richard Salomon points out, “It has been authoritatively estimated that something like 80 percent of our knowledge of the history of India before about A.D. 1000 is derived from inscriptional sources.”⁷² Matching the content, language, style, and script of the inscriptions and edicts, the dates of which are known, with the texts under consideration here provides another fruitful angle for investigation. For example, in the Aśokan Edicts, where moral issues are more emphasized than obtaining *nirvāṇa*, the language of the edict is Prākṛit, and all of these characteristics are also shared by the inscriptions at Buddhist sites at Sañcī and Bhārhut that were developed and furnished in the second to third century BCE. With the evidence obtainable from both edicts and inscriptions, we probably could assume that the style, content, thought, practice, and language of the Indian narrative literature are contemporary with the third century.⁷³

Furthermore, Herbert Gowen writes of the benefit provided by foreign documentation that “the Indian himself is obliged to own a particular indebtedness to the outsiders—often members of an invading or conquering race—who have had so considerable a share in the unveiling of the past and the interpretation of its significance.”⁷⁴ In that regard, the invasions of India, in particular by the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, resulted in crucial contributions to the preservation of knowledge about Indian literature, art, culture, and writing.⁷⁵ In addition, Chinese historical records have provided valuable information because of the connections between the Indian and Chinese governments in the ancient period. However, most significant among the Chinese sources are the journals of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims,

⁷² Salomon 1998, 3.

⁷³ For more detailed information on Aśokan edicts see Thapar 1997 [1961], 250-266; Norman 1971, 121-136 and 1985.

⁷⁴ Gowen 1968, 14.

⁷⁵ Winternitz 1962, 24.

written on their visits to India. These pilgrims kept detailed records of places they visited and the years events took place, and these records show that Faxian 法顯 went to India in the year 399, Xuan Zang's 玄奘 great journey was from 629-645⁷⁶, and Yijing 義淨 traveled in India from 671-695.⁷⁷ These are great resources for accurately organizing the history of India and Indian Buddhism.⁷⁸ Touching on our study of Buddhist narrative literature, Fa Xian pointed out that many *stūpas* that he encountered bore the stories of the *jātaka* depicted on their walls,⁷⁹ while Yi Jing once mentioned in his record that “the *Jātakamālās* were much loved in the India of his time.”⁸⁰ Therefore, based on outsiders' historical records and pilgrims' journals, we have some indications of the historical context of Buddhist narrative literature in Indian history. With the help of the journals of Chinese pilgrims and the inscriptional evidence on the reliefs at the *stūpas*, the approximate history and development of individual examples of Indian Buddhist narrative literature, including the *jātakas*, can be determined.

Indian Buddhist Narrative and Indian Non-Buddhist Narrative Literature

From its very earliest development, Buddhist narrative literature might have shared the same languages, literary styles, social context, and even similar content, ideology, religious practices, and subject matter as the non-Buddhist narrative literature contemporary with it. Presumably, the folk stories in ancient India all shared the same history and similar methods of transmission and grew out of a culture rich with the practice of utilizing storytelling as a means of disseminating moral and religious tenets. In the following, I apply Ayappa Paniker's analysis of Indian narratology as a checklist

⁷⁶ Ch'en [1964] 1972, 235-237.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 239.

⁷⁸ For detailed information on Chinese pilgrims see Kanai Hazra 1983.

⁷⁹ Ohnuma 1997a, 4.

⁸⁰ Gowen 1968, 330.

in a discussion of the distinctiveness of Indian Buddhist narrative from its contemporary non-Buddhist narrative literature in terms of form and style. Furthermore, because the *jātaka* probably is the earliest extant composition among the texts of Indian Buddhist narrative literature, and because it is the major concern of this project, I examine it primarily in the effort to establish the respects in which Indian Buddhist narrative literature is distinct or not from Indian narrative literature.

Generalizing the features of Indian narrative literature in style and effect, Paniker claims there are ten distinctive features of Indian narratology: interiorization, serialization, fantasization, cyclicalization, allegorization, anonymization, elasticization of time, spatialization, stylization, and improvisation.

1. Interiorization is “a process by which a distinction, a contrast or even a contradiction is effected between the surface features of a text and its internal essence.”⁸¹ This feature refers to a text’s being written in multiple layers so that it interiorizes or harbors a deeper meaning and intent at its core that cannot be seen from the surface level by casual readers or audiences.⁸² Interiorization is one of the styles of Indian narrative writing in which the real and internal meanings of stories are hidden or at odds with their surface meanings. It is like a game that the author plays with his or her audience. However, the style is not very common in Buddhist narrative literature, except in its later development of *gong’an* 公案 in Chinese Ch’an tradition, since its purpose is to convey Buddhist teachings straightforwardly and directly to its followers and audiences. For instance, the goal of the *jātaka* literature is to present the moral lessons and self-sacrifices of the Bodhisattva. There is no hidden meaning within the narrative. There may be some exceptions,⁸³ but by and large, there are not

⁸¹ Paniker 2003, 4.

⁸² Ibid., 4.

⁸³ For instance, according to Steven Collins (1998, 499-500), the *Viśvantara-jātaka* has many different layers of meanings as it “is both realist drama and allegory: its characters are both realistic representations of human beings going through a coherent narrative sequence, and textual embodiments

many interiorization devices employed in the Buddhist narrative literature because of this difference in its intent from the point of non-Buddhist narrative literature. The intent of Buddhist narrative literature is mainly to teach and disseminate information about Buddhist morality and ethics, and this cannot be accomplished if its audience cannot be vividly confronted by the instruction.

2. The feature of serialization is described as “the structure of the typical Indian narrative, which seems to prefer an apparently never ending series of episodes to a unified, single-strand, streamlined course of events, centering around a single hero or heroine and whatever happens to the central character.”⁸⁴ This is another feature of narrative writing and common to most Indic epics (for instance, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*), which offer a series of episodes without any attempt to integrate them. New episodes were inserted with the same casual audacity as old ones were removed during oral transmission, graphic transcription, or translation. It is like an ongoing drama without an ending. This feature is especially evident in the *jātakas*, which are never-ending stories of the former lives of the Buddha, and in which he is always the central character. They are all thematically focused on the Bodhisattva’s career toward Buddhahood, but stories are added, replaced, and omitted throughout the history of *jātaka* literature without regard to coherent sequence. Therefore, the *jātakas* in Buddhist narrative literature contain serializations similar to those found in Indian narrative traditions.

3. Fantasization is a commonly found feature in Indian narrative literature, acting as “a way of adjusting and accommodating even the unpleasant reality of the outside world to the heart’s content of the author or reader.... [It] becomes an interface that the reader’s imagination shares with that of the author.”⁸⁵ This feature is an effect

of values, emotions and aspirations.”

⁸⁴ Paniker 2003, 6.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 8.

commonly included in imaginatively rich fairy tales about the gods and how they interact with humans and animals. There is hardly any need to point out that there is indeed fantasy found in Buddhist narrative literature, such as in the *Lalitavistara*,⁸⁶ the biography of the Buddha in which the authors repeatedly utilize fantasy, miracles, and omens, within the magnificent picture of resplendent places surrounded by thousands of gods and bodhisattvas. In addition, in the *jātakas*, the authors frequently describe the miracles that occurred when the Bodhisattva was in danger and when he received assistance from the gods. His extraordinary births from the past to the present are also common features of the authors' compositions. Thus, the fantasization feature appears in narratives of Indian literature and Buddhist narrative literature alike, illustrating the rich imagination and effect that the author brought to bear in offering a colorful and intense experience for his audience.

4. Cyclicalization is another regular style and effect of Indian narrative literatures and characterizes tales that provide a linear construction in accordance with the perpetual cyclical recurrence of processes of the natural world.⁸⁷ Many Buddhist narratives have this feature. The *jātakas*, for instance, begin with the establishment of the cyclical nature of narration by treating familiar and recurring themes characterizing the cycle of birth and rebirth, or *saṃsara*. In each story the Bodhisattva is born, lives, and discovers and applies himself to his practice in some novel and instructive way, all of which presents the cycle of life, and therefore presents pointedly a cyclical rotation to the *jātaka* tales.

5. Allegorization is another common effect of the narrative literature found not only in India but also in China and Europe. In India the *Pañcatantra*, for instance, is a prime example of allegory since it invests inanimate objects and nonhuman creatures

⁸⁶ This text probably dates between the first century BCE and first century CE.

⁸⁷ Paniker 2003, 10-11.

with the qualities and capacities of humans in the course of a narrative that emphasizes moral values. With the same function and approach as that of Indian literature, the *jātaka* tales employ many of the allegorical devices seen in the *Pañcatantra*.⁸⁸ Many tales in the *jātaka* portray animals that are moral, compassionate, and wise in sacrificing themselves for the sake of others. In most of the *jātaka* tales of animal fables, ethical and moral superiority resides in the animals rather than the humans. Thus, allegory is a successful and prominent feature of both the *jātaka* tales and other Indian narratives, such as the *Pañcatantra*, where the animal kingdom is routinely substituted for the human world.

6. Anonymization is a style of both practical and artistic purpose in the early narratives. Paniker describes it this way: “Anonymity was maintained by most story-tellers, even when they lived in historical times, and their names were known or could be identified. The objective was to merge the subjective self of the narrator in collective readership so that ideally the narrator and the audience are one.”⁸⁹ The anonymity of the narrator also removed the restraints on the tendency of readers to amend or expand the text they were reading, restraints that a strict code of authorship would have imposed. In an environment of authorial anonymity, stories can occur in any locality and to anyone at all without boundaries and without any issue being made by subsequent readers of omissions in or additions to the story. Does this style of narrative apply to Buddhist narrative literature? The answer is both yes and no. Since “[w]ithin Buddhist tradition...in each instance the author, in the sense of the first teller of the tale, is said to be the Buddha himself,”⁹⁰ or the tale is believed to be the

⁸⁸ The relation between the *jātaka* and the *Pañcatantra* has been debated by scholars since there are many similarities between these two. In the older sources, the Buddha was never identified as an animal or ordinary man as he is in the extant *jātaka* tales, but only with famous sages and wise men in the ancient time.

⁸⁹ Paniker 2003, 13.

⁹⁰ Reynolds 1991, 53.

buddhavacaṇa, that is, the words of the Buddha, representatives of this tradition cannot be said to employ anonymization. However, from a historical perspective, we are certain that the majority of Buddhist teachings extant today, including the *jātakas*, are not truly *Buddhavacaṇa*, but are probably productions or reproductions of some monks who wrote anonymously the words of the Buddha. In that regard, the style of anonymization indeed applies to Indian Buddhist narrative literature.

7. Elasticization is another prominent style of both non-Buddhist and Buddhist Indian narratives. According to Paniker, “Narrative time in Indian texts is more psychological in character than logical; and this is one of the major differences between nineteenth century western fiction and traditional Indian narrative.... [S]ince the narrative consists of a sequence of events, the duration is certainly of significance, but not perhaps its historical placement.”⁹¹ Thus, as mentioned above, ancient India’s ahistorical bent has made elasticization very typical of Indian narratives, including Buddhist narrative literature, the content of which provides few clues to its historical placement, and so forces scholars to rely almost exclusively on external signposts when attempting to ascertain the approximate date of any of its compositions. The elasticization present in the majority of the works of the Indian tradition makes the work of placing the text into a larger historical framework even more difficult. For instance, in the *jātaka* tales, the actual or approximate historical context of any given story is never addressed; they are stories about some inconceivably ancient period of time, not scientific histories. It is a style of narrative that is particular to Indian works and to the context of their composition.

8. Although ancient Indian texts intend to leave out the historical context, they do not omit the spatial context—spatialization is a particular feature of style in Indian narrative: “The narrative formula of opening a tale is more specific about place,

⁹¹ Paniker 2003, 14.

leaving the exact time imprecise.”⁹² As seen in most non-Buddhist and Buddhist Indian narrative literature, stories always meticulously provide a location where the events take place, depicting the specific and detailed surroundings and any further changes in location that might arise as the story goes on. Some of the places mentioned in stories do not even exist in India; they are fictional. In other words, for Indian narrators, “the temporal dimension is often underplayed, while the space factor gets added importance.”⁹³ It is a style found in a wide range of Buddhist texts, including the *jātaka*, whose stories often describe in detail the location where the Bodhisattva was born and where he goes to make his career, and so forth.

9. and 10. The final two features of Indian literature in Paniker’s list are stylization and improvisation. Stylization is “a factor that imposes limitations on the writer or story-teller.”⁹⁴ It is the evidence in any text of rules and codes that have accumulated independently of any particular author and that regulate the text and identify it as belonging to a given genre. Improvisation, on the other hand, is a comparatively liberating factor and frees authors from external limitations on their creativity. According to Paniker, “total stylization is stifling and uncreative, while total improvisation means chaos and is unproductive. The Indian narrative seems to maintain an even balance between these two opposing pulls.”⁹⁵ Although further research must be conducted to determine more conclusively to which category the *jātaka* belongs, it seems that the *Pāli Jātaka*’s unpolished nature suggests a more improvisational style, whereas the refined and metrical presentation of both the *Jātakamālā* and *Buddhacarita* suggest more stylization.

⁹² Paniker 2003, 15.

⁹³ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 16.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 16-17.

As I have shown above, Buddhist narrative literature, and the *jātaka* tales in particular, exhibits all ten styles of Indian narratology catalogued by Paniker, except for interiorization. From the perspective of Paniker’s analysis of Indian narratology, the difference between Indian Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative literature is minute. In general, Buddhist narrative literature is only barely distinct from non-Buddhist narrative literatures; they share generous measures of style, language, social context, and culture. Besides the narratology of general characteristics that I have brought to the forefront through our comparison of Buddhist narrative literature to Paniker’s analysis of narrative attributes, there are more specific characteristics found in Buddhist narrative literature that indicate further similarities between Buddhist narrative literature and the greater Indian tradition stylistically, linguistically, contextually, and culturally. Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative traditions inevitably and genetically share related stylistically linked histories of literature.

Style

The style of *kāvya* shared by those traditions is but one example. According to A. B. Keith, the refined style of *kāvya* seen in the *Rāmāyaṇa* represents “the work of an artist, and the same trait is revealed in the uniformity of the language and the delicate perfection of the metre, when compared with the simpler and less polished *Mahābhārata*.”⁹⁶ That the formal merits of the *Rāmāyaṇa* had an impact on the development and history of *kāvya* is by no means improper in terms of its language and verse techniques “this richness and elaboration of metre, in striking contrast to the comparative freedom of Vedic and epic literatures, must certainly have arisen from

⁹⁶ Keith 1966, 43. The evidence of the growth of the *kāvya* style, as Keith (1966, 43) points out, is disputable while using the *Rāmāyaṇa* as evidence, but regardless, the *Rāmāyaṇa* “affords an illustration of the process of refinement which the style was undergoing, but it is essential to realize that even in its original form the poem must have shown a distinct tendency to conscious ornament.”

poetical use.”⁹⁷ After the development of the *kāvya* style seen in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the style continued in other traditions⁹⁸ and in other forms, such as inscriptions.

As discussed above, inscriptions have provided one of the few significant forms of historical evidence, and very likely the most reliable ones, in India. For instance, an inscription at Girnāra dated approximately 150-152 CE employs conventional poetic terminology that shows in “a most interesting manner the development from the simple epic style to that of the *Kāvya*.”⁹⁹ That is, the inscriptional evidence at Girnāra, provides information not only on the language and poetic terminology used, but also on the earlier stage of *kāvya* in a Buddhist context that occurs in Buddhist narrative literature.

The *kāvya* style, developed in the *Rāmāyaṇa* and seen in the Girnāra inscription, is also present in slightly later developments of Indian Buddhist narrative literature, such as the *Buddhacarita* by Aśvaghōṣa (around the second to the third century CE)¹⁰⁰ and the *Jātakamālā* by Ārya Śūra (approximately the fourth century CE).¹⁰¹ Aśvaghōṣa, a well-known poet and philosopher, adopted the *kāvya* style. For example, in the *Buddhacarita* he uses the style because he “recognizes that men rejoice in the delight of the world and seek not salvation, and therefore he sets out the truth which leads to enlightenment in attractive garb, in the hope that men attracted by it may realize the aim and extract from his work the gold alone.”¹⁰² In other words, it seems

⁹⁷ Keith 1966, 47.

⁹⁸ For instance, the Jainist story of Maheśvaradatta told in *Dharmabyhydayamahākāvya* provides certain information on the style of *kāvya* and on its similarity to the *jātaka*.

⁹⁹ Keith 1966, 49.

¹⁰⁰ As I have mentioned, there is often a problem in determining the date of Indian narrative literature. For instance, the date of Aśvaghōṣa’s life is still questionable, but since he mentioned Kaniṣka’s reign as having passed (around 100 CE) in his work, and since Sūtrālamkāra and Yijing (seventh century CE), while traveling in India, refer to him as a great teacher from the past, it can be determined that he lived approximately between the second and sixth century CE. He very likely lived toward the earlier of the dates since one of his works, *Buddhacarita*, was translated into Chinese around 414-421 CE.

¹⁰¹ Khoroché 1989, xiii. However, Serge D’Oldenburg (1893, 306) suggests that the *Jātakamālā* was composed approximately between 550-650 CE.

¹⁰² Keith 1966, 57.

to Arthur Keith that a typical aim of Aśvaghōṣa is “to narrate, to describe, and to preach his curious but not unattractive philosophy of renunciation of selfish desire and universal active benevolence and effort for the good, and by the clarity, vividness, and elegance of his diction to attract the minds of those to whom blunt truths and pedestrian statements would not appeal.”¹⁰³ Striving for the refined style of *kāvya*, Aśvaghōṣa created a beautiful work in the *Buddhacarita* that exemplified the genetically connected histories of Indian literature.

Furthermore, the *kāvya* style is also utilized in another Buddhist narrative literature, the *Jātakamālā* by Ārya Śūra. Similar to the *kāvya* style seen in Aśvaghōṣa’s *Buddhacarita*, the *Jātakmālā* is also a work of art with careful, polished, and metrical verses. According to Keith, the *kāvya* style “is sufficient proof of the spread of the use of that language for purposes of literature and discussion in the courtly circles in which, we may safely assume, Ārya Śūra moved and lived.”¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the Indian Buddhist narrative tradition, as exemplified by both the *Buddhacarita* and the *Jātakamālā*, and the non-Buddhist Indian narrative traditions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* are genetically linked to the history of the *kāvya* style, and both traditions also share networks of transmission.

Languages

Linguistically, the language used in Indian Buddhist narrative literature was some sort of Prākṛit and not Sanskrit since the earlier tradition of Buddhism turned away from this so-called superior and untainted language. Use of Prākṛit began with the Buddha Śākyamuni, who did not use Sanskrit in his teachings but instead used other dialects of Prākṛit, such as Māgadhī. Nevertheless, the use of Prākṛit in ancient times

¹⁰³ Ibid., 60.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 68.

was not exclusive to Buddhism or Buddhist narrative literature, and according to Keith:

In the period [from 200 BCE to 200 CE] up to that revival Sanskrit was little used for secular poetry, which was composed in Prākṛit, until the reviving power of the Brahmins resulted in their creating the epic by translation from Prākṛit originals, [developing] a lyric poetry to replace the simpler Prākṛit songs of the people, and [transforming] the popular beast-fable and fairy-tale.¹⁰⁵

But according to Richard Salomon, “Sanskrit and Prakrit were, at least in early times, not so much separate and irreconcilable opposites as the poles of a dialect spectrum....It is naïve to expect that , in the early stages of the languages at least, a given text must always be either in perfect Sanskrit , or else in Prakrit.”¹⁰⁶ In that regard, it is fair to suggest that most Indian narratives, including Buddhist narrative literature, attempt to utilize mixed dialectal forms of language that “combined features of a more popular, colloquial variety of Sanskrit, or rather of OIA (Old Indo-Aryan), with the standard literary language.”¹⁰⁷ For instance, E. B. Cowell proposes that the reason the *jātaka* contains dialects is found in its connection with the popular tales of ancient India. They share a similar formation and function, bespeaking their relationship to popular tales.

The *jātakas* themselves are of course interesting as specimens of Buddhist literature, but their foremost interest to us consists in their relation to folklore and the light which they often throw on those popular stories which illustrate so vividly the ideas and superstitions of the early times of civilization. In this respect they possess a special value, as, although much of their matter is peculiar to Buddhism, they contain embedded with it an unrivalled collection of folklore. They

¹⁰⁵ Keith 1966, 39. Kanai Hazra (2002, 2), according to epigraphic evidence, suggests that “the indigenous ruler of India utilized the Prakrit languages for their epigraphic records, originally was used as the epigraphic language for the whole of India. From about the second half of the first century BC, however the inscriptions of north India show that Sanskrit began to be used and gradually began playing a vital role in Indian epigraphy throughout India and in the course of time replaced prakrit.”

¹⁰⁶ Salomon 1989, 277.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 277-78.

are also full of interest as giving a vivid picture of the social life and customs of ancient India.¹⁰⁸

However, the enterprise of popular tales or narrative literature in India later changed its gears linguistically, and the later practice of using Sanskrit in epics and popular fairy tales resulted in stories that were originally written or spoken in Prākṛit being translated into or reproduced in Sanskrit, such as *Pañcatantra* that was translated from vernaculars into Sanskrit.¹⁰⁹ It is likely that Buddhism also adopted the custom, which would explain why there is so much Buddhist narrative literature produced in Sanskrit, such as the *Jātakamāla* (Ārya Śūra), *Avadānas*, *Lalitavistara*, *Buddhacarita*, and so on.¹¹⁰ In terms of the transition from using Prākṛit to Sanskrit in the ancient period in India, Buddhist narrative literature is similar to its Indian narrative contemporaries because not only were they linked genetically in their histories but they shared social networks of transmission.

Context and Culture

Contextually and culturally, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian narrative traditions very likely shared social contexts as discussed above, and because of this we can explore these networks of transmission. For instance, the *Dasaratha-jātaka* (no. 461) shares a wide range of similarities with the *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹¹¹ As Reynolds points out, “there is general agreement that the *Dasaratha-jātaka* is a very ancient Buddhist crystallization of the Rāma story.”¹¹² Furthermore, Indra or Śakra plays a very significant role not only in *Rāmāyaṇa* but also in the *jātaka*. As in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, “Specifically, [Indra] facilitates the rebirth processes that result in the birth of Rāvaṇa

¹⁰⁸ Cowell [1895] 2003, vii.

¹⁰⁹ Edgerton 1965, 10.

¹¹⁰ In light of some contextual evidence showing that these Sanskrit texts could have been translated or reproduced from other dialects and are later productions.

¹¹¹ Grey [1990] 1994, 71

¹¹² Reynolds 1991, 53.

as Rāvaṇa and of Rāma as Rāma.... Later as Indra becomes aware of the threat to the proper order that Rāvaṇa’s activities are posing, he sees to it that a bodhisattva is reborn as Rāma.”¹¹³ In the *jātakas*, Śakra constantly tests, helps, or interferes with the practice of the Bodhisattva; according to Ohnuma, “the roles and functions of Śakra... remain consistent from story to story”; “a conventional pattern” as she calls it. The stories frequently describe Śakra’s arousal, his decision to test the donor, his donning of a disguise, his request for the donor’s body, the revelation of his true identity, his wish to restore the body, his role in encouraging the Act of Truth, and his positive reaction to the gift.¹¹⁴ In short, Śakra is often introduced into a story by being aroused by, or alerted to, the existence and pure intention of the donor, namely the Bodhisattva, and he further tries to *test* the donor’s extreme generosity by disguising himself and asking the donor for his body or others. In the case of Śakra’s role in these stories, these narratives share the social/ folklore context and culture of India where the characters of Rāma and Indra were well known and honored.

Moreover, the folkloric context and culture also sheds light on the pivotal presence of animal tales that are shared by such collections as the *Pañcatantra*, the *jātakas*, and the Jain *Dharmapadaṭṭakathā* and *Samyaktvakaumudī*. For instance, both the *jātakas* and *Pañcatantra*, in particular, utilize a wide range of animal tales. The same basic story is told in different manners and with different motivations, with room for significant variations, by both traditions. The *Pañcatantra*,¹¹⁵ *the Five Books*, was originally an instruction guide¹¹⁶ used by Viṣṇuśarman, a knowledgeable Brahmin, to

¹¹³ Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁴ Ohnuma 1997, 104-108.

¹¹⁵ As Franklin Edgerton (1965, 9-10) proposes of the *Pañcatantra*, “Probably no other work of Hindu literature has played so important a part in the literature of the world as the Sanskrit story-collection... There are recorded over two hundred different versions known to exist in more than fifty languages; and three-fourths of these languages are extra-Indian.”

¹¹⁶ As is always the case with the determination of ancient Indian historical events, uncertainty prevails due to the lack of historical documentation. But since it was translated into Pahlavi in the sixth century CE and quoted from in the *Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra (The Science of Polity)* by Cāṇakya in the early centuries of the common era, the *Pañcatantra* may have been composed between 100 BCE and 500 CE.

teach three unintelligent and ignorant princes the principles of polity through stories. These later became popular tales and were repeatedly told, expanded, abstracted, changed between verse and prose, translated into vernaculars, and retranslated into Sanskrit.¹¹⁷ Like all narratives, the content, format, and language of the *Pañcatantra* have not only been modified for its particular didactic purpose, but also have been transformed based on contemporary cultural, regional, language, functional, or doctrinal adjustments. Keith asserts that “It was a distinct and important step when the mere story became used for a definite purpose and when the didactic fable became a definite mode of inculcating useful knowledge....[But unfortunately,] we do not know at what date this took place.”¹¹⁸ Therefore, due to the uncertainty of the date of the *Pañcatantra*, it is unknown whether it preceded, followed, or coexisted with the *jātaka*. Some scholars argue that Buddhists adopted and assimilated some of the stories appearing in the *Pañcatantra* and transformed them according to the dogmas of the Buddha.¹¹⁹ For instance, Amore and Shinn argue that although Buddhism borrowed many of the fables of the *Pañcatantra*, they were “used in other contexts to tell of the many previous Births of the Buddha,”¹²⁰ and Patrick Olivelle agrees that the *jātakas* assimilate Indian folklores:

Storytelling (especially animal fables) was a very ancient art in India...going back to the early first millennium BCE.... It is clear that the Buddhists did not invent these stories [of the *jātaka*]. From the available repertoire of fables they selected and possibly modified the ones that would illustrate the heroic virtues the future Buddha practiced in each of his lives, even in his animal lives....What the *jātakas* did was to use fables for a didactic and religious purpose.¹²¹

For a detailed analysis see Edgerton 1965, 10-11, 21, and 23; Olivelle 1997, xii.

¹¹⁷ Edgerton 1965, 10.

¹¹⁸ Keith 1996, 242.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the development of the *jātakas* in India see Hikara [1954] 1978.

¹²⁰ Amore and Shinn 1981, 6.

¹²¹ Olivelle 1997, xi. For the basic early Buddhist attitudes toward animals and conceptions and misconceptions concerning animal behavior in the Pāli canon, see Deleanu 2000.

But, Olivelle does not entirely agree with Amore and Shinn's argument and suggests that:

It is quite uncertain whether the author of the *Pañcatantra* borrowed his stories from the *Jātakas* or the *Mahābhārata*, or whether he was tapping into a common treasury of tales, both oral and literary, of ancient India.¹²²

Because of the lack of historical records, it is improbable that one could accurately conclude which text might have borrowed from what others, and instead it is more judicious to accept that there was a significant degree of assimilation and correspondence that went on between the texts. Not only do they share the same material, but they probably also had overlapping audiences who had a basic knowledge of the common folklore. Given that these stories share a very similar didactic function, it is worth considering that these animal tales derive from a common treasury of the folklore of India and that particular traditions or literatures modified them to suit their didactic purposes.¹²³ The question should not be which text borrows from which other text since these texts contain assets borrowed from traditional tales spread throughout India and share the same cultural and social networks of transmission.

In addition, the Jain *Dharmabyhydayamahākāvya* and *Samyaktvakaumudī* probably also coexisted and developed in the same period. Akin to the development of Buddhism in its stance against Brahmanical tradition, Jainism rebelled against the authority of the Vedas and the status of the Brahmins in India. However, despite a variety of differences in the doctrines of the two religions, they are close in age: Jainism dates approximately to the sixth century BCE, while Buddhism dates to the fifth century BCE. For that reason, when attempting to determine the historical context

¹²² Olivelle 1997, xi.

¹²³ Due to their different circumstances or locations, the *jātakas* function differently. In next chapter I will further discuss another function of the *jātakas*, devotional, as presented at *stūpas*.

of Indian Buddhist narrative literature, the Jain moral tales, poetry, and canon can be pertinent. The parallel between the Buddhist *jātaka* and the Jain story of rebirth is by no means insignificant, since they shared not only similar motives in the same period, but also networks of transmission and similar audiences who likely were interested in and fond of the narratives. For instance, as Serge D’Oldenburg points out, interesting parallel to the *Padakusalamāṇava-jātaka* (no. 432) are found in Jain collection of *Samyaktvakaumudī* and in the commentaries to the *Uttarajjhayaṇa*. D’Oldenburg, therefore, suggests that “there is no doubt of the relation between the Buddhist and the Jain texts.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, according to Paniker,

No one can miss the parallelism between the Buddhist *Jātaka* and the Jain story of rebirth. The didactic tone is common: in one the Bodhisattva is the teacher-moralist, in the other is the Jain monk. In both, the rebirth formula is the operative factor. The recycling of the narrative matter is resorted to in both as a means of story-telling.... Both could perhaps be termed to form strong marginal streams, if not the mainstream narrative tradition.¹²⁵

Thus, while examining Indian Buddhist narrative literature, Jain sources could provide very useful evidence. Based on their similarity of style and their use of narrative as a tool for the purpose of teaching, the two narrative traditions probably had similar networks of transmission and the people in the societies that used them probably led similar lives.

In sum, the links between these narratives are probably the result of these stories and characters being already familiar to their audiences, being part of a common folklore tradition. As discussed earlier, every narrative version has been constructed and reconstructed to suit certain purposes or interests of both audience and author.¹²⁶ The stories in each tradition differ in ways that serve the particular purposes of those

¹²⁴ D’Oldenburg 1893, 341.

¹²⁵ Paniker 2003, 106.

¹²⁶ Smith 1980, 219.

traditions, that is, they serve to propagate their distinctive ethics and ideals. The stories that had been popular in India before or when the Buddhist and Jain narratives developed were assimilated by these traditions and became either Buddhized or Jainized.

In that regard, in ancient India, Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative literature was shaped by a shared and common narrative style, language, context, and culture. For example, there are many examples of Indian Buddhist narrative literature that portray moral issues, self-sacrifice, or a spiritually attractive picture of the Buddha (for instance, in the *Pāli Jātaka*, *Jātakamālā*, *Buddhacarita*, and *Lalitavistara*) but in which references to topics unique to Buddhism such as renunciation or nirvāṇa is not found. Except for the hero being the Bodhisattva in these Buddhist narratives, the tales are very much like other Indian ascetic poetry and folklore. And, although it seems to contradict the common understanding that Buddhism arose against the Brahmanical tradition, quite often a Brahmin is the central character of the tales and Indra is the figure that tests the intention and endurance of the Bodhisattva. In a word, in most tales in the *jātakas*, there is often more common folklore than Buddhism. This is due to the fact that many of the stories in the *jātaka* not only share a common treasury of folktales, but were composed by Buddhist monks who were familiar with different popular narratives, ballads, heroic songs, ascetic poetry, and religious myths as a result of the diverse experiences they had before becoming Buddhists. It is thus likely that the majority of Indian Buddhist narrative literature involved assimilating non-Buddhist Indian narrative literature, and thus was initially indistinguishable from it.

1.4 THE JĀTAKAS

Apparently, having developed in the very similar atmosphere as its non-Buddhist counterpart, Indian Buddhist narrative shares a great degree of similarity with it. In

fact, in the early phases of its development, the *jātaka* was likely not different from other Indian narrative literatures, so we still find in the *jātaka* traces of features common to other Indian narrative literatures even after the *jātaka* progressed gradually and underwent constant changes. It has gone from a rough and unstable stage to a refined and distinguished form unique to itself. No doubt the stories had been known and circulated for many centuries before they were assimilated into Buddhism and canonized. Once again, the great challenge occurs when endeavoring to determine when the collection of *jātakas* was created. In S. C. Sarkar’s words, “To ascertain (maybe) any specific date of the *jātakas* is a most difficult task and for want of conclusive data we are bound to ascertain the probable priority of a set of *jātakas* over others.”¹²⁷ It is an almost impossible task to fix the date of the *jātakas* from any perspective; here we are only able to examine, from an internal perspective, the development of its style, genre, and content.

The *jātakas* are not a historical document per se, but a populist and didactic device, in which ample information about ancient Indian culture and customs is revealed in various languages and versions. Among these languages, versions, and collections, I discuss the genre and nature of the *jātaka* from the collection of *Pāli Jātaka* and *Cariyāpiṭaka* in the Pāli canon together with the Ārya Śūra’s *Jātakamālā* in Sanskrit, but later in this chapter, I expand the discussion to include one of the Chinese *jātaka* collections, the *Liu du ji jing*.

Like other Indian Buddhist narratives, as discussed above, in the beginning they were probably not very distinctive compared to non-Buddhist narrative literatures, but after many modifications throughout its long period of development, the *jātaka* gradually established itself as a genre in its own right, as we experience it today. The genre constantly and continuously changed in accordance with its particular

¹²⁷ Sarkar 1990, 5.

circumstances. As Kent suggests: “The term genre may be understood to have two dimensions: one synchronic, the other diachronic. In one sense, a genre is a system of codifiable conventions, and in another sense, it is a continually changing cultural artifact.”¹²⁸ That is, although a genre bears a recognizable face, and there is something about it that is fixed through time, it also reflects in its very structure the effects of certain historical moments.

Genre

Compelled by the opinions of scholars who strongly emphasize the significance of maintaining the norms of genres and the essential nature of them for the study of literature, we must ask, what is a genre? How does a genre function in a text, and how does it pay a pivotal role in a study of a text or literature? Didier Coste provides a proper analogy for and an explanation of genre: “The notion of genre is obviously nothing but a dim, changing constellation in the metalanguage of literature....If we take transversal communicating into account, genre will appear as an essential element of communication through texts, since it does not belong to any text in particular or even to a finite group of texts.”¹²⁹ It seems that genre transmits a pivotal message via a text; therefore, it is crucial for the study of a text and literature, and without it a text could not be understood and interpreted appropriately. Jonathan Culler proposes: “Genres are no longer taxonomic classes but groups of norms and expectations which help the reader to assign functions to various elements in the work, and thus the ‘real’ genres are those sets of categories or norms required to account for the process of reading.”¹³⁰ Whether following the codes of genre or not, “a writer always writes within the context of his culture’s repertoire of genres and generic conventions, [while]

¹²⁸ Kent 1986, 15.

¹²⁹ Coste 1989, 253.

¹³⁰ Culler 1981, 123.

readers...can only interpret a text by placing it within the context of a particular genre or genres.”¹³¹ It contains a hermeneutic interpretation of a text, showing the generic contract between the text and the competent reader. In that regard, in order to understand the meaning of a text which is uncertain, the genre plays an essential role for interpreting a text.

Moreover, according to Reiko Ohnuma, “the term genre should be restricted to those historically situated sets of institutionalized conventions that have presumably governed the writing and reading of literature at a particular place and time.”¹³² Therefore, genres are supposed to have historical and cultural specificity and distinctive institutionalized complexes of generic conventions. Genres are constantly changing throughout time, and because of this an absolute definition of a literary genre is impossible. However, the specific cultural, social, and historical attributes of any genre can be described. Hence, “even genres which cross cultural boundaries inevitably become ‘different’ genres.”¹³³ The relationship between writing /reading and a genre is one of inseparability. Therefore the understanding of a text in its context and as a genre must include the understanding of both its synchronic and diachronic dimensions.

Since genres are historical, cultural, and social in nature, Buddhist narrative literature has its own genres (*jātaka*, *avādana*, and so forth), and each of them in turn possesses its own agendas and characters. Because of the complications involved in the *avadāna* genre and the limitations of my present project, I discuss here how only the *jātaka* genre developed and transformed throughout its transmissions. Scholars offer various analyses of the term “*jātaka*”; some, from its linguistic analysis, interpret it as “belonging to or connected with birth,” and therefore as “a birth-story,” some

¹³¹ Ohnuma 1997, 13.

¹³² Ohnuma 2007, 30.

¹³³ Ohnuma 1997, 12-13.

suggest it be rendered merely as “tales.”¹³⁴ In their earlier developments, *jātakas* presumably contain a series of birth stories of some honorable personages, as E. W. Cowell states: “In India this recollection of previous lives is a common feature in the histories of the saints and heroes of sacred tradition; and it is especially mentioned by *Manu* as the effect of a self-denying and pious life.”¹³⁵ According to the *Laws of Manu* (VI, 148-49), “A person comes to remember his prior births through daily recitation of the Veda, purification, the generation of inner heat, and absence of malice to living beings. Remembering his prior births, a twice born man who recites the Veda attains perpetual, unending happiness through that recitation of the Veda.”¹³⁶ But later, when the *jātaka* tales were extensively adapted by Buddhism and *jātakas* became a genre of Buddhist literature, probably the only Indian *jātakas* that survived were in Buddhism. What then is a *jātaka* in Buddhism? Here is a definition given by Peter Skilling: “That which relates the austere practices and bodhisattva practices of the Blessed One in various past births: this is called *jātaka*.”¹³⁷ After being adapted into Buddhism, *jātaka* tales are very widespread in early Buddhist sources, before being collected into a set or sets of literature with the marks of its specific genre among the other nine or twelve *aṅgas*.¹³⁸ Even though it has its own genre, as Skilling reminds us: “*jātaka* is not an inflexible category. The same narrative can fulfill different functions, at one and the same time or at different times, as a *jātaka*, a *deśana*, and *ānisaṃsa*, a *paritta*, or a *sūtra*.”¹³⁹

¹³⁴ Ohnuma 1997, 16.

¹³⁵ Cowell [1895] 2003, v.

¹³⁶ Doniger & Smith 1991, 88.

¹³⁷ Skilling 2006, 125.

¹³⁸ In the Pāli Canon of the Theravada tradition, most people agree that there are nine *aṅgas* or genres: *sūtra* (discourses), *geya* (recitation), *gāthā* (stanzas), *veyākaraṇa* (expositions/prediction), *udāna* (utterances of joy), *itivṛttaka* (thus said), *jātaka* (birth stories), *adbutadharma* (marvelous phenomena), and *vedallav* (analyses). For a more detailed discussion of these genres, see Norman 1983, 15-17. Sanskrit sources add *nidāna* (reasons), *avadāna* (metaphor), *upadeśa* (dogmatic treatises), and *vaipulya* (expansion), but drop *vedalle* from the Pāli sources (Nakamura 1981, 658b).

¹³⁹ Skilling 2006, 133. An example, also given by Skilling, is the *Khandhavatta-jātaka*, which belongs not only to *jātaka* (no. 203) but also to *Vinaya* (Cullavagga, II 110), to *Sutta* (Aṅguttara-nikāya II

But the genre of *jātaka* in the Buddhist Pāli canon, according to D’Oldenburg, has a distinct and fixed style: “The *Jātaka*, like most productions of Indian Literature, has its fixed pattern, strictly preserved in the Buddhist [Pāli] canon, which in general distinguishes itself from the Sanskrit and Prākṛit by its propensity to systematize.”¹⁴⁰ Ohnuma further explains that even as the established genre of *jātaka* emerged from its crude beginnings, it was “a Buddhist generic framework that invaded and incorporated material from a wide variety of already-established genres” and it “seems to suffer from a lack of characteristic features...[and] is marked by almost *nothing but* such a characteristic—the requirement that one of the characters be a past birth of the Buddha.”¹⁴¹ In other words, the so-called established genre of *jātaka* developed upon or within other earlier Buddhist genres, with Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources, and only later did it develop and reconstruct itself into a more focused and fixed genre. As the canon was gradually closed, the increasing corpus of *jātakas* were categorized and separated from others.

The Pāli Jātakas

In the process, those tales had to be “Buddhictized” through careful revision to include as a major character the Bodhisattva who was the Buddha to be, and, as seen in Pāli collection, this ultimately “led to the characteristic *jātaka* framework consisting of a ‘story of the present,’ explaining on what occasion the Buddha told his tale, and a story of the past, or the tale itself. The ‘stories of the present’ were composed anew...or taken from episodes already present in earlier sources.”¹⁴² These processes took several centuries, and the stories so rewrought and redacted developed, at last, a

72-73), and to paritta (Khandha-paritta).

¹⁴⁰ D’Oldenburg 1893, 301.

¹⁴¹ Ohnuma 1997, 22.

¹⁴² Ohnuma 1997, 20.

distinctive style and genre that could be called *jātaka* and could be delineated as follows:¹⁴³

1. An introductory story; the “story of the present time,” relating the occasion on which the Buddha narrated to the monks the relevant *jātakas*
2. A prose narrative, *atītavatthu*, story of the past age, that contains the *jātaka* proper
3. The *gāthās* or stanzas, that in general form a part of the *Atītavatthu*, but often also form a part of the story of the present time
4. A grammatical and lexicographical commentary upon the *gāthās*
5. The connection, in which the personalities of the story of the modern age are identified with those of the past age¹⁴⁴

The current extant *Pāli Jātaka* has been studied by many scholars, who have drawn a variety of conclusions. Its style, for example, has been criticized as mediocre by Khoroché: “The prose in the Pali versions is simple and unadorned and the verses which form the older core, though often obscure, have no pretension to artistry.”¹⁴⁵ Even so, it contains a recognition of the value of humanity, as Terral-Martini states: “The *Jātakas* have been blamed for being ill composed and crammed with digressions.... But it should be understood that their object was entirely different. They have been written for the edification of the simple folks whom they sought, before all to instruct.... However, this teaching has been and remains the spiritual nourishment of a considerable part of humanity.”¹⁴⁶ Even though it manifests a vulgar

¹⁴³ First, we have to keep in mind that the current *jātaka* in the Pāli canon is not a real canonical *jātaka* collection, but a commentary on the *jātaka* proper. As Sarkar (1981, 15) points out “The present form in which we find the *Jātaka* is nothing but a book of commentary, a literary manipulation, which may have grown out of the works of a considerable number of scholars in the 5th century A. D or even at a later period. Furthermore, the total number of the *jātakas* is open to question because of the inconsistent and striking differences in the total number in different collections. Fausboll’s collection of *Jātakathavaṇṇanā* contains 447 stories and the *Culla-Niddesa* gives the number as 500, while B. Hodgson’s collection of the *jātakamālā* of Nepal numbers 565.

¹⁴⁴ Winternitz 1987, 111. The elements of genre and style evident in the *Pāli jātaka* such as “the story of present,” “the story of past,” and “the Buddha identifies the different actors in the story in their present births at the time of his discourse” do not occur in other *jātakas*, such as seen in the *Jātakamālā* or *Pariyāpīṭaka*.

¹⁴⁵ Khoroché 1989, xv.

¹⁴⁶ Terral-Martini 2000, 64-65.

style and unexpected digressions, the *Pāli Jātaka* does possess literary value not only in Buddhist narrative literature but also in Indian literature.

However, the most problematic aspect of their composition is the mixed verse/prose composition of the *Pāli Jātakas*. Some scholars argue that only the *jātaka gāthā* can claim canonical authority, and it should be regarded as a document of the third or even the fifth century BCE; some suggest the *jātaka* is originally a stylistic mixture of verse and prose; others claim the verse portion is added to make the stories into *jātakas*. Due to the different styles in the verse and prose, scholars such as Wilhelm Geiger suggest that only the verses in the *jātakas* should be regarded as canonical, and that the prose narrative should be left more or less to the preference of the reciters.¹⁴⁷ In addition, E. Cowell claims that “the language of the *gāthās* is much more archaic than that of the stories; and it certainly seems more probable to suppose that they are the older kernel of the work; and that thus in its original form the *jātaka*, like the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, consisted only of these verses.”¹⁴⁸

However, scholars, such as H. Oldenberg and S. C. Sarkar, have a different opinion about this issue of the mixed prose and verse style, or *Ākhyāna*, which is another feature shared with both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Oldenberg claims that it is the oldest feature of the *jātaka* literature.¹⁴⁹ S. C. Sarkar further explains: “the *jātakas* are the illustrations of the *Ākhyāna*-literature which is claimed to exist from the Vedic period onwards. This type of literature is composed in a mixture of prose and verse of which the verses only were committed to memory and handed down, and of which the prose story was left to be narrated by every reciter in his own words.”¹⁵⁰ K. R. Norman also suggests that “Some are narrative stories,

¹⁴⁷ Geiger 1956, 21.

¹⁴⁸ Cowell[1895] 2003, iii.

¹⁴⁹ Oldenberg 1910-1912, 21.

¹⁵⁰ Sarkar 1981, 24.

where the action may either be supplied in the verses or supplemented by prose insertions. [But] some of the verses are very difficult to understand without a prose introduction.”¹⁵¹ These scholars suggest that the style in which there is a combination of prose and verse as illustrated in *Pāli Jātaka* has a long history and very likely has been present from the beginning of this literature.

With some corroboration of opinion from others, Maurice Winternitz proposes that the original *jātaka*, if not all of them, were originally in both verse and prose, but the original prose has been lost, and only the original verse survives in the Pāli canon.¹⁵² For him, the prose of the *jātaka* should not be considered original because it’s “inferior and tasteless and rather does not stand in harmony with the *Gāthās*.”¹⁵³ That is, in the process of transmissions or translations, the original prose might have been lost, so it is more likely that both the verse and prose had been side by side in the original. Without the prose, with the verses alone, some stories do not even make sense, as Winternitz points out: “there are some *jātakas* which were prose stories with only one or two or a few verses containing either the moral or the gist of the tale.... [and some] *jātakas* [in which]...the story itself [is] related alternately in prose and verse.... But there are other *Jātakas* which originally consisted of *Gāthās* only.”¹⁵⁴ There are a variety of explanations that account for the inconsistency in the current Pāli: some of the *jātakas* were originally in the mixed verse/prose style; some were in prose form now only due to the restricted portion of the verse; others were originally in verse only.

On the other hand, A. B. Keith’s argument stands apart: “in the case of narrative the evidence seems clearly to indicate that originally in India prose and verse were

¹⁵¹ Norman 1983, 80.

¹⁵² Winternitz, [1962]1987, 111.

¹⁵³ Winternitz [1962]1987, 114.

¹⁵⁴ Winternitz 1928, 13-14.

used independently.”¹⁵⁵ After suggesting that in its original form the *jātakas* consisted of prose narrative, Sarkar further explains that it is possible that the verses were inserted for emphasis:

The older Indian literature was of narrative type. In the framework of prose, the emphasized verse[s] were inserted. For the conventional tradition of such narratives one has to learn verses and teach them. Therefore, the sense of the prose did not stand really firm, but in course of time the prose would undergo changes as one generation of narrators yielded place to the next. The original prose work was gradually drowned in the sea of oblivion, but the verses kept their genuine nature as they were handed down carefully through memorization. So with the addition of the prose-work the verses become intelligible. The same thing was repeated in the case of the *Jātaka* also.¹⁵⁶

Overall, scholars have proposed a range of opinions on the issue of *jātaka-gāthās* in the current *Pāli Jātaka*. In order to adjudicate them, we need to confront the question regarding the canonical authority of the verses and the prose from two different perspectives: from the current *Pāli Jātaka* and *jātakas* from other earlier data, namely inscriptions and Chinese sources. There is an apparent difference in the time of composition between the verse and the prose in the current *Pāli Jātaka*; the former is more ancient than the latter. But the current *Pāli Jātaka* does not represent the earlier *jātakas*, and therefore, it is inaccurate to assume that the verses in the current *Pāli Jātakas* are earlier than the poses in their earlier development . Here is a place where the inscriptional evidence, mentioned above, can shed some light.

While incorporating inscriptional evidence, Rhys Davids, on the other hand, suggests: “The verses, of course, are the most trustworthy, as being, in language, some centuries older. But the prose, which must have accompanied them throughout, and it is taken for granted in the illustrations on the ancient bas-reliefs, ought also, in such

¹⁵⁵ Keith 1966, 71.

¹⁵⁶ Sarkar 1981, 28.

questions, to have due weight attached to it.”¹⁵⁷ There is evidence of the existence of the prose, not the verse, on the *stūpas* at Bhārhut and Sāñcī, built in the second to first century BCE as in Ohnuma’s words: “it is clear that the prose portions preserve much ancient tradition, since many of their details have exact parallels in Buddhist Sanskrit texts and in the bas reliefs of Bhārhūt and Sāñcī.”¹⁵⁸ In other words, based on the inscriptional evidence, which is indeed historically more reliable than literary evidence, we might need to pay more attention to the long period of scholarly negligence that has enshrouded the prose portion of the *jātakas*. As I discuss latter, the majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* have only a prose, not a verse, portion. Along with the inscriptional evidence, the *Liu du ji jing* could provide additional evidence to help adjudicate the question whether prose and/or verse is in the earlier *jātakas*, even though the current *Pāli Jātaka* has both.

In addition to the *Pāli Jātaka* collection, two later collections of *jātakas* frequently mentioned are: the *Pāli Cariyāpiṭaka* and the Sanskrit *Jātakamālā*, in which some differences with the *Pāli Jātaka* developed. I compare and contrast the *Cariyāpiṭaka* and Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* with the *Pāli Jātaka* in terms of their styles and genres. As I mentioned above, modifications of genres take place in order to accommodate particular social realities. It must have been in the face of such influences that the *jātaka* genre changed with regard to the character and rebirth of the Buddha and in its emphasis on devotional practice. The sea change undergone by the character of the Buddha from a wise/holy man to an animal was probably effected in the interests of people who were familiar with popular tales in which moral stories featured animals as the protagonists. This device transformed the emphasis of the *jātaka*; the teachings began to stress not the importance of moral value and karma

¹⁵⁷ Rhys David 1971, 204-05.

¹⁵⁸ Ohnuma 1997, 17.

theory but self-sacrifice and the Bodhisattva's career in which he strives to develop the perfections. The result of his practice of cultivating the perfections became the central theme of the *jātakas*, as can be seen in many *jātaka* collections, such as in the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, the *Jātakamālā*, and the *Liu du ji jing*.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka*

The *Cariyāpiṭaka*, consisting of thirty-five stories of the former lives of the Buddha, is organized into *seven* perfections in verse in the *Khuddakanikāya* of the *Pāli Tipiṭaka*. The date when the *Cariyāpiṭaka* was composed is controversial; some scholars argue that the *Cariyāpiṭaka* precedes the *Pāli Jātaka*; some think that it was composed after it; others propose that they were contemporary. Because the *Cariyāpiṭaka* contains stories in verse without any prose, some consider that it is earlier than the *Pāli Jātaka*. However, it was worth considering the possibility that it was composed later than the *Pāli Jātaka*, which had a crude style and originally did not include the idea of *pāramitā*, which is found in the *Cariyāpiṭaka*. For example, Winternitz argues that “[*Pāli*] *Jātaka* collection in its present form shows traces of influence by a *Cariyāpiṭaka*, that it had originally nothing to do with the *pāramitā*-theory, since in the majority of the narratives of the *Jātaka*-book that we have examined generally the Buddhist dressing fits in very loosely, and there is no mention of the ‘perfection’ of the Bodhisattva.”¹⁵⁹ Because the idea of *pāramitā* is a later development of Buddhism, it is unknown to the earlier *jātakas*.

The *Cariyāpiṭaka* is very similar to the *Pāli Jātaka*, in terms of genre: every story begins with the Buddha declaring that in one of his previous lives he was so and so and that he practiced in such a manner.¹⁶⁰ But unlike the *Pāli Jātaka*, after a story is

¹⁵⁹ Winternitz 1987, 154-155.

¹⁶⁰ I have noticed that unlike the *Pāli jātaka*, which has been extensively studied by scholars, the *Cariyāpiṭaka* has not been paid much attention. I will examine it together with the *Liu du ji jing*, not

told, the Buddha also tells which perfection was cultivated. Indeed, the thirty-five stories in the *Cariyāpiṭaka* are arranged according to which of the seven perfections it illustrates.¹⁶¹

The *Jātakamālā*

The *Jātakamālā* of Ārya Śūra,¹⁶² similar to the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, is also focused on the significance of the perfections. It consists of thirty-four stories, but unlike the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, it is in the mixed prose-and-verse style (*campū*) in Sanskrit. Ārya Śūra's *Jātakamālā* is dated at approximately the fourth to sixth century CE,¹⁶³ and is a much later work. It shares thirty stories in common with the *Pāli Jātakas* and twelve with the *Cariyāpiṭaka*.¹⁶⁴ Although the *Jātakamālā* is an example of Buddhist narrative literature in the *Ākhyāna* or *campū* style, it “transformed [stories selected from other *jātaka* collections] into much more elaborate and polished work.”¹⁶⁵ The style and language of the *Jātakamālā* make it the most elegant and decorative *jātaka* collection in all of Indic Buddhist literature, which is especially evident when comparing it with the *Pāli Jātaka*: “The *Jātakamālā*, like the Pāli, are a mixture of prose and verse, but unlike in the Pāli where the prose is considered secondary and tasteless, in the

only because it is one of the *jātaka* collections, but also because it is arranged based on the idea of the *pāramitās*. Is there a connection between these two collections in terms of the compilation of the *pāramitās*?

¹⁶¹ Scholars have various opinions as to why there are only seven *pāramitas*, not ten. For a detailed discussion, see Barua [1939] 1979, vi-xiii. While comparing with the *Buddhavamsa* and *Apādāna*, Jonathan Walters (1997, 165) suggests that the *Cariyāpiṭaka* is “the earliest known complete biography of the Buddha on a cosmic scale, that is, the first that understands the Buddha’s present life as the result of actions performed in a series of previous lives.”

¹⁶² Besides Ārya Śūra's *Jātakamālā*, there are other *Jātakamālās* by Haribhaṭṭa and Gopadatta, who are in the succession of Ārya Śūra. For more detailed studies on the *Jātakamālās* of Haribhaṭṭa and Gopadatta see Michael Hahn 1977.

¹⁶³ Actually it is still questionable when Āryaśūra lived; some argue he lived in the sixth century CE; others suggest that he lived in the fourth century CE. For a more detailed discussion on the date of the *Jātakamālā* and Ārya Śūra see Khoroché 1989, xiii.

¹⁶⁴ For more detailed information, see Ohnuma 1997, 23.

¹⁶⁵ Khoroché 1989, vii. Examples of works in the *Ākhyāna* style are the *Kathāsaritsagara* (the *Ocean of Story*) and the *Buddhacarita* of Aśvaghōṣa.

Jātakamālā, in Ārya Śūras' versions, the use of verse and prose is dictated by artistic considerations, and both are written with the same conscious care."¹⁶⁶ Ārya Śūra's treatment of the *jātaka* themes shows a conscious concern for style. As he says in his prologue, "may these edifying tales give greater enjoyment than ever before."¹⁶⁷ Unlike the *Pāli Jātaka*, the *Jātakamālā* is written in classical Sanskrit with an elaborate style and a rich vocabulary. It seems that Ārya Śūra's intention is to not only convey the teachings of Buddhism and the Bodhisattva's career, but also compose the stories in a sophisticated and artistic style. Probably the latter more concerned the author.

In addition, like the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, in its process of the development, the *Jātakamālā* also adapted and composed its stories in light of the idea of perfections. M. A. Gokuldas proposes that, in both the *Cariyāpiṭaka* and the *Jātakamālā*, the main focus of the *jātaka* has switched from presenting moral stories to illustrating the career of the Bodhisattva.¹⁶⁸ In the *Jātakamālā*, the tales are categorized according to the perfections they demonstrate: 1-10 regard generosity, 11-20 morality, 21-30 forbearance, and 31-34 exertion. The common number of *pāramitās* is six in Mahāyāna school or ten in Theravāda school, only four of which appear in the *Jātakamālā*. There is disagreement among scholars whether the extant *Jātakamālā* is complete or the common number of perfections had not yet been established at the time of its writing. In any case, the insertion of the perfections in both the *Cariyāpiṭaka* and the *Jātakamālā* represents a later development of *jātaka* literature and a change in the *jātaka* genre.

¹⁶⁶ Khoroché 1989, xv. Also, in the stories, "dialogue is often, but not always, in verse. Descriptive passages are more frequently in prose than in verse" (ibid.).

¹⁶⁷ Khoroché 1989, xiv.

¹⁶⁸ Gokuldas 1951, 158.

Indian Buddhist narrative is not wholly distinct from Indian non-Buddhist narrative because they have grown and developed together. The development of Buddhist narrative literature depended on how well Buddhism was established in a region, how popular the tradition had become at that time, and how necessary it was to create a separate Buddhist identity. As I argued above, there is no firm historical evidence to show when Buddhist narrative literature or any other Indian literature was first established. It seems that Buddhist narrative literature such as the *jātaka* was probably indistinguishable from its contemporaries prior to the second to third century BCE, except that some Buddhist notions were inserted into previously propagated stories. But it is clear that in its later development, when its genres were fixed, it possessed its own style and content and was distinguishable from non-Buddhist narrative literature. Internal evidence from the Buddhist narrative tradition suggests that there was an explicit awareness of the fixity or boundaries of these genres, in particular of the *jātaka* genre.

1.5 THE *LIU DU JI JING*

The *Liu du ji jing*, (六度集經) or a *Scripture of the Collection of the Six Perfections*, is one of the earliest Chinese translations of a *jātaka* collection. My purpose in including the *Liu du ji jing* in this discussion is to examine the respects in which the *Liu du ji jing* differs from other *jātaka* collections, for these differences might provide answers for some of the unresolved issues about *jātaka* collections in Indic literature. For example, unlike other *jātaka* collections, there is almost no verse portion in the *Liu du ji jing*. Verse portions of a Buddhist text or a *jātaka* are not unique to either Indian or Chinese literature, but occur in both. Why then does the *Liu du ji jing* alone skip it?

The *Liu du ji jing*, consists of ninety-one¹⁶⁹ *jātaka* stories and was translated and compiled into eight fascicles and probably arranged into the six perfections by Kang Senghui 康僧會. There are twenty-six stories in the first three fascicles on the perfection of generosity; fifteen stories in fascicle number 4 on the perfection of morality; thirteen stories in fascicle number 5 on the perfection of forbearance; nineteen stories in fascicle number 6 on the perfection of vigor; nine stories¹⁷⁰ in fascicle number 7 on the perfection of meditative absorption; and nine stories in fascicle number 8 on the perfection of wisdom.

Possibilities of How Kang Senghui Translated the *Liu Du Ji Jing*

Unfortunately, we do not have any extant Indic, Tibetan, or Chinese parallels with the *Liu du ji jing* as whole, only similar stories that appear in different languages and traditions. But as discussed in the introduction, we are not very certain on how much Kang Senghui had done with the *Liu du ji jing* although Sengyou's *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集 confirms its authenticity.¹⁷¹ There are a few possibilities:

¹⁶⁹ The total number of stories related to the former lives of the Buddha in the *Liu du ji jing* in the current *Taishō* canon requires a certain degree of clarification. According to the *Chu san zang ji ji*, among the ninety-one stories, the last four stories, nos. 88-91, were not originally included in the collection. Also, story no. 16 is no. 17's preface, and nos. 74 and 75 are actually the preface to the perfection of meditation and an explanation of the four stages of meditation, which is also contained in no. 76. Additionally, nos. 77-80 are connected with meditation techniques and the ways of attending to them in association with the historical events of the Buddha, such as the famous four visits or the attainment of enlightenment. In sum, there are only seventy-nine *jātaka* stories in the scripture, and there are still a few that are not exactly about former lives of the Buddha.

As in the *Pāli Jātaka* collections, there is duplication of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing*, for instance, story no. 6 is similar to story no. 14; no. 10 is the same as no. 11; no. 12 is the same as no. 31; no. 24 is the same as no. 73; no. 25 is the same as no. 49; no. 29 is the same as no. 63; no. 33 is the same as no. 39; no. 37 is the same as no. 49; and no. 56 is the same as no. 57.

¹⁷⁰ In the *Taishō* edition, story no. 74 is actually the prefatory section to this perfection; therefore, there should be only eight stories on the perfection of meditative absorption.

¹⁷¹ While working in the field of early Chinese Buddhist translations, scholars frequently use two methods to evaluating the authenticity of scriptural attributions: external evidences, including all the testimony of Sengyou's *Chu san zang ji ji* or use of corroborating colophons or early glosses; and internal evidences, including terminology and style of the text in question. For more detailed discussion on the attribution of early Chinese Buddhist translations, see Zürcher 1979 and 1991.

1. We would assume that Kang Senghui translated the scripture directly from an Indic-language text and that the original had been lost afterwards.

2. Kang Senghui collected individual stories and translated and compiled them into the *Liu du ji jing*. But, due to the inconsistent styles within the stories, such as some stories have their own title while others do not, it is difficult to determine if Kang Senghui just translated stories that were available to him.

3. Kang Senghui translated an Indic text, but then added some material from other texts or stories that he thought looked like the *jātaka* stories and called the collection the *Liu du ji jing*.

All three are very possible, but, almost a century ago, a French scholar, Édouard Chavannes, who not only translated a wide range of Chinese Buddhist *avadāna/jātaka* tales, including the *Liu du ji jing*, into French, but also provided very extensive annotation and a concordance of each story in his translation of five volumes. Chavannes also questions whether Kang Senghui was responsible for the compilation of the *Liu du ji jing*: “*Seng-houei* a-t-il traduit littéralement un livre bouddhique de l’Inde ou est-ce lui qui a fait un choix de récits divers et qui les a groupés d’après les pâramitâs? J’avais adopté d’abord la seconde alternative, parce que la plupart des contes que nous trouvons ici figurent effectivement dans divers autres ouvrages d’où ils peuvent avoir été tirés.”¹⁷² Also as noted on the very beginning of his translation on the *Liu du ji jing*, “Comme son titre même l’indique, il est un recueil de sūtras primitivement indépendants les uns des autres. C’est, selon toute vraisemblance, *Seng-houei* lui-même qui composa ce recueil en choisissant les textes et en les élaguant; il n’y a pas lieu de supposer l’existence d’un ouvrage sanscrit dont celui-ci serait la version littérale”¹⁷³ But, he changed his argument from which he proposed on

¹⁷² Chavannes 1910-1934, iii

¹⁷³ Chavannes 1910-1934, 1 note 1. Robert Shih (1968, 29 notes. no 106) also agrees with Chavannes’ earlier argument that the *Liu du ji jing* of compilation is done by Kang Senghui, not the translation.

the translation of the *Liu du ji jing* in the introduction to the *Cinq cents contes et apologues* for two reasons and suggests that the *Liu du ji jing* is indeed a translation of an Indic scripture:

[C]onsidérant cependant, d'une part, que ces contes se présentent dans le *Lieou tout si king* sous une forme qui n'est jamais rigoureusement identique à celle qu'ils ont ailleurs, et d'autre part, que le préambule du *Lieou tout si king* semble en faire un véritable sūtra commençant par la formule usuelle : « Voici ce que j'ai entendu raconter », pour ces deux raisons, je serais disposé maintenant à ne plus rejeter aussi nettement l'hypothèse d'un texte hindou dont le *Lieou tout si king* ne serait que la traduction pure et simple.¹⁷⁴

Unfortunately, Chavannes' reasons are not that simple and pure. The inconsistency and lack of corresponding detail between the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* and those in other Chinese collections cannot simply suggest that the *Liu du ji jing* is whether a directly translation of an original Indian text. It is possible that either the original text was already inconsistent in style or the inconsistency is due to the fact that Kang Senghui added some independent stories into the *Liu du ji jing*. In addition, Chavannes bases his argument about the provenance of the *Liu du ji jing* on the presence, in only some of its stories, of the standard opening phrase common to the majority of Chinese Buddhist texts, "Thus have heard by me, once the Buddha was..." I am not sure why Chavannes thinks this standard opening phrase indicates that the *Liu du ji jing* is an authentic Indian Buddhist scripture when only a few stories in it bear the phrase and that this phrase is missing from a number of early translations. He also appears to have forgotten that most Mahāyāna scriptures also share that opening phrase, and are demonstrably not the words of the Buddha for this, and in addition that many known Chinese Buddhist counterfeit texts begin with the same phrase.

¹⁷⁴ Chavannes 1910-1934, iii.

Contrary to Chavannes' argument, I suggest in light of the internal evidence the possibility of Kang Senghui translating an Indic text, adding some material from other texts or stories that looked like the *jātaka* stories, and compiling them into the collection of the *Liu du ji jing*. There are stories that seem to be adapted from other already translated texts, such as story no. 89, *Jing mian wang jing* 鏡面王經, which looks almost exactly like story no. 5, with the same subtitle, in the *Yi zu jing* 義足經.¹⁷⁵

In addition, the presence of several problems with the compilation of the *Liu du ji jing* indicates that Kang Senghui indeed carried out the compilation and wrote the preface in addition to executing the translation. There are several stories that do not fit the criteria for a given perfection, such as the stories in the section on the perfection of meditative absorption. More precisely, story number 74 to 78 are not *jātaka* stories in the section of the perfection of meditation, but rather a summary explanation of the four stages of meditation and of the techniques for achieving them. For example, stories numbers 74 and 75 are actually the preface to the section on the perfection of meditation and a discourse on meditation theories, which is also contained in number 76. Additionally, numbers 77 and 78 contain detailed meditation techniques in association with stories of historical events of the Buddha. Perhaps Kang Senghui is not responsible for this, for the problem most likely is inherited from the original. But whether or not the stories of this section were lost during transmission, it is very likely that Kang Senghui deliberately or mistakenly put these meditation techniques in this section, regardless they are not *jātaka* stories at all.

Furthermore, Kang Senghui also wrote both the commentary and preface on the *An ban Shou yi jing* 安般守意經(T 602) in which we can see a certain degree of similarity with stories numbers 74 to 76 in the *Liu du ji jing*. According to Zürcher, “From a doctrinary point of view, the most interesting documents are no doubt the

¹⁷⁵ T 198, 4.178a22-c14.

introductory sections to five of the six parts of K'ang Seng-Hui's *Liu-tu-chi-ching* [*Liu du ji jing*]-the section on the *Prajñāpāramitā* has been lost, which were written by Kang Senghui himself."¹⁷⁶ Owing to the interesting remarks on these sections, it is very likely that Kang Senghui composed the scripture and wrote the preface himself, especially the preface to the perfection of meditation. In any case, we know that the *Liu du ji jing* is the earliest extant Chinese *jātaka* collection by far and the majority of stories in the collection were very likely translated from Indian authentic *jātaka* tales, and one which is invaluable for the study of *jātaka* literature, as well as the manner in which the six perfections developed in Buddhism.

As an instance of the *jātaka* genre, the *Liu du ji jing* does share many basic features of the other *jātaka* collections. For instance, like the *Pāli Jātakas*, the majority¹⁷⁷ of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* begin with an introductory story that is the story of the present time, relating the occasion on which the Buddha narrated to the monks the relevant *jātakas*, and continue with a narrative of a story of the past age that contains the *jātaka* proper and the identification of the personalities of the story of the present age with those of the past age.¹⁷⁸ These elements of genre and style that are evident in the *Pāli Jātaka* such as “the story of the present,” “the story of the past,” and “the Buddha identifies the different actors in the story in their present births at the time of his discourse” do not occur in other *jātakas*, such as the *Jātakamālā* or *Cariyāpiṭaka*. However, the *Liu du ji jing* shares another feature with both the *Jātakamālā* and the *Cariyāpiṭaka*: all three of them are compiled according to the idea of the *pāramitās*. It seems that the *Liu du ji jing* has one foot in the genre of the *Pāli*

¹⁷⁶ Zürcher 1959, 53.

¹⁷⁷ By and large, the textual style of the *Liu du ji jing* is consistent with only a few exceptions. The reasons for the exceptions are difficult to determine, but they presumably are due to Kang Senghui's borrowing directly from independent or individual texts that had already been translated by others and were available by the time of the *Liu du ji jing*.

¹⁷⁸ For the connections of the characters in each story of each perfection with the Buddha, see the appendix no. 2 of this dissertation.

Jātaka and the other in the *Jātakamālā* and *Cariyāpiṭaka*. After examining the particular styles and genre of the *Liu du ji jing*, I will be in a better position to decide the possible literary developments of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* and its most invaluable for the study of *jātaka* literature. Then, in Chapter 3, I bring to bear some internal evidence from our investigation of the *Liu du ji jing* authors' attitude toward women and how that fits into social/institutional circumstances of Buddhism.

Style

The majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* usually begin with an opening phrase such as “Once the Bodhisattva (was)... or once...” (*xi zhe, pusa (wei)* 昔者，菩薩(為) ...或 (*xi zhe* 昔者...) However, there are twelve stories with different types of opening phrases. At the time of Kang Senghui, these phrases were popularly used in Chinese Buddhist scripture to translate the Sanskrit “*evam mayā śrutam*” as “Thus was heard by me [Ānada], once the Buddha at...” (*wen ru shi, yi shi, fo zai* 聞如是，一時，佛在...) Why does Kang Senghui utilize two styles of opening phrases in the collection? It is possible, as I have discussed above, that Kang Senghui adapted a few stories that look like *jātakas* from extant translations or other Indian texts that indeed have a standard opening phrase. In addition, those stories with a standard opening phrase are story numbers 15 (no title), 16 (*fo shuo si xing jing* 佛說四姓經), 38 (*tai zi mu po jing* 太子墓魄經), 39 (*mi lan jing* 彌蘭經), 40 (*ding sheng sheng wang jing* 頂生聖王經), 41 (*pu ming wang jing* 普明王經), 64 (*fo shuo mi feng wang jing* 佛說蜜蜂王經), 83 (no title), 87 (*mo tiao wang jing* 摩調王經), 88 (*a li nian mi jing* 阿離念彌經), 89 (*jing mian wang jing* 鏡面王經), and 91 (*fan mo huang jing* 梵摩皇經). Apparently, besides story numbers 15 and 83, in every instance the standard phrase goes with an individual title as an independent text. Among the ninety-one stories in the *Liu du ji jing*, most of them are just assigned a number (but no title) in the *Taishō*

edition¹⁷⁹, but there are thirty stories with their own individual titles. Those that have a title also have a standard-text style, with a formal opening and ending phrase. In addition, in most cases they are compiled next to each other in the same fascicle. For instance, four stories (numbers 11-14) in the second fascicle all have a title, as well as numbers 38-41, 51-54, 64-73, and 84-91. Only number 16 (which has a title) has no other titled stories before or after it. Why do these stories have their own titles when others do not? The answer is uncertain. It is worth considering that because the stories with titles and standard openings are grouped together they had a different source than the ones without titles and standard openings. Therefore, it is very possible that these stories (with their titles) were available to Kang Senghui at the time he was about to translate the *Liu du ji jing*, so he not only translated these individual stories but also compiled them into the scripture.

Furthermore, most of the stories conclude with a phrase that accords with the story's placement in a particular section in the *Liu du ji jing* (that is, according to the perfection demonstrated) such as “A bodhisattva's perfection of benevolence in practicing giving is thus” 「*pu sa ci hui du wu ji, xing bu shi ru shi* 菩薩慈惠度無極，行布施如是」, or “A bodhisattva's perfection of persistent in practicing morality is thus” 「*pu sa zhi du wu ji, xing chi jie ru shi* 菩薩執志度無極，行持戒如是」, and so forth. But there are eight stories with dissimilar ending phrases that are, in turn, very common in Chinese Buddhist scriptures concluding phrases such as “these śramaṇas having heard this sūtra, all with great joy pay homage to the Buddha and leave 「*zhu sha men wen jing, jie da huan xi, wei fo zuo li er qu* 諸沙門聞經，皆大歡喜，為佛作禮而去。」 Like the opening phrase and title, a likely explanation for the inconsistency is that the stories with the variant concluding phrases were borrowed and added to the

¹⁷⁹ It is very likely *Taishō* editors added numbers to the stories since other versions, such as *Zhong hua da zhang jing* 中華大藏經 or *Shi jing* 石經 does not assign a number to a story.

collection from an extant or independent text. Besides the two different styles of titles, openings, and endings, overall, there are no other particular stylistic oddities in the *Liu du ji jing*.¹⁸⁰ Thus, it seems likely that Kang Senghui not only translated stories of the *Liu du ji jing* but also collected and added stories that were in accord with the six perfections that were available from other independent Indian texts or stories.

Six Perfections

Similar to both Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*, which is organized according to four perfections (*pāramitās*), and the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, which is organized according to seven perfections, the *Liu du ji jing* is organized according to six perfections.¹⁸¹ The idea of the six perfections is commonly associated with the Mahāyāna tradition today in the same way that the idea of the ten perfections is commonly attributed to Theravāda Buddhism. But was the idea of these perfections included in earlier school of Buddhism or the *jātakas*, and if not, how did it develop? The doctrine of the *pāramitās* plays no part in the older books, including the *Pāli Jātaka*. According to Sarkar, “the theory of *Pāramitā* was quite unknown to this type of original *jātaka* and this was perhaps borrowed from the Mahāyāna doctrine.”¹⁸² Sarkar is correct; the notion of *pāramitās* is likely a later development of Buddhism since it is not found in the *Nikāyas*, only in later collections of the *Cariyāpiṭka* and *Jātakamālā*. In that regard, probably the notion of perfections was developed in both Mainstream and Mahāyāna traditions simultaneously. But it is not known how, when, or by whom the concept was developed, but N. Dutt suggests that “the introduction and formulation of the

¹⁸⁰ I plan to work on a project on Kang Senghui's particular translation styles and vocabulary comparing with Zhi Qian's in the near future.

¹⁸¹ Three fascicles pertain to the perfection of generosity, and for each of the remaining five perfections there is one fascicle each.

¹⁸² Sarkar 1981, 10.

Pāramitās were due originally either to the Mahāsāṅghikas or the Sarvāstivādins.”¹⁸³

Dutt does not tell us on what ground he claims this, but even if he is right, we still do not know how the idea developed and how the compilers of these *jātaka* collections adapted the idea when making their compilations.

However, based on the textual evidence in the Chinese texts, we can probably determine approximately in what century the idea of the *pāramitās* developed. One of the earliest Mahāyāna texts that mentions the notion of the six perfections is known as the *Liu bo luo mi jing* 六波羅蜜經 (*ṣaṭpāramitā?*), which is referred to in the *Chu sa zang ji ji* 出三藏記集. The six perfections are also frequently mentioned in a wide range of Mahāyāna texts, such as Lokakṣema’s *Fo shuo wu liang qing jing ping deng jue jing* 佛說無量清淨平等覺經 (or T 362)¹⁸⁴ and Zhi Qian’s translation of Larger *Sukhāvātīvyūhasūtra* (*fo shuo a mi tuo san ye san fo sa lou fo tan gu du ren dao jing* 佛說阿彌陀三耶三佛薩樓佛檀過度人道經 or T 361).¹⁸⁵ In these scriptures, a bodhisattva is advised to recite the *Liu bo luo mi jing*, which unfortunately is no longer extant, so there is no way to know what the *sūtra* contains. But, as HIRAKAWA Akira indicated “[a]s its title implies, it probably consisted of a description of the practice of the six perfections,”¹⁸⁶ which is similar to the case of our text, the *Liu du ji jing*. In that regard, the *Liu bo luo mi jing* was quoted in Lokakṣema’s authentic translation (either T. 361 or T. 362) between the late 170s to the mid-180s CE, and since it took years to be transmitted to China, the scripture was probably composed approximately in the first century BCE or earlier.

¹⁸³ Dutt 1930, 13.

¹⁸⁴ 當作菩薩道。奉行六波羅蜜經者 (T.361,12.291c 18-19); Paul Harrison (1998, 556-557 notes 16-18) has argued on stylistic grounds that the version of T. 361 conventionally attributed to Lokakṣema may be the work of Zhi Qian, whereas T. 362, on the other hand, could be the work of Lokakṣema.

¹⁸⁵ 有作菩薩道。奉行六波羅蜜經 (T.362,12.301b28-29).

¹⁸⁶ HIRAKAWA 1990, 276.

But there is also disagreement about the number of perfections in various schools of Buddhism. Nalinaksha Dutt claims that “the conception of six *pāramitās* was the oldest,”¹⁸⁷ but, according to HIRAKAWA, “At first, the number of perfections was not set at six. The Sarvāstivādins of Kashmir had a list of four: giving (*dāna*), morality (*śīla*), vigor (*vīrya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*). The other two elements of the six perfections, patience (*kṣānti*) and meditation (*dhyāna*), were included in the four perfections as components of morality and wisdom.”¹⁸⁸ Today most scholars recognize ten perfections in Mainstream Buddhism and six in Mahāyāna, with a few exceptions. The perfections that appear in the Pāli sources are giving, morality, wisdom, vigor, patience (which overlaps with five of the six perfections in Mahāyāna), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), truth (*sacca*), resolve (*adhiṭṭhāna*), friendliness (*mettā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The Mahāyāna school, on the other hand, generally adopts the six perfections.¹⁸⁹ Besides the *Liu du ji jing*, the *Lalitavistara*, also mentions the six perfections, as can be seen in its Chinese translation: the *Pu yao jing* 普曜經 or T 186, but sometimes also includes a seventh, skill in means or *upāyakauśalya* (T186,3.512c15 a, 523a02 and 526a05). Furthermore, some Mahāyāna scriptures mention ten perfections. But the Mahāyāna list of the ten perfections differs from the Theravāda’s list as much as from the list in *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (*Shi di jing* 十地經 or T 287,10.540b14; 554c14; 562a13; 566a7; 571c17). Because the ten perfections in the Mahāyāna school “were needed to correspond to the ten stages of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, four additional perfections were sometimes added to the standard six, making ten. The four additional perfections were skill in means, vows, strength,

¹⁸⁷ Dutt 1930, 12.

¹⁸⁸ HIRAKAWA 1990, 299 and the *Mahāvibhāṣāśāstra* or the *A pi da mo da pi po sha lun* 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論 (T 1545,27.892a26-b26).

¹⁸⁹ The six perfections also appear in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T 1545,27.892.) and *Mahāvastu* (vol. III., p226). See HIRAKAWA 1963, 69.

and knowledge”¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, with few exceptions, it is conventional to recognize that Theravāda Buddhism accepts ten perfections and Mahāyāna Buddhism accepts six.

Sarkar, following up on Dutt’s argument, suggests the reason why the *pāramitās* were adapted by the *jātakas* is that “...in order to keep difference with those of the Sarvāstivāda and Mahāsāṅghika schools, the Theravādins incorporated ten *pāramitās* instead of the six of the unorthodox schools.”¹⁹¹ However, Dhammapāla claims “the six [is] only a reduction from the ten,”¹⁹² and Meena Talim suggests “the Mahayana sect... has dropped five *pāramitās* of the Hinayan and introduced a new one, namely *dhyāna*.”¹⁹³ But we are not sure on what grounds Dhammapāla and Talim make this assumption— and it seems questionable since there is no indication of the presence of the concept of the *pāramitās* in the earliest layer of Buddhist literature. In other words, how do we know it’s not the other way around: that the Mainstream Buddhism of the Pāli canon dropped the perfection of *dhyāna* and added the others. We really do not have any concrete evidence to establish the history and development of the idea of the perfections but only suspect that it is a later development of Buddhism. The explanation for the difference between the two schools’ in the number of perfections they acknowledge is simply a mystery

Prefaces

Unlike in the rest of the *jātaka* collections, in the *Liu du ji jing*, there is an explanatory preface attached to each collection of the perfections (except for the perfection of wisdom).¹⁹⁴ There is a certain formality to these prefaces. For instance, the preface to

¹⁹⁰ HIRAKAWA 1990, 299.

¹⁹¹ Sarkar 1990, 175.

¹⁹² Barua [1939] 1979, xii.

¹⁹³ Talim 1988, 108.

¹⁹⁴ Both Zürcher and Arthur Link suggest that the section on the perfection of wisdom has been lost

the section on the perfection of generosity begins with “the perfection of generosity is what?” (*bu shi du wu ji zhe, jue zhe yun he* 布施度無集者。厥者云何。。。。)。Other sections begin, “the perfection of morality is what?” (*jie du wu ji zhe, jue zhe yun he* 戒度無極者。厥者云何。。。), “the perfection of forbearance is what?” (*ren du wu ji zhe, jue zhe yun he* 忍度無極者。厥者云何。。。。)。Following each question, the author explains what the perfection means, for instance, in the section on the perfection of generosity:

布施度無極者。厥則云何。慈育人物。悲愍群邪。喜賢成度。
 護濟眾生。跨天踰地潤弘河海。布施眾生。飢者食之。渴者飲之。
 寒衣熱涼。疾濟以藥。車馬舟輿。眾寶名珍。妻子國土。索即惠之。
 猶太子須大孳。布施貧乏。若親育子。父王屏逐。愍而不怨。

What is the perfection of generosity? It includes: benevolently nourishing human beings and animals and sympathizing with those evil ones; *Being fond of sages* and saving them; protecting and rescuing the sentient beings [the scope of generosity passes beyond the sky and breaks through the earth; bringing benefits as great as a river and ocean to the sentient beings: when they are hungry, feed them; when they are thirsty, water them. When it is cold, give them clothes; when it is hot, cool them. When they are sick, give them medicine. Cars, horses, boats, carriages, diverse treasures and gems, wife, children, or country: if one asks for any of these, [the bodhisattva] will give it to him, like Prince Sudāna who makes offers to the poor, like the parents who give nourishment to their children. Even when the king sends him away, he with sympathy never complains.¹⁹⁵

(Zürcher 1959, 54; Link 1976, 97) because it would not make any sense for the author of the *Liu du ji jing* or Kang Senghui to have left the last one out, after having already made an effort to include the prefatory sections for the first five perfections. I suspect that the lost preface of the perfection of wisdom in the *Liu du ji jing* might relate to the first fascicle of the *Da ming du jing*, translated by Zhi Qian, because there is a certain degree of similarity between these two texts in terms of vocabulary. Also, as Zürcher suggests, the other translation made by Kang Senghui, the *Wu pin*, might refer to the *Xio pin*, which could be a counterpart of the *Da ming du jing* or a portion of it. I am planning to conduct a further research on the connection between Kang Senghui’s *Wu pin*, the preface of the perfection of wisdom in the *Liu du ji jing*, and Zhi Qian’s first fascicle of the *Da ming du jing* in the near future. Both Jan Nattier and I, who have conducted a study of Zhi Qian’s translation, agree that, except for the first fascicle, the *Da ming du jing* should be attributed, without doubt, to Zhi Qian.

¹⁹⁵T152,3.1a14-20.

Each preface, although they differ in length, describes the idea of one perfection. Since there are no prefaces in any of the other *jātaka* collections in either Indic or Chinese, including the *Pāli Jātaka*, *Cariyāpiṭaka*, *Jātakamālā* and other Chinese collections, it is very probable that Kang Senghui is the author of the prefaces of the *Liu du ji jing*. Kang Senghui likely inserted the prefatory sections during the process of translation or compilation, which is Zürcher’s opinion: “the introductory sections to five of the six parts of K’ang Seng-hui’s *Liu-tu chi-ching*...were written by K’ang Seng-hui himself.”¹⁹⁶ In addition, as I discussed in the introduction, Kang Senghui wrote other prefaces; there are at least two extant prefaces attributed to him: The preface on the *An ban shou yi jing* 安般守意經(T602) and the preface on *Fa jing jing* 法鏡經(T 322). It is very possible that, given his professional inclination, Kang Senghui wrote and then added the prefaces, which were based on his understanding of the perfections, while translating the collection.

For instance, the preface to the perfection of *dhyāna* in the *Liu du ji jing*, the longest one and it is about as long as the four other prefaces added together, is associated with the *dhyāna* school of An Shigao 安世高, which describes in detail the four stages of meditation.¹⁹⁷ According to Zürcher, this preface is “one of the most important documents of third-century Chinese Buddhism.”¹⁹⁸ This preface contains “a summary description of the four stages of *dhyāna* and of the techniques for attaining them.”¹⁹⁹ Arthur Link also notes there are parallels between the preface to the *An ban shou yi jing* 安般守意經 and the preface to the perfection of *dhyāna*: “[r]eference is therefore made to the *An-pan-shou-yi ching* preface wherever it seemed relevant to...K’ang Seng-hui’s introduction to the Perfection of *Dhyāna*.”²⁰⁰ These parallels

¹⁹⁶ Zürcher 1959, 54.

¹⁹⁷ Zürcher 1959, 54.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 2:338, note. 160.

¹⁹⁹ Link 1976, 97.

²⁰⁰ Link 1976, 102. Link (1974, 209) points out that “Seng-hui largely drew on one important passage

are evidence that both prefaces have the same author. Given this, I believe it is very likely that Kang Senghui is responsible for the preface of not only the perfection of *dhyāna*, but the others as well.

Prose and Verse

As noted earlier, many scholars in the field of Indian literature have discussed the history and development of the mixed prose and verse style of the *Pāli Jātaka*. (The *Jātakamālā* follows the tradition of the style of verse and prose, whereas the *Cariyāpiṭaka* consists only of verse.) Most scholars believe that in the earlier *jātakas* both prose and verse were presented side by side in narration, but only the verse was preserved in transmission from one generation to another and was eventually written down, whereas the prose portion was left up to the creation of narrators throughout the centuries. Therefore, the verse portions of the *Pāli Jātaka* collection as a representative of *jātakas* are more archaic than the prose portions.

However, this assumption does not apply to the *Liu du ji jing*, in which only four stories²⁰¹ have retained the verse portion. Can the form of the *Liu du ji jing* confirm the claim made by some scholars, based on inscriptional evidence and some stories in the *Pāli Jātaka*, that the prose portion of the original *jātakas* is older than the verse portion? We do not have solid evidence available indicating the issue of prose vs. verse in the *jātaka*. But if we want to use it to illuminate the history and development of the verse and prose style of the *jātakas*, there are two questions we need to ask:

1. If the most reliable evidence indicates that the *jātaka* was originally preserved in verse, then what happened to the verse portions of the stories in the *Liu du ji*

describing the practice of *dhyāna* by the Bodhisattva in the *T'an-tzu jui-ying pen-ch'i ching* [太子瑞應本起經 T. no. 185...and on his knowledge of An Shih-kao's translation of the *Ta-an-pan shou-i ching*.”
²⁰¹ Stories nos. 37, 41, 48, and 64.

jing? Is it possible that Kang Senghui deliberately dropped the ancient verse portion of a story and kept only the contemporary prose narrative? And if he did this, why do four of the stories in the scripture maintain the verse portion?

2. Why the evidence of the Chinese scripture militates against the conclusion drawn from extant Indian ones and agrees with the inscriptional evidence that the prose is original in the *jātakas*, not the verse? At this stage of study, we cannot determine why the majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* have no verse part, but perhaps we should consider the possibility that there were no verses in some of the originals. This hypothesis is further justified by the evidence that prose is a feature of the inscriptions in the *stūpas* at Bhārhut and Sāñcī, built in the third to second century BCE, whereas at the same sites there is no evidence at all of verse. In other words, based on early Indian inscriptional and Chinese textual evidence, if the earliest *jātaka* was not in prose alone, then the prose shouldn't be considered to be later insertion of the *jātaka*.

1.6 CONCLUSION

Narratives are an essential source of cultural wisdom; they not only tell stories or events of certain people in certain periods but also serve as a cultural storehouse of shared knowledge and belief. The value of narratives to people and their cultures is evident in the fact that they are transmitted from generation to generation in the forms of literature, art, drama, and other media. With regard to our initial question—how "Buddhist" is Buddhist narrative literature in India in the ancient period?—I concluded that there was not much difference between Buddhist narrative literature and non-Buddhist narrative literature in *ancient* times when they were in the period of active development. The lack of sufficient historical evidence about the history of Indian literature makes knowledge about this ancient period difficult. Fortunately,

from evidence provided by the records of foreigners and pilgrims in India and by the reliefs at the *stūpas* and on inscriptions, we can tentatively establish an approximate time when Buddhist narrative literature was first propagated and compiled, what languages and scripts were utilized, and what was the specific nature of the relationship between Buddhist narrative literature and non-Buddhist narrative literature.

For example, I used Paniker's list of common features of narratology in India to compare Indian Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative literature. I found many similarities between the two traditions stylistically, linguistically, contextually, and culturally. For instance, the *kāvya* style shared by both Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative (as evidenced by the *Rāmāyaṇa*, an inscription at Girnāra, Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita*, and Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā*) illustrates how the histories of the two narrative traditions are genetically linked. The *kāvya* style has been preserved in these texts in the face of the differing traditions of each and stands as a mark of their common origins. That both traditions germinated within the same literary environment is also indicated by the fact that they both used the same two languages of ancient India: Prākṛit and later Sanskrit.

These two Buddhist and non-Buddhist narrative traditions also shared parallel subject matters, story contents, a mixed prose/verse style, social context, and networks of transmission. The similarities between both the story contents and the story characters indicate that the two traditions shared the same social contexts and social transmission networks. For instance, a wide range of similar animal tales appear in the *Pañcatantra*, the Buddhist *jātaka* and the Jain *Dharmapadaṭṭakathā*. These tales were presumably drawn from the most popular stories in the ancient time. Since people were already familiar with them, each tradition reconstructed and modified the stories

in order to make its teaching more accessible to people. As a result, these shared folk tales became Buddhicized or Jainized.

Through a long period of transmission and modification, these narrative traditions come to maturity and develop sets of relatively stable characteristics or genres. The genre sheds light on the pivotal messages conveyed by the texts, and thus plays a significant role in the comprehension of these texts. A genre is established and fixed over time, but may be modified to some extent under the influence of particular historical moments and people. Therefore, the genre's boundaries are not fixed; the *jātaka* genre continuously changed as it disseminated into different Buddhist traditions. Spurred by changing historical circumstances, the *jātaka* genre changed, reconstructed itself, and developed to optimize its effectiveness for a specific people, time, or place.

Like the *Pāli Jātaka*, stories in the Chinese *Liu du ji jing* usually include “the story of the present,” “the story of the past” and “the Buddha identifies the different actors in the story in their present births.” And like the *Cariyāpiṭaka* and *Jātakamālā*, the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* are organized according to the perfection they illustrate, although the number of perfections differ among these collections. The most striking aspect of most of the *Liu du ji jing* stories, differentiating them from the Indian *jātakas*, is that they were not written in the mixed style of verse and prose, but in prose only. Why does the *Liu du ji jing* alone have almost no verse between its prose sections, unlike the *Pāli Jātaka* and the *Jātakamālā*, and why was it not written entirely in verse, like the *Cariyāpiṭaka*? The fact that the *Liu du ji jing* is written predominantly in prose, combined with the fact that the inscriptions from the *stūpas* at Bhārhut and Sāñcī are only in prose form leads to a new perspective on the original style of the earliest *jātakas*: the prose style indeed presents the older and most original style. Rhys Davids also confirms our argument by suggesting that “Out of those tales of which we can trace the pre-*Jātaka* book form, a large proportion, 60 to 70 percent., had no

verses....The verses....are found only in the framework....[T]hese stories existed, without verses, before they were adopted into the Buddhist scheme of *jātakas* by having verses added to them; and they are, therefore, probably, not only pre-Buddhistic, but very old.”²⁰² For that reason, we should be skeptical of the claim, which many scholars make, that the verse portion of the *jātaka* is older than that of prose in its earlier transmission.

Until now we have considered only textual versions of the *jātakas*, but many also appear in an artistic form, such as in sculpture, painting, or in bas-relief at Indian Buddhist *stūpas*. These artistic presentations of the *jātakas* provide valuable information, not only on the history and development of *jātaka* literature, but also on Indian Buddhism in general. Since image is different from word, in the next chapter, I discuss how the *jātakas* are presented visually at Indian Buddhist sites and whether they function differently there than when presented in textual form.

²⁰² Rhys Davids 1971, 205-06.

CHAPTER II
THE DEVOTIONAL FUNCTION OF THE ARTISTIC PRESENTATION OF
THE *JĀTAKAS* AT INDIAN BUDDHIST SITES

This pictorial organization of events of a lifetime is spatial, atemporal, motivated perhaps both by considerations of design and by regarding these events as eternal and emblematic rather than as episodic or transient.

—Nelson Goodman²⁰³

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The enormously popular stories of the former lives of the Buddha, known as *jātaka* tales, which I discussed in the previous chapter from a literary perspective, were represented in ancient India for many centuries in sculpture and painting at various Buddhist sacred sites known as *stūpas* (relic monuments). In this chapter I examine the *jātaka* from an artistic and epigraphical perspective to explore the functions of the representations of the *jātaka* tales and major patrons at such Indian Buddhist sites as Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Amarāvātī, Ajañṭā, and Gandhāra. By no means are these the only sites in India of significance for our purposes, but these Buddhist sites are especially renowned for both their antiquity and their elaborate and marvelous ornaments. Their geographical and historical privilege is profound—not only are they located in Buddhism’s motherland of India, but they also are held to be the oldest, most sacred sites of all. Moreover, from both aesthetic and religious perspectives, they possess the most decorative sculptures and paintings of Indian Buddhism, as well as archeological and inscriptional evidence about this religion in ancient India.

²⁰³ Goodman 1981, 104.

The majority of scholars in the field of Indian Buddhist art, such as Alfred Foucher, Vidya Dehejia, Susan Huntington, and many others²⁰⁴ suggest that the pictorial presentations on the bas-relief at these sites serve a didactic purpose. That is, the function of these images is to teach Buddhist discourses through stories. However, there is a wide range of evidence that suggests that we should think otherwise. For instance, while applying Dehejia's theory of the modes of visual narrative to the discussion of these depictions and examination of the function of the visual *jātaka* tales we reveal a counterargument: these scenes are incomprehensible as a consistent narrative, and so their intention could hardly have been didactic. It is impossible to communicate a consistent story to any audience with any reasonable possibility of success using these scenes. As we will see in my case study of one of the most popular *jātaka* stories, the *Viśvantara-jātaka* from one of the Chinese *jātaka* collections, the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經, the significant differences in the function of the story as depicted from textual and visual perspectives can be ignored only to the detriment of our understanding of these artistic representations.

In addition, these scenes representing the *jātaka* stories, with their inconsistent and imprecise inscriptions and labels, are located in places where they would be invisible to any viewer, in places too high, too low, or too dark to permit observation. If these scenes were created for the purposes of teaching or being read, why are they regularly located in inaccessible places? Due to the disorganization, incomprehensibility, and inaccessibility of these scenes and their inscriptions and labels, I am suspicious of the standard theory according to which these representations serve a didactic function.

My argument of devotion survived as the primary function of the visual *jātakas* is also supported by their location and the ritual activity associated with them—*stūpa*

²⁰⁴ Foucher 1917, 10; Hallade 1968, 106; Huntington 1992, 141; Dehejia 1997a, 55-56; Behl 1998, 37.

and pilgrimage. The *stūpa* and its art are one, and they are unified in their purpose: pilgrims came to these sacred sites to worship, and the art within them is intended to contribute to that end, rather than for didactic purpose. And if one assumes that pilgrims viewed the visual *jātakas* while practicing circumambulation, as most scholars do, then why are the stories always depicted in an incomprehensible fashion? Is it possible that these images functioned as icons to the viewers when they performed the Indian ritual of *darśan* (seeing).²⁰⁵ All the evidence leads us to suggest that the major function of these images is not narrative.

Associated with the images of the *jātakas*, a wide range of inscriptions at these *stūpas* provide constructive evidence of their patronage, including both monastics and laypeople and men and women. With the assistance of this inscriptional evidence of the patronage of the *stūpas*, we are able to examine the role and status of women in early Buddhism, which I will further explore in Chapter 3.

2.2 INDIAN BUDDHIST SITES

There are numerous Buddhist sacred monuments in India, and it would be an ungainly exercise to include all of them in my discussion. I treat only a few of the Indian sites of the greatest significance. These Indian Buddhist sacred sites by and large are the earliest and most significant generally, although we have no historical record of the Buddha's visiting any of these sites. They are spread throughout the subcontinent: Bhārhut is in central-east India, Sāñcī is in central north, Ajañṭā is in the central west, Amaravāṭī is in the south, and Gandhāra is in the northwest. Through the historical reach of these sites, we are able to grasp the area of the transmission of the stories of the *jātakas* in the period from the second century BCE to the seventh century CE.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ For more detailed of the term "*darśan*" in Buddhism see Robert Sharf 2005, 257-259.

²⁰⁶ These famous Buddhist sites in India have been carefully and extensively studied by a wide range of scholars, so here I will only introduce their history and development in brief, focusing on how the

BHĀRHUT

Bhārhut, located in east-central India, was established approximately around the third to second century BCE and completed around the first century BCE.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, as one of the earliest *stūpas* in India, it is celebrated for its simple but elegant style compared to sites developed later: “Bharhut’s...reliefs create an effect which is lively and animated on the one hand, and formal and stately on the other.”²⁰⁸ The most distinctive feature of Bhārhut is the prolific variety of its *jātaka* scenes. According to Sir John Marshall, at the earliest Buddhist monuments, the presentation of *jātaka* tales greatly predominated, but later on the depiction of the actual life events of the Buddha became more prevalent.²⁰⁹ Here the *jātaka* scenes not only outnumber the scenes of the Buddha’s life, but outnumber the catalogue of *jātaka* images found in any other *stūpa* on the subcontinent.²¹⁰ There are approximately sixty-two *jātakas* illustrated at Bhārhut.²¹¹

In addition to the scenes, there are inscriptions or labels associated with the *jātakas* that provide us with further information on their patrons: “Close to two-thirds of the Bharhut inscriptions, or 136 records, are donatives and give the names of donors, their occupation or status, and frequently their home town.... A third of the donations towards the Bharhut railing came from the Buddhist monastic community itself...over a third of the Bharhut donors were women.”²¹² Based on the inscriptional evidence, the patrons at Bhārhut were individuals with a wide range of vocations, monastic ones

jātakas were presented at these sites.

²⁰⁷ In Dehejia’s words: “By the year 80 BCE, a lavishly sculpted stone railing enclosing the Buddhist stūpa at Bharhut was nearing completion” (Dehejia 1997a, 83).

²⁰⁸ Dehejia 1997a, 83.

²⁰⁹ Marshall 1960, 7.

²¹⁰ For more information on *stūpa* of Bhārhut, see Cunningham 1962 and Hultzsch 1912 and for all the available *jātaka* images at Bhārhut and their correspondence with Pāli collections, see Ahir 2003, 164-167.

²¹¹ Talim 1988, 112. However, according to Dehejia (1997a, 98), forty-four stories are identified as “*Jātaka*” at Bhārhut. The numbers at each site are derived from different sources.

²¹² Dehejia 1997a, 107.

included. Besides the inscriptions, eighteen *jātakas* have the title of “*jātaka*” carved along with the sculptures on the bas-reliefs at Bhārhut.²¹³ But, the same or similar story might have borne a different title or had a different name from what we had in Pāli collection. Because of this morphing of designation, one might wonder whether, in general, the *jātakas* in visual presentation have been transmitted differently than the literary narrative, in terms of their originals or source content, or whether they were just presented differently at the *stūpas*. In light of the inscriptional evidence, which is unlike the literary *jātaka* tradition in terms of the contents and even the titles of individual works, even as they depict material from those works, it is clear that the *jātaka* tales presented at Bhārhut are not systematic representations of their textual sources—the unsystematic representations at Bhārhut or other *stūpas* were likely predate their textual sources. Because of the inconsistent distribution of the inscriptions and the small number of titles that accompany the art, the criterion used for labeling or not labeling individual images from the *jātakas* has remained doubtful and demands a further examination, which I perform in the latter part of this chapter.

Incidentally, this inconsistency of organization endemic to the inscriptions at Bhārhut is only a part of the larger reality that the entire project seems to lack a thematic program and systematic plan, especially when the site is compared to Sāñcī, where by and large the most marvelous project of all Indian Buddhist sites is to be found.

²¹³ There are complications involved in both the processes of transmission and forms of the presentation that have somehow eluded general recognition. However, based on the evidence from Bhārhut, we know the term “*jātaka*” is used as early as the third to second century BCE, but it may have not have been used the same way as we use it today, and we should not rely on the title “*jātakas*” because it has not remained constant and was probably changed to suit the vision of individual storytellers or performers.

SĀÑCĪ

Sāñcī, consisting of fifty-one monuments dating probably from the third century BCE to the thirteenth century CE,²¹⁴ is located in Madhya Pradesh, in central-north India. The most famous *stūpas* at Sāñcī are Stūpa numbers 1, 2, and 3. Stūpa number 2 is rather small, having a diameter only of forty-six feet, but is considered the first Buddhist monument erected in India. At this very *stūpa* there are ninety-one surviving inscriptions. (Fifty were donated by lay people and forty-one came from monastics.) In addition, Sāñcī's stūpa number 3, built in the second century BCE, is also a smaller relic mound with a diameter of fifty feet and a height of twenty-seven feet, containing the relic of Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāna. It encloses a single gateway, seventeen feet high. Both Stūpas number 2 and 3 contain few *jātaka* scenes, whereas Stūpa number 1 has the most.

The most famous and important *stūpa* at Sāñcī, if not of all *stūpas* inclusively, is *stūpa* number 1—or as it is famously known, the Great Stūpa. It was originally about sixty feet in diameter, probably first built by the King Aśoka in the third century BCE,²¹⁵ and later the Buddhist community enlarged it, ultimately doubling it in size around the first century BCE. The railing at the Great Stūpa is larger than it is at Bhārhut, and it is also richer in embellishment. One of the most remarkable attractions and foci of magnificence at Sāñcī Stūpa number 1, which appear at no other Buddhist sites, are its gigantic and decorative gateways or *toranas* in the four directions, each gateway consisting of two fifteen-foot-high pillars. They were a slightly later

²¹⁴ Marshall 1955, 7.

²¹⁵ Dehejia 1997a, 110; Huntington [1985] 1999, 91. The Aśokan schism edict at Sāñcī indicates that which was important Buddhism center in the time of Aśoka. (Thapar [1961] 1997, 235) For more detailed discussion and the most important study on Sāñcī, see Marshall and Foucher's *the Monuments of Sāñchī* (1940) and Gill 2000.

development of the Great Stūpa: “Sometime in the late 1st century BC or the late 1st century AD four gateways...were added at the entrances.”²¹⁶

As for information concerning its patrons, a wide range of inscriptions at Sāñcī provide constructive evidence. According to Gregory Schopen, “[W]ork at early Sanchi was not funded by royal or political patronage, but by a surprisingly large number of separate gifts made by individuals, mostly ordinary monks, nuns, and lay people.”²¹⁷ In a case very similar to that of Bhārhut, the patrons of the project, including patrons of the *jātakas* scenes, comprised a wide range of individuals and occupations. Unfortunately, beyond the information about the occupations of the patrons, the majority of the inscriptions carved on the gateways of Sāñcī relay very limited information. As a consequence, we know next to nothing about the scenes and figures delineated in the renderings of the *jātaka* tales, the content here having taken secondary place to the record of the circumstances of the donors.

In addition, the Great Stūpa is surrounded by an elaborately ornamented stone railing on the face and gateways on which numerous *jātaka* tales are presented. Similarly to the layout of the depictions of the historical life events of the Buddha in Bhārhut, which are in the minority at that *stūpa*, depictions from the *jātaka* at Sāñcī are less accessible to viewers than in most sacred sites—they are placed in unnoticeable or inaccessible areas. But unlike the case in Bhārhut, the number of *jātakas* illustrated at Sāñcī stūpa number 1 is conspicuously small. Only five *jātaka* tales are depicted: the *Mahakapi* (no. 407),²¹⁸ the *Syama* story (no. 540), the *Alambusā* (no. 523), the *Chaddanta* (no. 514), and the *Viśvantara* (no. 547). However, due to duplication of images from both the *Chaddanta* and the *Viśvantara jātakas*, there are ten in total. For instance, the *Chaddanta jātaka* is repeated on three

²¹⁶ Karlsson 1999, 96.

²¹⁷ Schopen 1996, 60.

²¹⁸ This is story number 407 in the *Pāli Jātaka* collection.

architraves of three different gateways, while the *Viśvantara* appears on both sides of an architrave. Without doubt, these two tales must have been popular at that time and are to this day the favorite of patrons at Sāñcī. (Because of the value conferred on it by its unsurpassable popularity, I discuss the art and texts of the *Viśvantara* in more detail later in this chapter.) Dehejia notes that, “the repetition of themes from one gateway to the next is also suggestive of a lack of such planning,”²¹⁹ and in most cases there is no relationship between the scenes situated at the gateway pillars. These pieces were probably just randomly chosen by individual patrons or artists, according to personal rationales long lost to the historical record. The demonstrable pattern of the development of Buddhist sites indicates that sites more recent than Bhārhut and Sāñcī, such as Ajañṭā, are more rigorously planned and elaborately executed.

AJAÑṬĀ

The Ajañṭā caves in central-west India were excavated from the second to the first century BCE (caves 9 and 10) until approximately the seventh century CE, but the majority of them were more likely completed in the fifth century CE. The Ajañṭā caves are approximately thirty in number,²²⁰ decorated with lively murals and sculptures, and have become known as the most decorative and complicated of Buddhist rock-cut monasteries. In Benoy Behl’s words:

[F]or all the historical importance of the paintings of Ajanta, for all the doctrines of Buddhism, as it evolved through hundreds of years, for all the surprising and immensely sophisticated stylistic and technical developments in painting of which Ajanta represents the sole surviving inheritance—one cannot help but be

²¹⁹ Dehejia 1997a, 125.

²²⁰ The caves are numbered serially from the entrance, not chronologically. Besides, Cave nos. 9, 10, 19, and 20 are *Chaity* (worshipping halls), while the rest are *Viharas* (residence halls).

completely immersed in the sheer beauty, both pictorial and emotive,
that is present here.²²¹

Its tremendous and breathtaking exhibition endows the site with exceptional historical, devotional, and aesthetic significance,²²² although most scholars are more interested in its cultic significance. For instance, of the Buddhist *stūpa* sites, Ajaṅṭā is by far the most attractive to scholars historically because it's the locus of a problematic issue related to the development of Mahāyāna. For example, scholars have tried strenuously to determine the sources of the *jātaka* tales at Ajaṅṭā, which tales are Mahāyāna in origin and which ones are not, but they have succeeded only in increasing the variety of their opinions, not of combining them into some compelling agreement. Some scholars examine the imagery there according to the controversy surrounding iconic/aniconic displays; others interpret them according to the ideas of the *pāramitās* (perfections).

For example, Walter Spink argues “there are some 30 major caves [at Ajaṅṭā]. Five of these, near the centre of the complex, belong to the early, Hīnayāna, phase of Buddhism and were created some 2,000 years ago. The remaining 25, with which we shall be concerned, date from the more developed, Mahāyāna, phase of Buddhism and were inaugurated in the fifth century AD.”²²³ In addition, Sheila Weiner states that “Ajaṅṭā occupies a unique position in the history of Indian art because it is the only extant site of such grandeur which combines painting, sculpture, and architecture and extends in time from the early Hīnayāna aniconic phase through the Mahāyāna period prior to the incursion of Esoteric and Hindu influences.”²²⁴ Weiner (1977, 36) further

²²¹ Behl 1998, 11.

²²² Regarding aesthetics, “[at Ajāṅṭa] a few instances of differences in figural styles, compositional format, treatment of space, and variations in color scheme suggest different hands. It also appears that individual compositions...are frequently the works of more than one artist” (Dehejia 1997a, 224). Also, see Dehejia 1991b on narrative modes in Ajāṅṭa caves and Yazdani 1937 and 1957 on Ajāṅṭa caves and its artists.

²²³ Spink 1974, 743.

²²⁴ Weiner 1977, 2.

provides evidence that “the earliest caves at Ajañṭā, those belonging originally to the Hīnayāna aniconic phase of Buddhist development, are the caitya halls IX and X and the vihāras XII and XIII.”²²⁵ It seems that in both Spink’s and Weiner’s opinions, the earlier paintings, which are without any anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha but contain only symbols, are representative of Mainstream Buddhism,²²⁶ whereas the later emergence of the anthropomorphic form of the Buddha is presumably due to the great influence of the Mahāyāna. The argument is interesting, but not persuasive. How do we know conclusively that the anthropomorphic development is not prior to the development of Mahāyāna? In other words, why couldn’t Mainstream Buddhism have employed icons in their art? The issue of aniconic and iconic representation has been thoroughly discussed by scholars such as Dehejia and Huntington, and I further explore it later when I treat the functions of the visual *jātakas*.

Furthermore, as I discussed in the previous chapter, the notions of the *pāramitās* have gradually merged into the *jātakas* and have become a distinctive feature of some *jātaka* collections, such as the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, *Jātakamālā*, and *Liu du ji jing*. Many scholars suggest this is an assimilation due to the influence of the Mahāyāna’s development. However, Meena Talim, from a different approach, suggests that the majority of stories at Ajañṭā are inspired by the theory of *pāramitās* found in the Pāli *jātaka* collection, which is properly non-Mahāyāna,²²⁷ and she further claims that “[artists] have selected those Jatakas which would cover all the ten *pāramitās*.”²²⁸ Talim’s arguments are problematic. First, why does Talim assume that the theory of

²²⁵ I will return later in this chapter to the issue, discussed by Dehejia and Huntington, of aniconic and iconic representation insofar as it relates to our study of the functions of the scenes at Buddhist sites.

²²⁶ I intend to avoid using the term “Hīnayāna” and favor using “Mainstream Buddhism” to refer non-Mahāyāna Buddhism.

²²⁷ Talim 1988, 109.

²²⁸ Talim 1988., 112.

the *pāramitās* is present in the *Pāli jātakas*, which indeed does not incorporate the theory as we see it in other *jātaka* collections? Also, as I showed in the previous chapter, there is no evidence to indicate that the idea of the *pāramitās* is found in other early Buddhist (Sūtra or Vinaya) *piṭakas* or *jātakas* literature; it is present only in the later developments of the Theravāda and Mahāyāna schools. If our reading of the evidence is correct, we should assume that the depictions of the perfections that we see in these *jātaka* collections, such as in the *Cariyāpiṭaka* (seven perfections), *Jātakamālā* (four perfections), and the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (six perfections), are the outcome of decisions by the authors, editors, or translators of these collections that were made during compilation contemporaneously with or after the development of perfections regardless their different numbers. Second, on what ground does Talim claim that the artists have the idea of *pāramitās* in mind and that they intend to connect this theory with the images? Even though by the time of Ajaṅṭā's development, the idea of the *pāramitās* might already have been formulated, how much credence can we give to the idea that these artists, who were probably not Buddhists²²⁹ but simply artists cultivating a religious preference, were familiar with the idea of perfections?

Additionally, a number of inscriptions at some caves at Ajaṅṭā indicate that at least sixteen of their painted images are gifts from *śākya-bhiksus*, who were indeed the majority of donors among the monastic. The title *śākya-bhiksus*, according to Gregory Schopen, refers to a Mahāyāna monk.²³⁰ Even though there is some inscriptional

²²⁹ On the case of artists' role at Bhārhut, Lamotte ([1958] 1988, 404) suggests: “[i]n all probability, those artists worked from memory or from oral indications supplied by their clients who had their own folklore.”

²³⁰ Schopen, in his “Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions,” assays fourteen inscriptions through which he analyzes the common Mahāyāna formula and suggests the term “*Mahāyāna*” was being used from the sixth to the twelfth centuries, while the examination of eighty inscriptions indicates the use of another name dated from the fourth century. In other words, before the fifth/sixth century, even if there were Mahāyāna teachings and followers, they were named differently, as Schopen demonstrated, based on the archeological and inscriptional evidence. A certain formula attributed to the Mahāyāna consists of

evidence indicating Mahāyāna elements at Ajaṅṭā in the fifth century CE²³¹, it is unwarranted to come to any conclusion regarding which of the caves of Ajaṅṭā are Mahāyāna and which are Mainstream, when at the time of the establishment of these caves these two orders were still indistinct. It is acceptable only to say that the Mahāyāna and Ajaṅṭā probably developed simultaneously at a time when Mainstream Buddhism and the Mahāyāna were still practically indistinguishable. Evidently, out of twenty-seven²³² *jātaka* paintings that were presented in a wide range of caves, four of them are repeated,²³³ so there are twenty-three tales displayed in the caves.²³⁴ The number of *jātaka* tales is greater than at Sāñcī, but much smaller than at Bhārhut. Inscriptions at Ajaṅṭā provide constructive historical and literary evidence: “Ajanta’s identifying inscriptions are of two varieties: some identify individual painted figures and are often intrusive into the visual field, while others consist of entire

the terms “*śākyabhikṣu*,” “*śākyabhikṣnī*,” “*paramopāsika*,” or “*paramopāsaka*” and is associated with another phrase, *yad atra puṇyan tad bhavatu*, which refers exclusively to followers of the Mahāyāna, not to any of the non-Mahāyāna schools. Nevertheless, the term “Mahāyāna” itself does not occur alone in any of the inscriptions. When we consider that the majority of the donations for the inscriptions were made by *śākyabhikṣu* and *śākyabhikṣnī*, we may get a clearer idea of what the Mahāyāna was in its earlier days up to the fourth century, which is very different from the completed development we know today, which has resulted in its becoming a separate and independent school. Its followers at the time referred to themselves only as *śākyabhikṣu*, *śākyabhikṣnī*, *paramopāsika*, or *paramopāsaka*, not Mahāyānists. Although we do notice some Mahāyāna texts, there is no term “Mahāyāna,” and we do not know when the texts were compiled. With the epigraphical evidence, we at least have a basic history of how Mahāyāna followers referred to themselves: as *śākyabhikṣu* until the fifth century, and as *mahāyānānuyāyin* until the sixth century. Not until the tenth century does Mahāyāna finally get its own identity (Schopen 1979, 1-19).

²³¹ Spink 1974, 743.

²³² The numbers cited are different in different sources. For instance, Talim provides twenty-one in total of which two are repeated.

²³³ The *Sāma*, *Chaddanta*, *Hasti*, and *Viśvantara Jātakas* are portrayed twice at Ajaṅṭā.

²³⁴ As for the total number of the *Jātakas* represented, these are slightly different among scholars. In addition, Ahir provides more detailed information, not only on the total number of the *Jātakas*, but also on their correspondences to the Pāli in each cave. For instance, in Cave no. 1 are the *Sibi Jātaka* (no. 499), *Sankhapala* (no. 524), *Mahjanaka* (no. 539), and *Campeyya* (no. 506); in Cave no. 2, *Hamsa* (no. 502), *Vidurapandita* (no. 545), *Khanti* (no. 313), and *Ruru* (no. 482); in Cave no. 10, *Sama* (no. 540) and *Chaddanta* (no. 514); in Cave no. 16, *Hasti*, *Ummaga* (no. 546), and *Sutosoma* (no. 537); in Cave no. 17, *Chaddanta* (no. 514), *Vessantara* (no. 547), *Mahakapi* (nos. 407 and 516), *Hamsa* (no. 502), *Sutosoma* (no. 537), *Sarbhanmiga* (no. 483), *Matiposaka* (no. 455), *Maccha* (no. 75), *Mahisha* (no. 278), *Nigrodhamiga* (no. 11), *Sibi* (no. 499), and *Sama* (no. 540). (Ahir 2000, 24-30)

Sanskrit verses relating to the story illustrated.”²³⁵ In other words, unlike at other *stūpas*, in which inscriptions are mostly in prose in some forms of prakṛit, a number of painted inscriptions at Ajaṅṭā consist of entire verses in Sanskrit. It is unclear why some of these inscriptions are Sanskrit verses. Dehejia suggests the influence of texts on the artists of the time to account for the Sanskrit verses: “[T]hese inscriptions, testifying to the prevalence and popularity of Āryaśura’s *Jātakamālā*, suggest that artists painting the murals are likely to have followed the version narrated in this text.”²³⁶ She further suggests that not only does the *Jātakamālā* relate to the site, but also such works as the *Divyavādāna*, the *Mulasarvastivādin vinayas*, the *Laitavistara*, the *Saunadrananda*, and the *Pāli jātika* collection.²³⁷ For all the appreciation I have for the gesture, when Dehejia devotes great effort to discussing which story at Ajaṅṭā is from which *jātika* collection, I cannot help but think that her view might be too simplistic because it fails to take into account the phenomenon of versions. A wide range of Buddhist *sūtras*, including *jātika* tales, have more than one version in a different language. Some of these overlap extensively, differing in only minor ways, while others diverge dramatically in terms of stories and characters, while still others vary to such a degree that they seem to be unrelated stories, although sharing some minor content parallels. We should not base our analysis on a few similarities and jump to such a bold conclusion as does Dehejia.

AMARĀVATĪ

The Amarāvātī, complete with an early railing, was located in the south of India and probably built in the third century BCE and enlarged in the first to second century CE. The *stūpa* at Amarāvātī, 165 feet in diameter, is considered to be the largest of all

²³⁵ Dehejia 1997a, 208.

²³⁶ Dehejia 1997a, 210 and 228.

²³⁷ For a more detailed discussion on the textual sources at Ajaṅṭā, see Dehejia 1997a, 210-211.

ancient Buddhist sculptural achievements.²³⁸ As to its style, according to Dehejia, “[t]he art of Amaravati creates its elegant effect largely through the languorous attenuation of its figures that crowd the panels and medallions and are portrayed in movement so dynamic that it has been described as an almost hysterical unrest...everything being done with exuberance and extravagance.”²³⁹ Like most Buddhist sacred sites, it contains representations of both the historical life events of the Buddha and the *jātaka* tales that have traditionally been considered of lesser importance than the former by patrons or those who are in charge due to their numbers in small and unremarkable locations. Even so, there are approximately thirty *jātakas* depicted at Amarāvātī.²⁴⁰ In addition, 150 inscriptions on the Amarāvātī railing exist, but unfortunately “identifying labels were absent at the site during this phase of mature activity.”²⁴¹ As they often do, inscriptions indicate the donors’ status at Amarāvātī; a third of the donations came from the monastic population, many members of which have titles like *ācārya*, preacher of the Dharma or great upholder of the Vinaya. It has become the norm to assume that the patrons at most Buddhist sacred sites are individuals who performed a wide range of occupations and of these the monastic donors form the majority.

GANDHĀRA

In accordance with King Aśoka’s edicts, the first stirrings of Buddhism in Gandhāra started in the third century BCE, but Gandhāran art, as John Marshall stated, was developed between the first century BCE and the first century CE, influenced by Hellenistic, Greek, Iranian, and Parthian art, and the art of some central Asian

²³⁸ For more detailed study on Amarāvati see Knox 1992.

²³⁹ Dehejia 1997a, 150.

²⁴⁰ Besides the three of them (the *Śibi*, *Mandhatu*, and *Viśvantara Jātakas*) currently located in Amarāvātī Museum, the rest are in Madras Government Museum and British Museum. .

²⁴¹ Dehejia 1997a, 169.

cultures.²⁴² As a result, Gandhāran art, conceived in a region with a confluence of diverse cultures, developed a unique style that differs from that of most Buddhist sacred sites. For instance, “Gandharan builders abandoned the practice of constructing *stūpas* of enormous circumference such as those at Sanchi and Amaravati; instead they elevated their *stūpas* by placing the dome upon two or more tall square drums, and thereby creating structures of impressive height...[They] also rejected the practice of erecting impressive railings to enclose and surround *stūpas*.”²⁴³ Not only are its *stūpas* constructed differently, but, in addition, the images at Gandhāra are remarkable because, as Alfred Foucher first stated and later scholars agreed, Gandhāra is where the idea began of an image of the incarnate Buddha²⁴⁴ that the devout could witness at his shrines. It is often the case that representations of the Buddha in anthropomorphic form have been produced and put in shrine-like positions surrounding a *stūpa*.²⁴⁵ But a few scholars, such as Victor Goloubew, Anada Coomaraswamy, and J. E. van Lohuizen de Leeuw, did not agree with Foucher’s argument about the origin of the Buddha image and suggested that “not Gandhara but Mathurā was the birthplace of the Buddha image.”²⁴⁶ Coomaraswamy, based on abundant evidences, further suggests that “images of divinities and of human beings, both in relief and in the round, existed already in the third and second centuries BCE...[at] Bhārhut and Sāñcī.”²⁴⁷ In other words, anthropomorphic forms of the Buddha were not initiated at Gandhāra, but probably were already existed in the very early development of *stūpas* in India.

As our major concern is the representation of the *jātakas*, Kurt Behrendt comments that “A major difference is that Gandhāran narratives stress the life of the

²⁴² Marshall 1960, 17.

²⁴³ Dehejia 1997a, 184.

²⁴⁴ Foucher 1918-1922, 768; Marshall 1960, 7.

²⁴⁵ Dehejia 1997a, 184.

²⁴⁶ Lohuizen-de Leeuw 1981, 399; Goloubew 1924, 451.

²⁴⁷ Coomaraswamy 1927, 301.

Buddha, paying less attention to the *Jātakas*.”²⁴⁸ This is widely accepted to be the case, even when, in fact, as seen at Bhārhut, where the number of the *jātaka* depictions may be greater than the number of depictions of life-scenes of the historical Buddha, the former have never become the object of greater popular attention than the latter. In other words, throughout the history and development of visual presentation at the sites in India, the *jātakas* have become increasingly less prominent, from the ample number of their instances at Bhārhut to the minimal number at Gandhāra. The number of *jātaka* pieces is noticeably smaller at Gandhāra than at the early sites of the Indian plains.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, here, as at other Buddhist sites where representations of the *jātaka* tales are placed in less noticeable and less significant areas, they are scarcely ever placed on the narrow stairway of the votive *stūpas*. The exact reason for the lesser significance of the *jātakas* compared to the biography of the Buddha at these sites is unclear. But it is worth considering that the Buddha’s followers or patrons of later periods probably were more willing to contribute to the portrayal at these *stūpas* of his life stories than the *jātakas* because of their remembrance and respect for him.

The custom of accompanying visual images with an inscription is also practiced at Gandhāra, but here these captioned images are placed either on relic caskets or copper plates interred within the *stūpas*. It seems that the inscriptions at Gandhāra were never intended to be seen again after the erection of the *stūpa* alike the scenes themselves. I discuss the significance of the location of inscriptions and the purpose of placing inscriptions in certain places later on. The inscriptional evidence also provides us with the unique gender demographic of patrons of Gandhāra. Unlike at other sites, at Gandhāra, women were less involved in artistic patronage. According to the extant

²⁴⁸ Behrendt 2004, 273.

²⁴⁹ Raducha 1985, 89.

inscriptions, there were only five female patrons, compared to the forty-eight males who were involved in the design and architecture of the place.²⁵⁰

In light of the inscriptions, we know that many scenes at these sites were donated by a wide range of individuals, monks, nuns, laymen, or laywomen. To what extent did patrons participate in the project? Did he or she only support it, leaving the details of its plan and execution to others or did he or she also choose his or her favorite scenes for inclusion? I turn next to these questions.

2.3 OVERSEERS, PATRONS, AND ARTISTS

Based on the historical evidence, including the extant inscriptions, the *stūpas* seem to have been gradually developed and to have taken many years or even centuries to complete. Therefore, there must have been a great many individuals involved in the project of designing and building a *stūpa*. As Jonathan Walter points out, “the finished *stūpa* is the composite creation of successive complex agents who organized smaller unities of collective agency at different points in time.”²⁵¹ There were at least three major groups of people involved in the project of building and decorating a *stūpa*: the ones who provided the money (patrons), the ones who arranged or managed the work (overseers), and the ones who actually executed the designs (artists or sculptors). How did they cooperate on building and decorating a *stūpa*? Besides simply serving as sponsors, how extensively did patrons participate in the establishment of a *stūpa*, or in the committees that decided on which *jātaka* tales or scenes should be presented? What sort of make-up did these committees have?

Scholars provide divergent answers regarding who selected which *jātakas* or which scenes were to be put on the walls. Some scholars suggest that monks, as

²⁵⁰ Dehejia 1997a, 206.

²⁵¹ Walters 1997, 171.

overseers in charge of the *caityas* and *vihāras* included in the *stūpas*, were responsible for deciding which tales should be depicted and that laypeople were barred from participation in the process. In Talim’s words, “in the Buddhist religion, the choice of paintings of the Jātaka was ultimately in the hands of the Sangha [the monastic community]...The job of patrons was to pay the money.”²⁵² And yet, some scholars assume that patrons, both monastic and laity, absolutely participated and decided which tales should be represented on the walls—they paid money so they could have the power to shape the sites. Dehejia argues that “stories that were particular favorites of individual donors found a place upon monuments to which they contributed.”²⁵³ But other scholars claim that the stories were decided on by artists who made decisions in accordance with their preferences. Talim suggests, “the artists at Ajanta were more calculating, for they have thoughtfully chosen the Jatakas.”²⁵⁴ It could be that Talim believes that the case at Ajañṭā was different from that at other sites since she claims otherwise elsewhere. However, the question remains open. Regarding the arrangement and choice of *jātaka* scenes, it is very possible that the overseer initiated the project and collected the funding, the patron decided on which story or stories he or she preferred upon making a contribution, and the artists created the specified scenes.

As a result of the patrons’ idiosyncratic preferences for certain scenes, inconsistency of design and reduplication of scenes occurred at most of the sacred sites. For instance, there are three *Chaddanta-jātakas* at Sāñcī, two *Viśvatara-jātakas* at Bhārhut, and two *Mandatajātakas* at Amarāvātī. Probably the visual design of the entire project of the *stūpas* was not systemically planned, but developed according to patrons’ preferences without reservation. In other words, if there had been a plan, there

²⁵² Talim 1988, 118.

²⁵³ Dehejia 1997a, 34.

²⁵⁴ Talim 1988, 112.

would not have been any repetition but rather the coherent and thoughtful progression and arrangement of individual scenes.²⁵⁵ It is very unlikely that planners deliberately reduplicated some stories. As Dehejia suggested in the case of Sāñcī Stūpa no. 2, “it would appear that gifted pillars were carved with the donor’s choice of theme rather than according to any preconceived scheme.”²⁵⁶ It seems that the patrons chose scenes from their familiar and favorite stories and that these choices were incorporated haphazardly into the layout of the sites.

Without evidence about the delegation of responsibilities in the building of *stūpas*, we can only suggest about what roles patrons, overseers, and artists played. But it is plainly improbable that the moneyed patrons had no opinion and that the artists involved made all the decisions about choosing particular *jātakas*. Regarding the design and depiction of the scenes, as in the case of Ajañṭā, Benoy K. Behl suggests: “the artists give complete freedom and expression to their imagination....[They] belonged to professional guilds and would also have worked in the temples of other religions, as well as in palaces. Indeed, the painter was devout, but his devotion was through his art, not limited by the boundaries of any one faith or religion.”²⁵⁷ That is, the artists did not try to persuade others to accept a particular belief, but involved

²⁵⁵ Dehejia (1997a, 102), while pointing to the disorganization of the images from *jātaka* stories that occurred at Bhārut, complains that “the Jatakas are not organized according to their sequence in the Jātaka collection. A consideration of their sequential order reveals Jataka number 352...next to number 383...and separated from number 12 by two unidentified stories.” It seems that Dehejia has forgotten that the birth stories of the Bodhisattva were not compiled until the first century CE and that the current *jātaka* collection in the Pāli collection is a commentary that is a production of the fifth century CE. (Norman 1983, 5) There are some things that we have no useful evidence about, and are thus helpless to draw precise conclusions about. We do not know the sequence of the earliest collection of the *jātaka* or whether the current collection has the same sequence as its original. However, we do surely know that ancient artists had no access to the collection since it wasn’t even compiled until a couple of centuries later. Presumably, the artists and patrons then just selected and posted what stories they were familiar with on the sacred sites without any knowledge of their sequence in any literary collection—there was no such thing as a literary collection of them at that time. Furthermore, some stories represented at these sites are not included in any extant *jātaka* collections, so we have no indication of what these stories were. They must remain unidentified.

²⁵⁶ Dehejia 1997a, 82.

²⁵⁷ Behl 1998, 33 and 35.

themselves instead in the religious expression of their creativity. In that regard, they probably had neither the power to choose a particular story, nor even any interest in doing so; their freedom lay in choosing a certain style or mode to illustrate the stories. As suggested by A. L. Basham: “The sculptors were not commissioned by the monastery, but by private patrons, who wished to gain merit by beautifying the stūpa, and they carved what their patrons told them in the way they thought best.”²⁵⁸ But the factors influencing the modes of expression chosen by ancient artists are unknown. They might have chosen as they did because of the space the project afforded them, the budget allotted to the construction of the place, or any number of other factors. However, examining the influences on the utilization of expressive modes by the artists of the *stūpas* might also shed light on the function of the visual depictions of *jātaka* scenes at Buddhist sacred sites.

2.4 ART AS NARRATIVE

A number of scholars assert that the *jātaka* art within *stūpas* functions like a text that is meant to be read in order that Buddhist teachings might be inculcated and reinforced. For instance, Buddhist art historian Foucher suggested in 1917 that “just as by the rite of circumambulation, it has fixed the direction in which the scenes must succeed one another and be read.”²⁵⁹ A couple of decades later, Debala Mitra, while discussing the paintings at Ajañṭā, also claimed: “The theme of the paintings on the walls is intensely religious in tone.... These topics...[offer] visual representations of didactic themes to supplement the teachings of the elder monks to their pupils.”²⁶⁰ These earlier scholars have no doubt that the function of the *jātaka* scenes presented at *stūpas* are no

²⁵⁸ Basham [1954] 1959, 366.

²⁵⁹ Foucher 1917, 10.

²⁶⁰ Mitra [1956]1980, 11.

different from the function of their literary counterparts, that is, to convey the teachings of Buddhism.

Furthermore, even a contemporary scholar, such as Susan Huntington, contends that “While on a literal level [the *jātakas*] might be seen as biographical, on a didactic level they are paradigms of the Buddhist pilgrim’s progress toward enlightened states,”²⁶¹ giving the reliefs a double textual function. Dehejia’s further suggestions, in general, deepen our investigation because she begins to draw important distinctions between the purpose of the picture and that of the text. She maintains the prejudice that the devotional art is a close cousin of writing and one that is created in order to enter into a dialogue with its viewer: “the Buddhist artistic narratives served, in themselves, as texts; they communicated with their viewers in direct visual terms. None of the bas-reliefs or murals was intended to vivify a literary prototype, although they communicated their visual message to viewers familiar with the literary prototypes.”²⁶² Indeed, Dehejia is disappointed with scholars who privilege texts over imagery because she sees that text and image affect their audiences in significantly different ways. But she agrees with them insofar as she believes the image is also a text:

[The story at a *stūpa*]...functions in its own right as a ‘text.’ Literary confirmation in support of a visual reading should not be a prior condition, or a necessary condition, for visual interpretation. It is disheartening to find art historians themselves privileging the written over the visual and seeking literary confirmation of artistic readings.²⁶³

²⁶¹ Huntington 1992, 141. In addition, M. N. Deshpande (1991, 11) implies that the paintings drawn from *jātakas* and *avadānas* at Ajañṭā are didactic subjects intended to attract travelers and the local population to Buddhism. Furthermore, D. N. Varma (1991, 57) declares that at Ajañṭā “[t]he paintings were communicating. They were broadcasting information, making an impact on the thought process and influencing the attitudes of all those who had a look at them.”

²⁶² Dehejia 1997a, 55-56.

²⁶³ Dehejia 1997a, 37.

I agree with Dehejia's statement of the equal value of images and texts, but disagree that they share a common function in the sphere of religious devotion. These scholars assume that pilgrims, while visiting the Buddhist sites, tried to read or interpret the main discourse of the stories either by themselves or as they were narrated to them by a trained tour guide.

Ratan Parimoo, for instance, proposed that "obviously the visual versions on stone slabs had a didactic purpose and were regarded as being as effective as the oral versions. *Jatakas* as subject matter for the visual versions not only gave rise to the study of 'content' in art but also a phenomenon of further 'transformation' from the oral/literary version to the pictorial version."²⁶⁴ Moreover, he even argues that the episodes are not only meant to be read, but also to be interpreted for "an eventual meaning or moral which the Buddha wishes to point out at the closing of the story."²⁶⁵ Parimoo's argument indicates that each tale as it was depicted on the reliefs gives rise to a variety of interpretations. As an example of some possible interpretations of the *Viśavantara-jātaka* at Nāgārjunakonṇḍa, Parimoo suggests that "An unsuspecting viewer would, at first sight, tend to see the figure as the meditating Buddha. But careful observation will draw attention to the group of figures below the meditating personage, which represents the important episode of the forest-dwelling Vessantara."²⁶⁶ If Parimoo is correct, then any pilgrim capable of such interpretations would not only have had to know the stories very well but would also have had to be distinctly perspicacious to decode the underlying ramifications of the depictions of the stories. Parimoo's interpretation takes the artistic presentations at Buddhist sites to a more profound level of understanding of Buddhism than they were intended to bring to the faithful.

²⁶⁴ Parimoo 1990-91, 18.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

²⁶⁶ Parimoo 1995, 145-46.

Like most scholars in the field, Dehejia and Sandrine Gill assume that the art presented at *stūpas* serves a narrative function, so they devote a detailed study to the modes of visual narration. According to Dehejia, ancient artists used a wide range of modes of visual narration to communicate these stories, such as monoscenic, continuous, synoptic, conflated, and sequential narratives, and narrative networks.²⁶⁷ In the rest of this section, I examine Dehejia's theory but will arrive at a very different conclusion about the function of the art presented at *stūpas*. It is possible that the artists who sculpted and painted these pieces were writing with pictures in an attempt to convey in a novel manner the details and messages of the text from which they drew their imagery. But it is also quite possible to see in Dehejia's analysis a greater likelihood that the visual form has its own laws and ends that act upon texts in such a way that the visual form can no longer be considered textual, narrative, or even communicative.

According to Dehejia, the monoscenic mode depicts one single, easily identifiable scene or event chosen from one of the episodes anywhere in a narrative, not necessarily from the beginning or the end. The mode was frequently utilized at earlier Indian Buddhist *stūpas*, such as Bhārhut and Sāñcī.²⁶⁸ In Dehejia's words,

Monoscenic narratives must, of course, contain sufficient narrative content to stimulate the storytelling process in the mind of the observer....[K]ey figures to scenic details must be unmistakable and stimulate viewers into telling themselves the story.... [These scenes] must have aroused immediate recognition of the story in the viewer.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Dehejia 1997a, 4-35. Sandrine Gill (2000) has also analyzed narrative systems of art into six categories: narratives composed of successive episodes, metonymic narration, regrouping of anachronistic episodes, narratives combining linearity and duality, narratives broken up into several panels, and nonlinear narratives. I, however, prefer to apply Dehejia's categories because they are more straightforward. In any case, both scholars' analyses can be used to suggest that reading the scenes of the *Jātakas* on the bas-reliefs is challenging and ultimately unmanageable.

²⁶⁸ The reason for the choice of a particular mode, according to Dehejia (1997a, 12), is the restricted space, as can be seen in the case of the *Chaddanta* story at Bhārhut.

²⁶⁹ Dehejia 1997a, 10-11.

It seems to Dehejia that the design of the monoscenic mode is for the sake of viewers who themselves actually narrate or read a story. If so, the viewer must have memorized the stories very well; otherwise, faced with a single scene from anywhere in a story, they may have felt more like they were taking an examination gauging how much they could immediately recall from their studies than that they were connecting with the stories through the art. Not every devotee responds to images of characters in a story with a literary reflex, identifying the story among stories indexed by what she sees, especially when the person in question is a follower of a religion, a follower who could be from any walk of life and equipped with any degree of intellectual endowment, from quite small to quite large. Identifying these stories with limited information was probably a nearly impossible task for the average visitor to these sites and a difficult one even for the visitor with an ingrained familiarity with the tales. Therefore, it is unlikely that artists used the mode for narrative and didactic purposes, as Dehejia suggests. In fact, it is possible that the artists involved in these projects made as little sense of their source stories as the average visitor made through viewing them, even if the effect of these pieces on Dehejia is quite another matter.

The continuous mode uses successive episodes, where the figure of the protagonist is repeatedly seen within a single unit and each episode consists of more than one scene. Sometimes there are no framing devices to separate one scene from another and no divider to distinguish between episodes.²⁷⁰ This very continuous mode, unlike the static monoscenic one, suggests movement in space and development in time, a single, composite, metamorphosing image of the life of the Buddha or of the *jātakas*. In Dehejia's words, "[T]he viewer unfamiliar with such presentations may indeed find these repeated appearances of the protagonist within a single unframed

²⁷⁰ Dehejia 1997a, 15.

setting both illogical and incoherent.”²⁷¹ In other words, the repeated appearance of the protagonist might enable the viewer of the scene a greater opportunity to recognize the story, since it compresses many potentially identifiable scenes from it into a single image, but at the same time the jarring artificiality of both the composite scene and reduplicated characters could be even more puzzling to visitors than the monoscenic depiction.

In addition, in many cases, the continuous mode does not narrate a given story from beginning to end, but from the starting point of a scene deemed significant, with the result that most of the time the stories are not in sequence. The stories are not even intended to be read from right to left, left to right, from top to bottom, or bottom to top. No matter how thoroughly one had memorized a tale, when faced with its novel depiction at *stūpas* employing the continuous mode, one would still need to walk forward and back in order to read the story correctly. The continuous mode suggests a unique, generative experience, not a referential, mnemonic one. It suggests an intellectual digestion of the story that no longer respects the narrative integrity or message of the source text, but instead sunders these at the behest of an indiscernible and unrecoverable program. And if it is true that the intention of the pilgrim was to better understand his or her faith, to proceed by measurable steps toward an ascertainable goal through “reading” the stories in their visual depiction at the *stūpa*, why did whoever was directing this project intend to challenge the capacities of pilgrims by presenting them at the end of their journey with a flowing pictorial enigma?

The synoptic mode is very similar to the continuous mode, in that it depicts multiple and undivided episodes of a story by utilizing the repeated figure of the

²⁷¹ Ibid.,15.

protagonist, but it goes farther in abandoning any temporal sequence or succession.²⁷² It tempers this profusion, in the manner of the monoscenic mode, by confining this imagistic mutiny in a single frame. In other words, the synoptic mode, a combination of monoscenic and continuous modes, compresses a series of episodes of the same story into a single scene. It is a story loosed from all rational considerations and constitutes, like depictions in the continuous mode, a challenge for viewers to follow, grasp, or decipher—a challenge pitilessly compounded if viewers actually try to identify or reconstruct the story from those they are familiar with. This confusion characteristic of the art of the *stūpas*, which reaches its apogee in the synoptic mode, provides compelling confirmation of the argument that the scenes of the *jātakas* do not function like a text.

In the sequential mode, as in both the continuous and synoptic modes, each episode consists of more than one scene and contains the repeated figure of the protagonist. Yet, unlike these two modes, its episodes are separated from one another with dividers.²⁷³ Due to the dividers, stories become clearer from the viewer's perspective. Furthermore, the stories treated in the sequential mode have the good fortune of being presented almost in the sequence of the texts they are drawn from, so their viewers do not need to puzzle back and forth in order to learn the story. That is to say, the sequential mode makes the stories depicted relatively comprehensible compared to the other modes I have discussed above, although this fact alone doesn't show that the art presented in this mode was designed to be read.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Dehejia 1997a, 21-23.

²⁷³ Dehejia 1997a, 20.

²⁷⁴ In many cases, such as the art at Borobudur that uses this mode, it is still implausible that viewers who might have tried to read the stories actually succeeded because the imagery was positioned up to three feet above eye level. The point is that even instances of a mode such as the sequential, which is compatible with and abets reading, have been placed at the sites so that they cannot be deciphered.

The conflated mode differs from its sister modes in that the figure of the protagonist is conflated instead of repeated; multiple episodes of a story or multiple scenes of an episode are presented so as to make the most of the single depiction of their main character. In Dehejia's words, "When a single character takes part in a number of episodes, the artist could avoid needless repetition by making that character the central or most prominent motif."²⁷⁵ The artists using this mode have taken great liberties by conflating major or significant episodes from various stories into a single or multiple images.

Narrative networks are a mode very similar to synoptic narratives which "may be viewed in their entirety and taken in...from a single view-point. Narrative networks extend across an expanded area that does not allow the viewer to see the conclusion of the tale at the same time as he views the beginning."²⁷⁶ If the visual scenes are designed to be read, then reading becomes a rudely frustrating labor when they are presented in a narrative network. Narrative networks are unduly taxing because of the combination of their spatial extension and the logical inconsistencies of the layout of events. Some stories have their first episode at the very top right of the relief, followed by the second—which has been positioned at the very bottom left; some stories even start at the center of the wall. The reader's experience is of applying herself to a connect-the-dots puzzle, the points of which have been scrambled and from which all numerical indices have been removed.

Overall with the exception of the sequential mode, these modes of the depiction of the *jātakas* are not modes of "texts" but of art. They do not have the nature or the function of narrative. And so it stands to reason that they are not intended to be

²⁷⁵ Dehejia 1997a, 26.

²⁷⁶ Dehejia 1997a, 31. Furthermore, Dehejia (Dehejia 1997a, 236) states: "While Ajanta's artists made use of a variety of narrative modes to convey their stories, the network is their special contribution and their most favored mode of discourse, with synoptic narrative second in popularity. Both modes, it may be noted, require direct viewer participation to 'read' and unravel the narrative."

interpreted or read. If they are, the artists have done an incompetent job of it. We can no longer consider the visual presentation of the *jātaka* to be a mode of narrative. Were the artists really so invested in testing or playing a game with the pilgrims who viewed their work? If they were, how many devotees could actually accomplish the task these artists set for them, and if any could, how many of them would make such great efforts to decipher *these scenes in this way* when there were other clearer and more straightforward narratives available, namely storytellers or texts? Although the scholars I have cited believe that the *jātaka* scenes at the Buddhist sites are supposed to be read and their meanings learned by pilgrims, the unsuitability for reading of scenes presented using these modes of visual narration indicates otherwise.

2.5 PROBLEMS WITH NARRATIVE READINGS OF THE JĀTAKA ART

Images can tell stories, but they are not bound to them. As Barbara Smith tells us, a desire to communicate or to participate in communication is the engine of all that we ultimately consider narrative. “[E]very telling...always involves two parties, an audience as well as a narrator,...[and] each party must have some *interest* in telling or listening to that narrative.”²⁷⁷ Along similar lines, Seymour Chatman suggests: “A narrative is a communication....The sense modality in which narrative operates may be either visual or auditory or both.”²⁷⁸ Theoretically speaking, no matter which medium is in operation, a narrative requires communication, interpretation, and participation by authors and their audiences. Images allow for translation or interpretation into a comprehensible language, revealing a story to its viewers, even though the process of doing so is different from that of oral or written narrative—and

²⁷⁷ Smith 1980, 233.

²⁷⁸ Chatman [1962]1978, 28.

complexly so—because “[w]hen we read pictures...we bring to them the temporal quality of narrative.”²⁷⁹ In a narrative, in either textual or visual forms, the narrator and audience share particular interests and motives in cultural, social, religious, literary, and historical contexts associated with the narrative through interaction, communication, and participation. Although this immersion in a common element is true of narrative in writing and image alike, in the case of visual narrative, this sharing requires a special act of will on the part of both participants, who focus their minds in such a way as to invest the naked image with the connotative garment of a narrative organization, which is far more difficult to maintain than in textual narrative.

The Buddhist art at *stūpas*, however, does not indicate that there was any creation or maintenance of the type of communal bond between the artists and viewers that would need to be required if the purpose of the art was the conveyance of stories from point A to point B. Since the form of these episodes at the Buddhist sites in most cases is unintelligible, they cannot easily express a simple message to anyone, even if that person had prior knowledge of the stories. Even if one had an absolute familiarity with the literature prior to visiting the sites, one would still encounter a great challenge in treating these objects as mnemonic prompts. Robert Brown therefore suggests, and I agree with him, that “the *jātakas* on the monument worked as icons, units of meaning and reverence, expressions of an aspect of the Buddha’s nature and life that is (more) fully expressed by the entire monument.”²⁸⁰ Thus the visual images included at the *stūpas* do not function as either reading material or illustration in any logical, practical, or effective way. We cannot understand the significance of the art if we treat it as a

²⁷⁹ Manguel 2000, 13. But, Nelson Goodman (1981, 104-106) suggests otherwise as “this pictorial organization of events of a lifetime is spatial, atemporal, motivated perhaps both by considerations of design and by regarding these events as eternal and emblematic rather than as episodic or transient.” For Goodman, a narrative reordered in any way at all is still narrative, which is probably what the majority of scholars in Buddhist studies have assumed.

²⁸⁰ Brown 1997, 99-100.

text and imagine that the pilgrims consumed it as a text. The following example of the *Viśvantara jātaka* from both textual and artistic perspectives, will shed light on their different functions and support my conclusions about the nonnarrative function of the visual images at the *stūpas*.

2.6 A STUDY OF THE *VIŚVANTARA-JĀTAKA*: TOWARD A NONNARRATIVE/TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION OF THE *JĀTAKAS*

In this section I attempt to demonstrate the different functions of textual and nonverbal artistic presentations using the *Viśvantara jātaka* as an example because of its abundant presence in a variety of languages and traditions²⁸¹ and in almost every Indian sacred Buddhist site. But before examining and illustrating the different functions of its nonnarrative and textual presentations, we need to ask whether we can read the *Viśvantara-jātaka* in art the same way we do as text. If we cannot, then the

²⁸¹ The *Viśvantara-jātaka* is compiled, translated, or retranslated in various languages and Buddhist traditions. It is astonishing and extraordinary to find the *Viśvantara jātaka* in languages such as Pāli, Sanskrit, Sinhala, Chinese, Nepalese (Lienhard 1978), Mongolian, Tibetan (Bacot 1914, 221-305), Sogdian, Khotanese, and Tokharian (Cone and Gombrich 1997, xxxviii). Besides being diffused in many languages, the *Viśvantara-jātaka* has been frequently found at numerous Buddhist sites, if not all of them, in India, such as Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Amarāvati, Gandhāra, Ajañṭā, and Mathūrā. Cone and Gombrich (1977, xxxv) suggest “there is hardly a major Buddhist site in India which has no representation of Vessantara.” Besides the sites of its concrete depiction in India, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand, the *Viśvantara* is also popular in forms of sermons, dramas, dances, and ceremonies (Cumplings 1982, 101-102; Cone and Gombrich 1977, xv). As Lebenslauf (1978, 13-14.) states: “In the Buddhist countries, from time to time and on religious occasions the balladic and theatrical representations of the *Viśvantara* legend are staged before the followers of Buddhism.... [Nevertheless,] the popular versions of the *Viśvantara* legend are taught in schools and at home to give the children a moral code and an ethical guidance.” More recently, the *Viśvantara* story has been made into a movie (Dehejia 1997a, 62.). In Chinese, the *Viśvantara-jātaka* is even adapted in Daoist literature. (Stephen Bokenkamp [2006, 56-73] discusses the great similarity of the tale in the *Liu du ji jing* and in the Linbao scriptures and concludes the adaptation is due to their particular shared range of audience.) In the Theravāda Buddhist countries, people learn the *Viśvantara jātaka* tale during their earlier years in school, while in other parts of the Buddhist world people acquire it from the textual narrative. Thus, the *Viśvantara* tale is prevalent in, and propagated through literary, visual, and auditory media throughout, the Buddhist world.

burden is on us to discover what it is that nourishes us in the specious and powerful image. In W. J. T. Mitchell's words,

The 'differences' between images and language are not merely formal matters: they are, in practice, linked to things like the difference between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between 'hearsay' and 'eyewitness' testimony; between words and objects or actions...between sensory channels, traditions of representation, and modes of experience."²⁸²

Text and imagery are different, not simply in their styles and forms, from their audience's perspective, but also in their deeply unlike cultural and functional values. A large part of my point in this introduction is the simple yet demanding one that people have a different experience reading a text than they do viewing an image. And that differing experience matters if we are going to understand the effect that images on the pilgrims who saw them.

Text and imagery cannot substitute for each other, because the text is often so much fuller than the scenes that provide only a few figures and some attribute, or an accessory object. The story is entirely up to the interpretation of the viewers. As I discussed earlier with regard to the visual modes of narration, if one intends to *read* an image on bas-relief at any of these Indian Buddhist *stūpas*, one has to go through a convoluted process of interpreting a message from the image. That is to say, "in front of the painting [of the *jātaka* tales], the viewer tells a story to himself, he reads the painting, he understands the narrative messages. This means that he converts the iconic representational model into language, and more precisely into a story."²⁸³ But this, as we have already observed, is an act of the viewer's will in participation with that of the artist—it is not an existential action of the image itself. Because of the convolution of the presentation so depicted at the *stūpas*, we cannot infer that the

²⁸² Mitchell 1994, 5.

²⁸³ Marin 1980, 298.

contract of conversation was accepted by the artist or the viewer. And so we cannot agree with the assertion of Dehejia's that "[t]he Buddhist artistic narratives served, in themselves, as texts; they communicated with their viewers in direct visual terms."²⁸⁴ Since these two modes of presentation are treated and function differently, and since effort must be exerted on the part of the artist and the viewer to make them function in tandem, we must allow that these artistic presentations do not serve as texts; they do not communicate with their viewers in the manner so familiar to us through the experience of reading texts. In that regard, there is such a thing as a visual narrative, but it is not in evidence at the *stūpas*. This art served another, no less important purpose in the life of the devotee than the textual stories of the Buddha did.

In the following, I summarize the story by drawing primarily from story number 14 or *Xudana jing* (Sudāna) 須大拏經²⁸⁵ of the *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經, along with its corresponding Pāli, Sanskrit (*Jātakamālā*), and Chinese versions, and contrast these with its artistic presentation at Indian Buddhist sites, such as Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Ajañṭā, Amarāvātī, and Gandhāra to demonstrate how the two presentations portray the story. From a textual standpoint, the topic deserves a separate and further study with detailed annotations and analysis, but I leave that for future research. Here I aim to compare the possible functions of the texts as opposed to those of the images treating the same stories, and so only address a few major differences between the textual versions.

SUMMARY OF THE VIŚVANTARA JĀTAKA NARRATIVE

Once upon a time there was a prince named Viśvantara or Sudāna,²⁸⁶ the son and heir of Sañjaya, King of Sibis, who lived in the capital with his wife, Madrī, and their son

²⁸⁴ Dehejia 1997a, 55.

²⁸⁵ T 152,3.7c25-11a27.

²⁸⁶ In the *Liu du ji jing*, there are two stories corresponding to the *Viśvantara-jātaka*: stories no. 6 and 14. In story no. 14, also known by the title of *Xu da na jing* 須大拏經, the prince is named Xudana 須大拏 or Sudāna.

and daughter, Jālin and Kṛṣṇājīnā. Viśvantara was famous for his compassion and selfless generosity. He always granted any request made of him by any sentient being. Once, there was an auspicious and mighty white elephant belonging to the kingdom,²⁸⁷ but Viśvantara gave it away to Brahmins who were ordered to seize it by the neighboring enemy-king. At this, the citizens and ministers were enraged and forced King Sañjaya to banish him. They reasoned this way: “he is putting the kingdom in danger due to his heedless generosity. He is taking his beneficence too far, so we need to teach him a lesson by exiling him to the forest for ten years.” After Viśvantara accepted the punishment and explained to his wife Madrī the situation, she insisted on leaving with him along with their two children. Before they departed for exile, Viśvantara gave away all his possessions. After giving his horses and chariot away to some Brahmins on the way to the forest, Viśvantara and his party set off on foot, Viśvantara carrying the boy Jālin on his hip, while Madrī took the girl Kṛṣṇājīnā.

When they settled down in the forest and began to practice devotions, an old despicable Brahmin named Jūjaka asked Viśvantara for his two children in order to please his young wife who was hassling him to obtain servants. The two children, with tears streaming from their eyes, begged their father not to give them away.²⁸⁸ They said: “Daddy, obviously he is not a Brahmin. We have seen many Brahmins, but no one is like him. He is disguised as a Brahmin. I am sure he is carrying us off to eat us. Daddy, how can you take no notice when we are being carried off by a demon? Please don’t give us away while mother is out. Mother will be heartbroken if she does not see us.” But Viśvantara could not be dissuaded from agreeing to the request while Madrī

²⁸⁷ In the Pāli version, the elephant ensures adequate rainfall, while in both the Sanskrit and Chinese, it has valor, and in the Chinese version, it is more powerful than sixty elephants together (T 171,3.419c17-18; T 152,3.8a10).

²⁸⁸ In no. 14 of the *Liu du ji jing*, the children hide from their father upon seeing the Brahmin coming because they know their father has a tendency to honor even the most outrageous requests.

was out collecting food. He even helped the Brahmin tie the children up with a creeper.

Meanwhile Madrī felt anxious and suspected something unfortunate had happened, so she hurried back to her children. However, Madrī was detained by Śakra who, in order to confirm the great ambition of Viśvantara to practice ascetic devotion, transformed himself into a lion, a fox, and then a tiger to impede Madrī from returning to the children before they were taken by Jūjaka. When she finally returned, she was distraught over the loss of her children and went crazy. But Viśvantara stopped her by saying: “You must have known my ambition toward the great practice,²⁸⁹ and that I have never rejected any request made of me by a sentient being, but now you are distressed and have disturbed my aspirations.” Having heard the speech of Viśvantara to his wife, another Brahmin, who was Śakra in disguise, tried to confirm his ambition by asking for Madrī. After Viśvantara consented to the request, Śakra was pleased by his generosity and returned her immediately to him. Before Śakra had had the opportunity to explain his intention, Viśvantara tried to convince Śakra to accept his wife by proclaiming Madrī’s wonderful personality and qualities. Meanwhile, Jūjaka, the evil Brahmin, took the children to King Sañjaya for ransom.²⁹⁰ Out of sorrow,

²⁸⁹ The major difference between the Pāli version and all others is that it contains the typical style of nesting poetry in an otherwise prose narrative, whereas the other versions contain only prose; also the Pāli version is much longer than the others. In terms of emphasis, a striking statement included in both Chinese versions that does not appear in either the Pāli or the *Jātakamālā* refers openly to the Mahāyāna. For instance in the *Liu du ji jing*, no. 14, Viśvantara claims that “my aspiration for the Mahāyāna” (吾志大道 T152,3.10a26) , and in T171, *Taizi xudana jing*, 太子須大拏經 he is “striving for the path of Mahāyāna” (欲求摩訶衍道 T171,3.421b3) and for “the supreme perfect enlightenment” (無上正真道 T171,3.421b5). In neither the Pāli nor *Jātakamālā* is there any information regarding the prominence of the Mahāyāna path. It is possible that the idea of the Mahāyāna was incorporated into the Viśvantara story when it was transmitted and translated into Chinese.

²⁹⁰ As we said in the previous chapter, the narrative transmission of a story transforms that story into a new construct that strays farther and farther away from its origin since every individual narrator presents it in his or her own unique way. Therefore the same story in different traditions, languages, or versions manifests different emphases. For instance, in the story of *Viśvantara*, Jūjaka, the old cripple Brahmin, took the two children to King Sañjaya for ransom. In the *Jātakamālā*, the story states “they ransomed the children back from the Brahmin” without further explanation (Khoroché 1989, 72). And in the Pāli version, the boy replies to King Sañjaya, when he asks the price of the ransom for the

Sañjaya, in the company of his retinue, went to the mountain and invited Viśvantara and Madrī to return. When his family was reunited, Viśvantara became the king.

Although this story has been presented in various versions and languages, it is quite similar in each, except for some minor divergences in emphasis: for example, one version may elaborate a certain issue in detail, while another may just briefly mention it. Over all, the story communicates the message of the generosity of Viśvantara to its audiences, who in response may feel, along with the people of Viśvantara's father's kingdom that it was too extreme, especially when Viśvantara gives away his children and wife with no mercy. One might consider it too cruel for the protagonist to have so little concern for his family's feelings. Even so, it is a fine narrative in which the message of the practice of the perfection of generosity is well conveyed and narrated. Next, I discuss how the story has been presented in bas-relief on walls at many Indian Buddhist *stūpas*.

WHY THE VIŚVANTARA-JĀTAKA AT BUDDHIST STŪPAS IS NOT A NARRATIVE

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, there are various methods or modes utilized in order to artistically convey the *jātaka* tales at Indian Buddhist sites. The *Viśvantara-jātaka* is the most popular of the *jātakas*, almost all of the Indian Buddhist sites have

children: “My father gave me to the Brahmin at a price of a thousand gold coins, Granddad, and gave his daughter Kanhājīnā at the price of an elephant and a hundred” (Cone and Gombrich 1977, 82). The Chinese versions of *Liu du ji jing* 六度集經 (T152,3.7c-11a) and *Tai zi xu da na jing* 太子須大拏經 (T171,3.418c-424a), on the other hand, are more interesting, providing a dialogue between the boy and his grandfather, King Sañjaya. The boy says: “the price of the boy is one thousand silver coins plus one hundred cows while the girl's is two thousand golden coins plus two hundred cows.” Then the king asks: “a boy is always treasured by people, but for what reason is it that a boy is cheaper while the girl is more expensive?” The boy responds: “it is because the king must be fonder of a girl than a boy because you let the common girls who are not relations of the king stay in the court and you provide them a luxurious lifestyle, while you let my father be banished to the mountain alone. You must have no passion for him. Therefore, a boy is cheaper and a girl is more expensive” (T171,3.423 b12-18; T152,3.10c12-21).

at least one scene illustrated from the tale, and these depictions are manifested in a variety of modes. At Bhārhut the story is rendered in the monoscenic and sequential modes; at Sāñcī it is in the continuous mode; at Ajañṭā it is wrought in the synoptic mode and in the narrative network; at Amarāvātī it is in the continuous mode; and at Gandhāra it is in both the monoscenic and continuous modes.²⁹¹ The ubiquity of the *Viśvantara-jātaka* can be explained by its timeless popularity. In illustrating why the *jātaka* art at these *stūpas* is not a narrative, I start with Bhārhut, Amarāvātī, and Gandhāra because the art at these *stūpas* utilize less complicated modes such as the monoscenic and small continuous modes.

The visual representation of the *Viśvantara-jātaka* at Bhārhut, Amarāvātī, and Gandhāra is limited to the following:

Bhārhut

The whole story of the *Viśvantara-jātaka* in sequential mode at Bhārhut rendered in a 12 inch square.²⁹² It is represented simply as: 1. a white elephant (the gift), 2. a Brahmin (who receives the gift), and 3. Viśvantara (who pours water to sanction the gift).

Amarāvātī

The sculpture representing the *Viśvantara* tale at Amarāvātī uses the continuous mode, but provides only four scenes: 1. Viśvantara is giving the elephant away and pouring water on a Brahmin's hands from a pitcher, 2. people are paying homage to Viśvantara, 3. a chariot is yoked by horses that Viśvantara is giving away, 4. Viśvantara is giving his wife Madrī away to a Brahmin.²⁹³

²⁹¹ Dehejia 1997a, 271-272.

²⁹² Dehejia 1997a, 4.

²⁹³ Among the four different sculptures on the *Viśvantara* at Amarāvātī, they all are concise in

Gandhāra

The style at Gandhāra is the continuous mode as well but without much background. The main figures are: 1. the gift of the elephant is given to a Brahmin and water is poured on his hands from a pitcher, 2. the family riding in a chariot yoked by horses, 3. Viśvantara carries one child while his wife carries the other, 4. a Brahmin is approaching Viśvantara who stays in a hermitage in the company of the two children, 5. the Brahmin beats the children with a stick, 6. a lion is preventing Madrī from returning in time.²⁹⁴

In these places various modes are used, but none provide enough information to convey a message or theme, of course, much less the entire story. Therefore, if one desires to narrate the story based on the restricted scenes, one would surely encounter a great challenge. Even so, Dehejia suggests that at Bhārhut “Having given enough information to identify the tale, the artist leaves the viewer to narrate the story himself, and to recall that most important of the ten Buddhist virtues or *paramitas*, charity.”²⁹⁵ We have just read a summary of the story and understand what our experience of doing so was like. How could these three simple scenes of a white elephant, a Brahmin, and Viśvantara be considered *enough information* to enable one to read or interpret this story and recall the Ten Buddhist virtues? It would be incredible if one could narrate the whole story based on the evidence provided at Bhārhut, which amounts to *next to nothing*, much less develop an understanding of “that most important of the Ten Buddhist virtues,” the urgency of the transmitting of which could hardly have been a consideration of the artists that decided on the content of this work. With nothing more than this ruthlessly abbreviated index that Bhārhut, Amarāvātī, and

presentation, so I have chosen only one of them for the discussion—for the rest of them see Schlingloff 2000, 38.

²⁹⁴ Dehejia 1997a, 199.

²⁹⁵ Dehejia 1990, 374.

Gandhāra provide, it is impossible to narrate the whole story or to be able to comprehend the major ideas or teaching of the story—the perfection of generosity—without having the story at one’s fingertips. That is to say, the simple and concise indications provided at these sites are *not enough* information to convey a message or communicate or grasp the major idea or theme of a story. We are hardly in the arena of narrative here.

Furthermore, on our reading, it is not at all surprising that Beni Madhab Barua points out: “[T]he subject of the sculpture is an episode which is common to two distinct Jātakas, viz. the *Kurudhamma* and the *Viśvantara*, and there is no inscription to guide us in deciding as to which one of these two jātakas is here meant [at Bhārhut].”²⁹⁶ Without further indication, one has no idea of which scene represents which story. But it is probably not very important to the viewers.

The depictions of the *Viśvanta-jātaka* at Ajaṅṭā and Sāñcī are more visually detailed than those of other versions:

Ajaṅṭā

Ajaṅṭā is widely famous for its rock-cut Buddhist caves in Western India, replete with rich and colorful stylish presentations including the *Viśvantara* tale. The following scenes from the story are in evidence there: 1. the presentation of the elephant, 2. the banishing of the prince—a chariot drawn by four horses carrying Viśvantara, his wife, and the two children, 3. the giving away of horses, 4. Viśvantara’s family walking toward the forest, 5. the evil Brahmin, Jūjaka, requesting the children for the sake of his wife, 6. receiving the children from Viśvantara, 7. the evil Brahmin driving the children before him and beating them with a stick, 8. a wild animal (a lion) keeping Madrī from returning in time, 9. Viśvantara giving his wife to Śakra who is in the form

²⁹⁶ Barua 1979, 160-161.

of a Brahmin, 10. Śakra respecting the virtue of Viśvantara, 11. the evil Brahmin entering the kingdom with two children and asking the king for a ransom to liberate the children and bring their parents out of banishment.²⁹⁷

Sāñcī

At Sāñcī the *Viśvantara-jātaka* is illustrated in a space of twenty-two square feet on the northern gateway in an expanded continuous mode; “each episode consists of more than one scene, and in each scene the figure of the protagonist is repeated.”²⁹⁸ It is to date the most detailed depiction of the *Viśvantara-jātaka*. The story begins with 1. Prince Viśvantara riding a royal elephant, 2. Viśvantara pouring water from a water pitcher for a Brahmin and people paying reverence to him, 3. Viśvantara departing from the palace in the company of his wife and two children, 4. Viśvantara and his family riding on a chariot yoked with four horses toward the forest, 5. the prince giving away his horses to a Brahmin, 6-7. the prince also giving away his chariot, 8. walking on foot; Viśvantara holding the boy while his wife is carrying the girl on her waist; villagers showing their respect toward them,²⁹⁹ 9. Viśvantara and his family walking toward a forest, 10. arriving in the midst of a jungle, the two children resting by sitting on a tree and the couple resting on a rock, 11. cooking in front of a hermitage, 12. a hunter drawing a bow toward the Brahmin, 13. Viśvantara giving his children to a Brahmin, 14. the Brahmin beating the two children with a stick, 15. Madrī coming back from fruit-collecting with a basket on her head, and lions preventing her timely return, 16. Viśvantara telling Madrī what happened to the children, 17. Viśvantara giving his wife to Śakra, 18. Śakra returning the wife to Viśvantara, 19. The king Sañjaya, father of Viśvantara, ransoming the two children, 20.

²⁹⁷ Schlingloff 1988, 146-147.

²⁹⁸ Dehejia 1997a, 5.

²⁹⁹ For a more detailed analysis, see Sugimoto 1968, 204.

The king Sañjaya, along with his retinue, coming to persuade Viśvantara to return to his kingdom, 21. all returning to the kingdom together.³⁰⁰

With extended information, one could probably recognize what in the story the images at both Ajañṭā and Sāñcī corresponded to, but such previous knowledge of the story would be mandatory. What if one did not have such knowledge? One's chances of unpacking the images at the sites into an approximation of the textual version are—to put the brightest face on the matter—bleak. In other words, without a powerful mastery of the story, it would be difficult to follow the narrative based on the continuous-mode illustrations or to grasp the main themes presented in the images. Even with the kind of detail available at Ajañṭā and Sāñcī, it is quite unlikely that the artists or patrons were trying to highlight the idea in the story of the perfection of generosity.

Incidentally, the three major scenes we looked at above form part of the imagistic environment at all of the sites, from the simplest at Bhārḥut to the most detailed at Sāñcī: an elephant, a Brahmin, and Viśvantara pouring water on this Brahmin's hands. Why did these artists all emphasize the scene? Is it concerned with something besides the *pāramitās*? Evidently, the major figure of the story is not Viśvantara anymore, but the Brahmins who have been respected with donations. As T. Sugimoto points out: “the details of [Sāñcī] sculpture are represented in a prolix manner and no particularity is recognized in the depiction of the hero's act of donation. Some of the minor episodes are delineated more elaborately than the important portion of the legend.”³⁰¹ Let me repeat this: the major concern of the visual depictions of the *Viśvantara-jātaka*, regardless of where or how detailed they appear, is the ritual of the *washing of the*

³⁰⁰ The depiction of Viśvantara at Sañcī is from Sugimoto (1968, 203-205), Dehejia's descriptions (1997a, 18), and my own interpretation based on Schlingloff 2000, 37. Also, see Gill 2000, 42 for more discussion.

³⁰¹ Sugimoto 1968, 206.

hands of a Brahmin as a some sort of token of donation. Every scene emphasizes the detail that Viśvantara is giving the elephant away and pouring water on the Brahmin's hands from a pitcher—not the generosity as elaborated in the textual narratives, not that most important of the six or ten Buddhist perfections or *pāramitās*.

2.7 THEY'RE ALL THERE BUT THEY'RE TOO HARD TO SEE

In addition to the implausible arrangements of the *jātaka* scenes, their inaccessible locations at the *stūpas* provides another reason to suspect their didactic function. Often the scenes from the *jātakas* at Buddhist sacred sites are positioned in such a way that it's impossible to see them; they are either too far above eye-level, too near to the ground, or in places too dark to be seen. In a word, they are all there but they are too hard to see. Many scenes of the *jātaka* tales are displayed far higher than eye-level, so they are basically invisible to all possible viewers. A.V. Naik suggests that “Besides being too high for the ordinary human eye, these inscriptions always remain in the dark.... Looking to their positions, it appears that there were no fixed rules or conventions as regards the place which the epigraphs were to occupy.”³⁰² For instance, a scene in the monoscenic mode from the *Viśvantara-jātaka* at both Bhārhut and Sāñcī has been deliberately hidden by the founders of these shrines. At Bhārhut, the story has been placed three feet above eye-level, and at Sāñcī it has been placed on the north gateway, twenty feet from the ground. Such story placements obviate the possibility of viewing them during circumambulation. Even so, the location of the *jātakas* depicted at Bhārhut are often as much as three feet above eye level and executed in relatively small sizes.³⁰³ Furthermore, at Bhārhut some of the scenes from the *Viśvantara* tale are on a pillar, on the bottom panel, about twenty centimeters from the ground, so one

³⁰² Naik 1948, 4.

³⁰³ Sugimoto 1968, 206.

would need to bend down or kneel to be able to see the panel well. Moreover, at Ajaṅṭā, where sculptures have been executed in dark caves, it is impossible to see anything at all without light, much less benefit from reading the story. In Milo Beach's words: "If one explores the site thoroughly, one finds that the majority of the caves remain almost completely dark, for the entrances are small and natural light seldom travel far within."³⁰⁴ Overall, judging from the locations where the stories are depicted—too high for practical viewing, too low to the ground to be regarded comfortably, or too thoroughly enshrouded in darkness to be visible—it is clear that they were not intended to serve any didactic function of propagating Buddhist teachings.

INSCRIPTIONS AND LABELS

In addition to the scenes, in many cases, there are inscriptions or labels attached to an image or scene from a life story of the Buddha or from a story of the *jātakas*. For example, "225 [inscriptions] have been counted at Bhārhut, 45 at Bodh-Gayā, and 824 at Sāñcī,"³⁰⁵ and a number of labels or titles have also been documented at these sites. The inscriptions often contain information unobtainable elsewhere, and therefore prove to be an invaluable source of knowledge about who donated the objects or images, where the donors lived, for what purpose they intended their donation, with what they associated the images they funded, etc. According to Richard Salomon, a typical inscription denoting a private donation is usually of a religious character, such as the inscriptions at Buddhist *stūpas* at Sāñcī and Bhārhut. This type of inscription may include "the date, the donor's name, title(s), occupation, and place of residence or origin, the nature of the donation or endowment, its intention or purpose, and the

³⁰⁴ Beach 1998, 9. A few sections of the major caves have been illuminated with torches or flashlights nowadays, but originally it is very likely that only small oil lamps could have been used.

³⁰⁵ Lamotte [1958]1988, 411.

names of the relatives and associates of the donor who are to partake of its benefits.”³⁰⁶ It seems that every image is the gift of an individual, and presumably the stories so rendered are chosen from among the favorites of individual patrons. As suggested earlier, whereas it was quite likely that the artists chose the modes of representing the *jātakas*, patrons decided which particular stories would receive artistic attention. But what is the function of an inscription accompanying the physical representation of a story of the *jātakas*?

Dehejia, in accordance with inscriptional evidence, suggests that the inscriptions or labels are certainly meant to identify stories and are specifically intended to assist literate monks when narrating the stories to worshippers circumambulating the *stūpa*.³⁰⁷ In the case of Bhārhut, she even suggests: “A third of the 220 inscriptions...are in the nature of aids to identification, either naming specific elements of a scene or serving as captions to individual stories.”³⁰⁸ In addition,

[T]he labels were probably intended primarily to serve as ‘prompts’ for the monks and nuns who must have acted as spiritual guides in explaining the edifying stories to those who came to pay homage to the Buddha’s relics. Certainly, the use of the first words of a verse from a *jātaka* story would have been recognized only by those totally familiar with a literary or orally recited corpus.³⁰⁹

In a diverging but still parallel vein, Sugimoto proposes that “it is a general custom for Bhārhut sculptures to bear inscriptions which import us some knowledge of their contents. But the main purpose of the artist at Bhārhut is shown effectively in these illustrations.”³¹⁰ Apparently, a diverse selection of scholars assumes that the stories illustrated on the railings are narrated by storytellers or tour guides, namely monks who have the stories at their fingertips. In that regard, they suggest that the

³⁰⁶ Salomon 1998, 118.

³⁰⁷ Dehejia 1990, 378.

³⁰⁸ Dehejia 1997a, 103.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 105.

³¹⁰ Sugimoto 1968, 207-208.

inscriptions or labels denoting titles function as an anchoring device to assist viewers in recognizing stories or to corroborate their identification of them.

Historically, as early as the Mauryas (325-184 BCE) picture-storytelling or *śaubhika* was already a common performance and entertainment among lay Buddhists (though not among the monks) in ancient India that is mentioned in Buddhist and non-Buddhist Indian texts.³¹¹ We do not have any evidence to indicate that there were any like performances held at *stūpas*. Although that does not mean they did not occur there, it suggests that their occurrence was infrequent, and that accommodation of the principal performers with cryptic mnemonic prompts is an unlikely explanation for the presence of the inscriptions. Because of their haphazard delegation and their mysterious identification of the stories in question, their presence can hardly be used to buttress this scholarly interpretation. In other words, if the labels or inscriptions are devices for recollection, then why aren't all the images labeled? The evidence of patchy or selective labeling at *stūpas* is abundant and uncontroversial. What happened to those images that have no labels? Also, in the treatment of some stories, every panel is inscribed with the overarching title of the piece. Shouldn't a single prompt have been sufficient?

There are some inconsistencies in the distribution of inscriptions. For instance, of the *jātakas* alone, only half of them have inscriptions. It seems that the inscriptions are not mandatory, but optional. Some of the *jātakas* even have more than one inscription; the same inscription in certain *jātakas* has been included repeatedly for each episode of the story. Furthermore, some well-known stories appear with different titles on the *stūpa* walls than they have in the collected texts. For example, the *Dabbha-puppha jātaka* in the Pāli collection is also inscribed as *Uda* or *Otter Jataka* at Bhārhut. Serge Oldenburg said of the Buddhist art of the *jātakas* long ago: “since sometimes even the

³¹¹ Mair 1988, 17-37.

Pāli Jātaka-manuscripts themselves give different names to one and the same text, ...in my opinion, as a manifest indication...the Bharhut artist did not have at his hand the Pāli text as we know it.”³¹² That is to say, there must have been more than one title for some stories in the time between the posting of the scenes on the reliefs and their literary transcription and collection. It is also very possible that there never were specific titles for the stories and that titling them was a separate task, unfettered by any consideration of precedent, of each individual narrator.

In addition to the uneven distribution of the inscriptions and inconsistent titling of the scenes, there is another reason to doubt that these written records served a didactic function. Gregory Schopen points out, “These records were written not only in a foreign script but in a distinctly foreign language, and could not therefore have been intended to communicate any information to the local populations who visited and supported the sites.”³¹³ I agree with Schopen that because the labels and inscriptions were written in a foreign script and language, it seems unlikely that they functioned as captions for stories.

The inaccessible placement of the inscriptions also helps rule out the interpretation of them as captions and mnemonic devices. A wide range of scholars agree that a large number of early Buddhist donative inscriptions were never intended even to be seen. A. Barth claims that the inscription on the Mathura Lion-capital was never intended to be seen because it is completely invisible,³¹⁴ and A.V. Naik suggests that in the Western Caves the inscriptions are only noticeable with a torch or lamp and

³¹² Oldenburg 1897, 185-186. Indeed the argument is supported by Lamotte ([1958] 1988, 236 and 405) who suggests that “in the third century B. C....[t]here are many reasons to doubt whether Buddhism possesses a canon already at that time,” and “if the artists took their inspiration from [the texts], it was certainly not from the *Pāli Jātaka* Collection....[some] *jātakas* appear at Bhārhut which are completely unknown to the Pāli Collection.”

³¹³ Schopen 1996, 65.

³¹⁴ Barth 1908, 246.

are accessible only with the assistance of a ladder.³¹⁵ Schopen proposes that the donors “did not intend to leave a record so it did not much matter whether it could be seen, or read, or understood.... They wanted only, it seems, to leave their presence in close proximity to another more powerful presence.”³¹⁶ Nancy Barnes, examining the case of Sāñcī, suggests that “the inscriptions were never meant for living human eyes...[Since] the stūpa is the Buddha himself....it was the Buddha who ‘read’ it.”³¹⁷ Is it possible that for the sake of merit the major concern of patrons is if the Buddha notices their donation and contribution on the images or project of *stūpas*? Even Dehejia herself, in making observations in this regard, strays momentarily from her argument elsewhere in remarking as follows:

These inscriptions, raised high above the eyes of worshippers, were obviously not intended for the purpose of proclaiming the name of donors.... Obviously, the donor considered it necessary to record the gift he had made whether or not it could be seen or read! The recording of the gift was perhaps all that was necessary for the donor to feel secure about receiving his religious merit.³¹⁸

If the inscriptions were not designed to be seen or read by human eyes, then it is very possible that the scenes or images of the *jātakas* to which they were attached were not designed for that purpose either. Perhaps, the patrons were content to have their names inscribed in, and so made one with, the sacred place and, by extension, with the divine personalities associated with it, so that they would receive the good karma and blessings that such a coming together promised. The custom of placing inscriptions at these sacred sites might be another type of devotional practice, one that didn’t have the transmission of doctrine as its aim. Let us now explore the possibility that the point of the pictorial presentations at these sites is more devotional in nature than didactic.

³¹⁵ Vaik 1948, 3.

³¹⁶ Schopen 1996, 72.

³¹⁷ Barnes 2000, 25.

³¹⁸ Dehejia 1992, 41.

2.8 THE DEVOTIONAL FUNCTION OF THE *JĀTAKAS* IN ART

By examining both theories of narrative and the modes of visual narration and seeing how well they apply to the case of the *Viśvantara-jātaka*, we have shown that the functions of the written and visual *jātakas* at the sacred sites are quite different. In the last section, we saw that visual *jātaka* does not serve a narrative function. In this section I argue that the art of the *stūpas* can be understood only in the context of the religious pilgrimage, and that the function of these visual representations is associated with the purposes served by the *stūpas* as places of devotional practice.

PILGRIMAGE AND *STŪPA*

Pilgrimage is a very common devotional practice, found in almost every religion in the world. For some religions, pilgrimage is even a fundamental and obligatory practice. One of the reasons people have made them is that “pilgrimage [gives] individuals a direct experience of the transcendent and an opportunity to show devotion and seek blessing.”³¹⁹ The practice of journeying to sacred places for the purpose of obtaining some type of divine blessing is also a universal feature of religious traditions.³²⁰ Because the *stūpa* is regarded and venerated as the living body of the Buddha, it is the most sacred place for Buddhist pilgrims to pay homage to the Buddha and thereby gain merit. *Jātaka* art can be properly understood only in the religious context of pilgrimage because it is associated so intimately with the physical structure of the *stūpa*.

In the history of Buddhism, according to both canonical and archeological evidence, pilgrimage has also played a formative role. For instance, in the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, the Buddha exhorts his disciples to make a journey to the

³¹⁹ Naquin and Yu 1992, 3.

³²⁰ Turner 1973, 204-205.

four places of religious significance in his life, the places of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death, and he claims “[t]hose who during that time die here with a believing mind *in my presence* [that is, within the *stūpa*], all those who have *karma* still to work out, go to heaven.”³²¹ Buddhist texts state that if one visits a sacred site, pays homage to the relics of the Buddha or his disciples, and performs certain rituals, then one will receive blessing from divine beings, leading to great fortune and a better rebirth in the future. In addition, the earliest archeological evidence of Buddhist pilgrimages are the inscriptions of King Aśoka in the third century BCE and the donative inscriptions at the relic monuments at Bhārhut and Sāñcī during the Śunga period between the second and first centuries BCE. Although neither Bhārhut nor Sāñcī had hosted the historical Buddha during his lifetime, the sites became the center of a devotional practice centered on the *stūpa* and attained religious power and authority because of its enshrined relics and through its artistic representations of the Buddha’s biography and the *jātakas*. In that regard, “the Buddhist *stūpas* and *caityas* are the oldest instances of relic worship in India.”³²²

As mentioned earlier, there are many *stūpas* in India that are relic monuments: in most cases they contain relics of the Buddha himself, but some of them have his disciples’ or followers’ relics. During the development of Buddhism, pilgrims believed that the essence of the Buddha was contained within the relic *stūpa* or *caitya*. In Schopen’s words, “the relics themselves were thought to retain—to be ‘infused with,’ impregnated with—the qualities that animated and defined the living Buddha.”³²³ The *stūpa* is the body of the Buddha and the external appearance and form of the

³²¹ I quote directly from Schopen’s translation of this passage (Schopen 1997, 117).

³²² Bharati 1963, 152. According to Brijinder Goswamy (1980, 1), “the *stūpa* is virtually the same thing as *caitya*...although there are perhaps two differences: *caitya* is often used in a more extended sense, and even when it is equated with the *stūpa*, it signifies more the religious ‘observance’ aspect while *stūpa* does the structural or architectural.”

³²³ Schopen 1997, 127.

Buddha.³²⁴ The followers journeying to the *stūpas* believed that they would experience the living presence of the Buddha and would even be enveloped on all sides by that presence. Thus, they paid homage to the *stūpa* as if there were no difference between the physical Buddha and his image. The *stūpa*, as the living Buddha, became the center of Buddhist ritual activity, linking veneration of the Buddha's relics to "an individual's attention to managing *karman* destiny and mundane well-being."³²⁵ The element of time that would irrevocably have severed the devotee from the presence of the Buddha was abolished at these sites, so that the Buddha was alive and well and available to direct his followers through the stages of enlightenment.³²⁶

The *stūpa* therefore became the geographic center of a Buddhist devotional ritual, by the performance of which devotees were able to connect with the Buddha spiritually. The *stūpa* pilgrims made their trek for nothing less than this, and having arrived, acted accordingly. They performed rituals such as *darśan* (seeing) and *pradakṣina* (the clockwise circumambulation); offered food, water, flowers or incense; chanted mantras; and made vows and/or venerated the Buddha and/or his disciples at the *stūpa*. For them, the devotional practice was a way of seeking purification, good fortune, a better rebirth, or even salvation in rare cases. Seen from this devotional perspective, the *stūpa* is not like a library or museum where people go to accumulate

³²⁴ Ebert 1980, 221. Yet Ebert (1980, 221) is incorrect that the patrons of the *stūpa* were exclusively laypeople, when he asserts: "It is interesting to note that in these reliefs the *stūpa* is not only depicted alone, a symbol as such, but also quite often in the act of being venerated by laymen (never by monks) either by the *pradakṣina* rite or by music, *añjali* and in other ways."

³²⁵ Lewis 2000, 22.

³²⁶ Lewis 2000, 132. Moreover, later in the development of the *stūpa*-cult, "[n]ot only did the presence of the relics make them cult objects of worship, but in after days the *stūpa* itself, whether it contained a relic or not, came to be regarded as a special symbol of Buddhism, worthy to be worshipped for its own sake; so that the mere erection of a *stūpa*, large or small and in whatever material, became an act of merit, bringing its author a step nearer salvation" (Marshall 1960, 3). Therefore, whether these sites contained relics of the Buddha or not, their patrons were people from diverse walks of life, including monks and the laity and men and women, and their worshipers were devotees who believed as deeply as their patrons did that the Buddha was alive and actively present there.

knowledge, but rather is a place where they go to accumulate merits by performing ritual such as *darśan*.

DARŚAN AND ICON

In India, Hindus or Buddhists visit a temple or shrine for *darśan* or “seeing” the image of the enshrined deity or Buddha. “Such seeing does not literally mean merely using one’s eyes, but is a dynamic act of awareness....The concept of *darshan* lies at the heart of the creation of images of the divine and of temples to enshrine them.”³²⁷

Susan Huntington further states that “the almost invariable presence of devotees and worshipers³²⁸ in such compositions suggests that it’s not an historical event in the life of the Buddha that is being represented, but rather the activity of *darśan*—the act of seeing a sacred place, person, or object—and the associated devotional practices.”³²⁹

In the practice of *darśan*, the devotees do not regard their looking at the images of Buddha and scenes from his life and the *jātakas* as the meaning of their devotional practice, but rather their being seen in the Buddha’s presence, as they worship as sacred objects or icons the images that surround them there.

The images illustrated in bas-relief at Indian Buddhist *stūpas* very likely function as sacred objects, iconically or aniconically. Whether the images of the Buddha depicted in this way is iconic or aniconic is an ongoing debate among scholars in the field of Indian Buddhist art. For instance, Susan Huntington and Vidya Dehejia have

³²⁷ Dehejia 1997b, 137.

³²⁸ However, Huntington (1990, 405) suggests that “the early Buddhist art of India was not primarily concerned with the biography of Śākyamuni Buddha, as has been assumed for so many decades, instead, an important emphasis was placed on the practice of lay devotion at the sacred sites of Buddhism. That the merit is derived from viewing the sacred trances of the Buddha is clear from the literary sources and surviving artistic remains.” It is convincing that the imagery of Buddha abetted the function of devotion, and that the practice was not exclusive to lay people, but included the monastic community as well. Perhaps it would be more precise to say that devotion was a practice engaged in primarily by the monastic community. According to Schopen (1997, 240), “even a preliminary analysis of the large collection of donative inscriptions that have come down to us clearly indicates the preponderant place that the monks and nuns had in the entire enterprise.”

³²⁹ Huntington 1990, 402.

produced a series of dialogues on the issue of aniconism. Huntington initiates the issue as a critique of earlier scholars in the field, starting with Alfred Foucher³³⁰ and his later followers who assumed the absence of anthropomorphic representation of the historical Buddha is an effort to conform to a doctrinal aversion to anthropomorphic images of the Buddha by utilizing emblems or symbols such as the bodhi tree, wheel, or footprint simply to refer to the Buddha or to important events in the Buddha's life.³³¹ Dehejia, agreeing with Foucher's aniconism, argues that aniconic or indexical symbols with multiple layers of meaning (sometimes known as emblems) could represent any number of things: events, sacred sites, the physical presence of the Buddha, or Buddhist ideals or attributes.³³² Huntington, on the other hand, responded to Dehejia's study by arguing that "My position is that the theory of aniconism is not valid as an all-inclusive explanation for the early Buddhist art of India, and the vast majority of artistic compositions that have been explained as aniconic scenes are not substitutes and do not portray substitutes for anthropomorphic representations of Buddha."³³³

Huntington, further, suggests that on the basis of inscriptional and archaeological evidence,

The Buddha image was first created during the Kuṣāṇa period around the first or second century A. D.... The early date of these images confirms that representations of buddhas were being produced *at the same time* as the so-called aniconic reliefs, thus suggesting that the absence of Buddha images in the reliefs

³³⁰ Use of these surrogates is known as aniconism. Foucher and his followers mislead that the practice of aniconism was exclusive to Mainstream Buddhists and the practice of anthropomorphic representation of the Buddha was a new invention of the Mahāyāna school, as we discussed earlier regarding the paintings at Gāndhāra and Ajaṅṭā.

³³¹ Foucher 1917, 1-29.

³³² Dehejia 1991a, 21 and 1997a, 21 and 42.

³³³ Huntington 1992, 111. Huntington (Ibid.) devotes a great deal of time to critiques of Dehejia's article "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems," examining the article's structure, theories, terminology, methodology, etc.

cannot be attributed to wide-spread prohibitions against the creation of Buddha images.³³⁴

If the presentation of images of Buddhas had never been prohibited in the very early period of Indian Buddhist history, then why are there in many Buddhist sites only emblems or symbols, not images of Buddha? Huntington concludes that “[i]t is possible that most, if not all, of these compositions do not represent events in the life of the Buddha at all, but rather portray worship and adoration at sacred Buddhist sites.”³³⁵ If this is indeed true of the Buddha images, it should be true without exception for the *jātakas* as well, since these two classes of image are always arranged side-by-side at the *stūpas*. It stands to reason then that they should serve the same function. Although the debate over iconism and aniconism has yet to be resolved, for my purposes, the contention that the *jātakas* served a devotional function supports my theory that the function of all the images at the *stūpas* was devotion rather than education.

If we take Huntington’s theory a step forward, it becomes clear that those scenes and the images associated with them in the bas-reliefs at these Buddhist sites are fundamentally intended for the practices of pilgrimage and devotion. They do not illustrate an event in the life of the Buddha or *jātakas*, but are sacred images *in their own right* at the sacred sites to which the devotees come to worship. The devotees came to these sites to pay their respects and to worship the Buddha through the practice of *darśan*. The stories of the historical Buddha or the *jātaka* tales that are so difficult to glean from the artifacts under examination here, were not the major concern of the artists at the establishment of the *stūpas*, but instead, *the images themselves as the actual presence of the Buddha*, sought by monks and pilgrims alike, most certainly were. As Robert Brown suggests, “these visual images...are not present

³³⁴ Huntington 1990, 402.

³³⁵ Huntington 1990, 402.

on the monuments to tell stories at all, but are there with an iconic function.”³³⁶ Hence, the major concern of the early Buddhist art of India was not with the biography of Śākyamuni Buddha or the stories of his former lives, but the devotional practices at the sacred sites of Buddhism. One of these practices was circumambulation.

THE ABSURDITY OF “READING” DURING CIRCUMAMBULATION

Besides *darśan*, one of the major rituals performed at *stūpas* is circumambulation or *pradakṣiṇā*, which is “an invariable observance during pilgrimage, and it often figures as the central event of the journey. The sacred object is circumambulated clockwise.”³³⁷ In Buddhism, the *stūpa* is the central object of the circumambulation, and pilgrims devotionally walk around the *stūpa*, which is always on their right hand as they progress. The pilgrims were devotees of the Buddha and honored his accomplishments, so “no doubt...this decorative layout was to signalize to the circumambulating visitor of the cave the omnipresence of all past and future Buddhas in their *nirvāṇa* state as well as the *parinirvāṇa*.”³³⁸ While performing the devotional ritual, the pilgrims pay homage to the Buddha’s images and relics, to celebrate his accomplishments, and, more importantly, to accumulate good *karma*.

But in the face of what is known about this practice, some scholars have persistently proposed that pilgrims traditionally have had another class of activity in mind as well at the Buddhist sacred sites. For instance, Foucher suggests that “[B]y the rite of circumambulation, it has fixed the direction in which the scenes must succeed one another and be read.”³³⁹ In the same light, while discussing Gandhāran art, Madeleine Hallade states that the episodes from the tales “succeed one another

³³⁶ Brown 1997, 65.

³³⁷ Bharati 1963, 138.

³³⁸ Ebert 1980, 223.

³³⁹ Foucher 1917, 10.

chronologically and should be read from right to left; it conforms with the movement of the faithful following the traditional rite of the *pradakshinā*, by circling a monument in a clockwise direction.”³⁴⁰ Benoy Behl observes and even suggests,

The *Jatakas* depicted on the walls reveal a narrative sequence that runs sometimes from left to right, sometimes from right to left, from top to bottom, or from bottom to top, and occasionally an incident is found in a seemingly unrelated place in the overall composition. There are no strict demarcations separating one instant in a story from another, but it is as if each finds an exquisite compositional structure of its own accord.³⁴¹

In other words, these scholars claim that while practicing circumambulation, devotees are also required to stop and absorb the stories represented on the railings or bas-reliefs. It is possible that during the circumambulation of the *stūpa*, where there are marvelous images and scenes of the Buddha and from the *jātakas* illustrated on the walls, some pilgrims might be curious to discover what the images were and that they would wonder what they represented. But, while encouraging in the movement of circumambulation, as Trainor points out, “the forward movement of the ritual served to discourage those participating from any sort of extended viewing at all.”³⁴² The performance of circumambulation is supposed to be a sacred *ritual* demanding single-mindedness in action and participation; unlike at museum, one is probably not expected to wonder about, look back and forth at, read, or interpret the content of the images on the walls. In this regard, the inscrutable design and sequence of the depictions served as an effective deterrent to being distracted by reading.

In certain contexts, some scholars admit the terminal incoherency of the art from the standpoint of narrative. For example, Dieter Schlingloff argues that the arrangement at Sāñcī does not make much sense because “the representation runs from

³⁴⁰ Hallade 1968, 106.

³⁴¹ Behl 1998, 37.

³⁴² Trainor 1996, 34.

right to left on the central portion of the outer side of this lintel, extends onto the left-hand end, and is then continued on the inner side of the same lintel, beginning at the right-hand end, extending along the central portion and finishing on the left-hand end.”³⁴³ Robert Knox, in addition, says of the images at Amarāvātī: “the fabulous generosity of Viśvantara and the order of the narrative is left, right, and middle. This would upset the purely chronological sequence of the *jātaka* but in no way would it diminish the ideological strength of the act of giving, seen in each of the registers.”³⁴⁴ Dehejia comes very close to the truth— before turning away again into her interpretation of the narrative intention of the reliefs—when she observes that “in any event, the viewer must perforce abandon the general movement of circumambulation if he wishes to experience this story in its entirety.”³⁴⁵ How could it be suggested that the pilgrims who came to the *stūpa* for devotional practice would give up the most central ritual of the pilgrimage, circumambulation? This becomes *even less* plausible when one considers that the merit and good karma that were among the outstanding goals of the journey were at stake.

It is obvious that a pilgrim would experience problems if he intended to read the stories while performing circumambulation. For instance, the sequence of the *Chaddanta-jātaka* at Ajañṭā proceeds neither in chronological order nor in the order of any discernibly increasing importance of the scenes. Viewers at this site could not possibly read the story from the beginning, but only from the middle of it, while circumambulating. Hence, in order to read the story, viewers would need to walk backwards and forwards in zigzag fashion many times in order to properly read the story. Moreover, the frustrating depiction of successive scenes from the same story with a different orientation in the interior than on the exterior of individual sites

³⁴³ Schlingloff 1988, 243.

³⁴⁴ Knox 1992, 103.

³⁴⁵ Dehejia 1990, 386.

requires the devotee with an appetite for narrative to abandon the story he had begun within when he emerges from the *stūpa* in the course of circumambulation. For example, the story of the *Viśvantara*, discussed above, on the north gateway at Sāñcī is difficult to follow if one tries to read the entire story in the circuit of a circumambulation. The movement of the story is from right to left, so it is suitable during the clockwise circumambulation of the outer face of the gate, but such movement is not appropriate for the inner face, where the story is read from the left to right. If reading were essential or even peripheral to the rite of circumambulation, then we should conclude that the artists that created these scenes and the patrons that funded them were renegades against the rituals of Buddhism. They certainly were not, and the purpose of the *stūpas*, from the point of view of their founders and their visitors alike, was not intellectual edification, but spiritual enrichment.

It is indeed most improbable that one could learn or reiterate the stories while circumambulating without interruption at a *stūpa* and was obviously never intended by anyone. Schlingloff further explains the madness of the experience of the imaginary pilgrim: “from the point of view of the beholder, in order to be able to follow the story as it progresses from right to left he would have to walk round the gateway, which the structure of the building does not permit.”³⁴⁶ But Dehejia still believes that in order to read the story, a viewer has to abandon his or her practice of proper movement—circumambulation—when Schlingloff, very much to his credit, reminds us that any counterclockwise perusal of the images was forbidden—leaving us to make the obvious inference that no one having made the pilgrimage would risk all by indulging in indecorous behavior in, as he or she believes, the very presence of the living Buddha. One may readily ask why didn’t the artists at the time of the erection of the *stūpa* make it easy for potential viewers to experience the literary progression of

³⁴⁶ Schlingloff 1988, 243.

the scenes depicted on the walls in the course of circumambulation if reading indeed was an aspect of the ritual practice of the *stūpa* pilgrim. Schlingloff approaches the trajectory of our query, but then deviates from it, when he concludes of the depictions at Sāñcī that “it is not very likely that the sequence of pictures in the form we see it here was created expressly for the decoration of the *stūpa* gateway in Sāñcī; it is much more feasible to assume that a continuous pictorial frieze served as a model.”³⁴⁷ But these images are only incongruous from the perspective of the constraints of narrative—as decoration, they are unquestionably magnificent. Dehejia elsewhere sympathizes with Schlingloff’s, to our mind, erroneous position, commenting that artists or sculptors “devised varying solutions to this challenge in narrative presentation, sometimes starting at the top and working down or vice versa; at other times beginning at the centre and moving both up and down; or concluding at the centre having commenced at either top or bottom. Each pillar thus requires the viewer to engage with it actively to unravel even a familiar legend.”³⁴⁸ This interpretation almost makes us think that the visitors to these sacred places of the Buddha were uniformly secular tourists with an excess of idle time on their hands. Brown brings some insight to the controversy in asserting that “the viewer would not be called upon to abandon circumambulation to experience the story in its entirety because he or she could not have experienced any of it in the first place.”³⁴⁹

Then again, there is reading and there is reading. The image to be read at the *stūpas* does indeed invite a viewer to a kind of reading—based on his or her individual and personal interpretation and experience—but without direction or limitations. There is no doubt that every individual invited can interpret, read, and ultimately narrate an image in a very wide range of ways. Insofar as this is the case, any visually

³⁴⁷ Ibid., 243-244.

³⁴⁸ Dehejia 1997b, 71.

³⁴⁹ Brown 1997, 68.

depicted story could be reconstructed into as many different stories as there are viewers, since individuals have their own imaginations and interpretations of whatever they see before them. The question is whether the monks or patrons who dedicated themselves to their religion by supporting and contributing to the project of producing visual scenes at *stūpas* of either the life-events of the Buddha or the *jātakas* intended the viewers of these scenes to exercise their imaginations on the stories in this way. Or rather, as the multitude of scholars that I have cited here assert, to take regimented, text-based and ultimately text-directed lessons from them. If the pilgrims to these sites came to experience their freedom of creative, free imagination through the entirely idiosyncratic activity of decoding these scrambled and metamorphosed stories, then the imagery at the *stūpas* functions aesthetically, not religiously nor didactically. In a religious context, the distortion of the stories everywhere in evidence at these sites would have been grossly inappropriate. Religion requires communication in order to propagate itself in a way that art, imagination, and devotion do not.

2.9 CONCLUSION

Roughly from the third century BCE to the seventh century CE, many Buddhist monument sites, such as Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Amarāvati, Ajañṭā, and Gandhāra, elaborately presenting the life events of the historical Buddha and stories of his former lives in art, were established and became centers of Buddhist pilgrimage. Based on their manner of presentation, their ritual use, and their location, I have concluded that the primary function of the *jātaka* scenes at the Buddhist sacred sites is not didactic, but devotional. Most of the modes of presentation utilized in the rendering of the *jātakas* turn out to be either illogical or incoherent from the standpoint of narrative; as instances of communication they are incomprehensible and cannot serve as a medium for conversation or participation between artists and audience. The artists presumably

intended to express beauty in the images, while the audiences honored the scenes these artists committed to stone as sacred and worshipped them as icons. The artistic presentations of the *jātakas* at *stūpas* should not be considered *narratives*. Unlike a text, in which a narrative is logically presented in sequence, the artistic presentations at *stūpas* are extracts, and the stories cannot be easily inferred from them. In the case of the *Viśvantara jātaka*, the literary and the artistic presentations provide very different messages. In its literary presentation, the story, regardless of version or language, clearly conveys the major themes and message of the tale. In its artistic telling, on the other hand, with its characteristic lapses and erratic thematic emphases, it is either too rough or confused to convey the story as a whole. It is impossible to take away a story from the images, chosen seemingly at random from the narrative as it has come to be known through its written form. In other words, the paintings and sculptures at the *stūpas* are not designed to be read or understood or narrated, and viewers should not expect them to be presented logically and analytically as in textual narratives. Text and illustrated image, of the sort found at Buddhist sacred sites, are two different forms of presentation, with very different functions.

The function of the artistic presentations of the *jātakas* is bound up with the place where they are illustrated, a *stūpa*, a place held to contain the relics of the Buddha. For Buddhist pilgrims, *stūpas* represented the Buddha's spiritual and physical power. Thus, to these pilgrims, there was no difference between the *stūpas* and the Buddha himself. A *stūpa* was divine and worthy as a center of devotional practice. Buddhist pilgrims performed certain rituals there such as seeing and circumambulation, seeking purification, good fortune, a better rebirth, or even, in rare cases, salvation. In that regard, they treated the *jātaka* scenes decorated on the bas-reliefs or walls as sacred objects—as icons, as Buddhas themselves, not as didactic devices. However, many scholars persist in assuming that pilgrims intended to read and interpret the stories

depicted at the Buddhist sites while performing the rite of circumambulation. But if they had any such intentions, the pilgrims would surely have been disappointed, and even absolutely frustrated, because the scenes were so disorganized. The pilgrims would have been frustrated by the impossibility of making sense of images that were never intended to make any sense, as well as by the strictures of circumambulation, which was the essential ritual of pilgrimage in Buddhism. As a result, we ought to reconsider whether the stories in the sacred sites were actually meant to be read or whether they served some alternative purpose. The evidence available to us, which I have summarized in this chapter, compellingly suggests these sculptures and paintings function primarily as objects of worship in a devotional context and do not serve a didactic function.³⁵⁰

³⁵⁰ I have no doubt that the visual images of the *jātakas* are devotional from the pilgrim's perspective, but they have a side-function as well: decoration and, concomitantly, a financial function, from the overseer's perspective. The *stūpas* and the scenes presented there were funded through the donation of patrons, both monastic and lay, men and women. Dehejia (1997a, 34) even suggests that "stories that were particular favorites of individual donors found a place upon monuments to which they contributed." For instance, there were donors who were also men of the world and who held the products of wealth in high esteem and who were drawn to these holy places by their physical majesty. So, "[merchants] saw *vihāras* that had high arched gateways, were ornamented with windows, latticed windows, and railings, *vihāras* that captivated the eye and the heart and were like stairways to heaven; they were deeply affected. They went to a *vihāra* and said to the monks: 'Noble Ones, we would make an offering feast for the Community'" (Schopen 2004, 32). The exquisite ornaments and elaborate imagery surrounding the sites were an alluring selling point. In addition, Sandrine Gill (2000, 51) confirms the intention of the monks for decorating a monastery, "Davantage que la volonté d'illustrer systématiquement la doctrine du Buddha, les sculptures des portails, par leurs procédés de représentation, semblent destinées à toucher le plus grand nombre pour valoriser la puissance et l'omniprésence du Buddha et conduire au don au profit de la Communauté." Sugimoto (1968, 211), moreover, while examining the *Mahākapi jātaka* scenes at Sāñcī, suggests that "the sculptors... had no intention to unite the behavior of the monkey king with that of the Bodhisattva and they enjoyed designing their own pictures without any special regard to the deed of hero." That is to say, when the devotees "can be responding only to the beauty and elaborate character of the monastery, not to what the monks are or do," (Schopen 2004, 32) the overseer might have deliberately elaborated the *stūpa* to attract patrons for more donations. These scholars argue that there is a separate and venerable intention on the part of the monks involved in decorating these sites to attract the donations of the wealthy and that this separate intention operates quite apart from any effort to appeal to the higher faculties of this wealthy audience, but only to their well-gratified appetites for opulence. Neither rich nor poor were educated by the environment of the *stūpa* and the extra effort expended on the beautiful and imposing structure of such a place might alternatively serve merely to attract large donations.

My study of the *jātakas* illustrated at these Indian Buddhist *stūpa* sites has significant implications for Indian studies in general and for Indian history, art, language, culture, literature, religion, and polity in particular. In the field of Indian Buddhist *jātaka* literature in art, the evidence discovered at these sites can provide precious and valuable resources about both Buddhist devotionalism and how Buddhism was actually practiced during certain periods in Indian history, evidence that is different from what we obtain from the literary sources. For instance, women are often depicted in a wide range of Buddhist scriptures as ungraceful and negative, and their status is underprivileged. Therefore, the impression we have from most of the literary sources is that women are inactive and even silent in the Buddhist community. However, the inscriptional evidence shows us otherwise; women, in their role as patrons, were as active as men in the early development of Buddhism. They participated in building and decorating *stūpas*, many of which were financially supported by women, both nuns and laywomen. The literary accounts were provided by monks, whereas the inscriptional evidence is a more reliable indicator of what women actually did. Interestingly, when we examine the status of women as depicted in the *Liu du ji jing*, we will find that women were described with more respect there than in the majority of Buddhist literature and the other *jātakas*. This picture of women corresponds better with the inscriptional evidence about the role of women. In Chapter 3, I discuss how women are depicted in the *Liu du ji jing*, possible explanations for the differences we find regarding this topic with the other *jātakas*, and how both literary and inscriptional evidence can assist us in this investigation.

CHAPTER III: A FEW GOOD WOMEN

The basis for realizing enlightenment is a human body. Male or female—there is no great difference. But if she develops the mind bent on enlightenment, the woman's body is better. – Padmasambhava

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The stories in the *jātakas*, like those of other narrative collections, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, are rich sources of Indian history concerning social, economic, political, cultural, family, religious, and ideological enterprises. In this chapter, I explore gender dynamics, the status of women, and Buddhist attitudes toward women in ancient India, as these are illustrated in the *Liu du ji jing*. I also contrast what I discover there with what the *Pāli Jātakas* tell us about the same constellation of issues and explain how these attitudes developed within the Buddhist doctrinal and institutional movements that encompassed and constrained the composition of these texts. The status of women, like that of men, is, no doubt, a very important index of the cultural life of a society, and we find that these attitudes have been inconsistent throughout the history of Buddhism. By examining the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* with an eye toward what they reveal about gender issues, I intend not only to enrich our understanding of the status of women in ancient India but also to uncover more evidence in support of both the claim made in Chapter 1 that the stories of the *Liu du ji jing* predate some of the stories in the *Pāli Jātakas* and the claim made Chapter 2 that women played an important role in early Buddhist communities.

My pursuit of the gender issue through the *Liu du ji jing* will be dogged at every point by the following question: isn't the *Liu du ji jing* a Chinese translation of a *jātaka* collection? Therefore, isn't the attitude toward women depicted there the attitude of the Chinese translator's culture and not that of ancient India? Yes, it is very possible that during the processes of translation, Kang Senghui may have projected Chinese cultural assumptions, gender values, and general concepts into the stories—in fact we know that he frequently incorporated the Chinese concepts of “humanity” (*ren* 仁) and “filial piety” (*xiao* 孝) into the stories of the *Liu du ji jing* because these are not reflected in any of the non-Chinese counterparts of stories in his collection. Even so, when I attempt to reconstruct the stories and look into the core of the social-gender perspective, I find that Kang Senghui does not put as much effort into, or elaborate on, the male-female issue as he does the issues of humanity and filial piety. As I argued in Chapter 1, most of the *jātakas* were originally borrowed from ancient Indian popular stories, and they were considered practical guidelines for the pursuit of good karma, and as such constitute an invaluable source of social history rather than of normative values. That is why the interaction between men and women is frequently the focus of the *jātakas*. Kang Senghui, however, might be interpreted as having redirected the stories into the arena of religious praxis, since he appears to have intentionally organized the stories around the six perfections of the rigorous path of the Bodhisattva. In other words, as monk and translator, Kang Senghui's preoccupations as a scholar of sacred texts were probably more steadfastly religious than social or practical. On this view, it was very possible that Kang Senghui was a literary architect of Buddhism, and to this end incorporated the major Chinese doctrinal ideologies of his time in the process of translation but did not put significant effort into elaborating on social gender issues, basically transmitting this material as he found it in his sources. In other words, because gender issues, having not been elaborated in the *Liu du ji jing*,

presumably were not the major concern of Kang Senghui, we can use the stories in the collection to examine the social dynamics and role of women in ancient India without suspecting Chinese cultural interpolation.

I examine two roles or statuses for women, secular and religious, in using the *Liu du ji jing* to examine the gender issue in ancient Indian culture. In the first half, I examine what the author's attitudes toward women were, in general, especially regarding how a wife was expected to behave and the social and family dynamics involved; and in the second half, I discuss the status of women in the Buddhist context. These divisions of my examination will allow me a more comprehensive rendering of the status of women in ancient India. But before investigating the position of women in ancient India, we need first to clarify the ambiguous terms "sex" and "gender." In the field of gender studies, scholars have distinguished these terms in careful, nuanced ways. It would be too long a digression to sort through all the careful and enlightening distinctions these scholars have produced in the academic literature on the subject; yet, for our purposes here, it is important to define the connotations of "sex" and "gender" in the contexts relevant to our investigation. After having clarified the meaning of these terms, we will be better able to define the gender issue in Indian Buddhist contexts.

From the secular standpoint, I discuss and analyze the social dynamics of Indian women in general and explore their role and position as wives, as illustrated in the *Liu du ji jing*. In these stories, the Bodhisattva was often a layman with a wife, and in many of his former lives, Yaśodharā, who was the wife of Gautama before he attained Buddhahood, was frequently the ideal wife who not only assisted him in his practice but also sacrificed herself in other ways for the sake of her husband. However, there are also stories in which the Bodhisattva had a wicked wife, who was often a manifestation of Ciñcāmāṇavikā in one of her past lives. With assistance from

Devadatta, the trouble-making antagonist of the Buddha— with whom she cheats on the Bodhisattva in many of the stories—Ciñcāmāṇavikā not only betrays the Bodhisattva but also tries to disrupt his practice or even kill him. Through the fascinating imbrications of the characters in their transmigratory incarnations in these stories, we can chart the reactions and attitudes toward Yaśodharā and Ciñcāmāṇavikā of the Buddhist authors of the collection. And this is our purpose in this chapter: to unearth the presuppositions of the authors of the tales, note how they change from one collection to the next, and appreciate how what we discover here is at odds with the contemporary academic literature to date. The punishment of a wicked woman, consigned to a fiery hell, was as much a figment of the cultural imagination of the author and his contemporaries as it was an article of religious dogma. Because the texts are clear that a meritorious and dutiful wife would be rewarded in subsequent reincarnations for her piety in her present one, I begin to suspect that married women might be the particular audience of the literature. Merit was as much a political issue as it was a spiritual one, and through attention to both the palpable and impalpable parts of this concept, I can begin to imagine the possibility of situating a given collection of tales in the social/institutional circumstances.

Conversely, from the religious perspective, the attitudes toward women in different Buddhist literatures exist in telling conflict with one another; as Alan Sponberg notes, “The voice one hears in reading these Buddhist texts, however, is neither consistent nor univocal...but rather a multiplicity of voices.”³⁵¹ Different literatures in different literatures provide us with different information— there is no single, monolithic opinion that represents the Buddhist attitude toward women. These inconsistent and contradictory opinions are probably the result of doctrinal and institutional developments throughout the history of Buddhism.

³⁵¹ Sponberg 1992, 3.

For instance, unexpectedly, even these two *jātaka* collections, the *Pāli Jātakas* and the *Liu du ji jing*, speak with dissimilar voices, more precisely, with opposite ones, in their attitudes toward women. When the majority of scholars in Buddhist gender studies suggest that, among the Buddhist literatures, the *jātaka* literature by and large is the most misogynous, this verdict is misguided, thrown off course by their unjustifiable dependence on the *Pāli Jātakas* to the neglect of the Chinese *jātakas*. For example, in the *jātaka* tales the Bodhisattva appears in human form, as well as in a variety of animal forms, in his former lives, but in the *Pāli Jātaka* he never appears as a woman. Therefore, it seems significant and exciting to us that the Buddha *does* appear as a woman four times in three stories of the *Liu du ji jing*. Why is the *Liu du ji jing* so different from other collections, particularly from the *Pāli Jātaka*, with regard to the Buddha's incarnation in female form?³⁵² Does this indicate that in fact the earlier scripture had a more positive attitude toward women than the *Pāli Jātaka* did? Does it mean that the author of the *Liu du ji jing* did not distinguish between the capability for religious accomplishment of men and women, as most Buddhist literature does? Do women have equal opportunity to obtain the Buddhahood? Why does this genre have these two very different voices and under what circumstances, social/institutional perhaps?

I address these questions by examining one of the female Bodhisattva stories, namely story number 73 *Ran deng shou jue jing* 然燈受決經, in which a woman needs to transform her female body to a male one in order to receive the prediction that in the future she will attain Buddhahood. What does it tell us: is a woman's body still not pure enough to be used to obtain Buddhahood? Furthermore, to what aspect of the Mahāyāna does the sex transformation correspond to? And how does our claim

³⁵² There are a couple of other stories such as the *Rūpāvatī* and *Jñānavatī* in Sanskrit that the Buddha was once incarnated in females form. I will further discuss the *Rūpāvatī*'s story latter in the section of sexual transformation.

that the stories of the *Liu du ji jing* are among the earliest fare in the light of this particular story? Does the *Liu du ji jing* present us with a new vision of Buddhists' attitudes toward women: were there a few good women after all?

3.2 SEX AND GENDER

In order to comprehend the status of women in Buddhism, in general, and in the *Liu du ji jing*, in particular, in a social context, we need discuss only the major differences between the terms of "sex" and "gender." This will enable us to explore the society's and the Buddhist community's attitudes toward women from both a sexual and a gender perspective throughout this chapter. For example, in their sexual and social gender contexts, were women appreciated or despised in ancient Indian society? How did both social gender and biological sex determine the position of women in Indian society?

Are the terms "sex" and "gender" interchangeable? For example, when filling out a form with one's personal information, as is routine in industrialized societies, one frequently needs to check a box indicating whether one is male or female, in a section with the heading of either "gender" or "sex." One will check the same thing regardless of whether it says "gender" or "sex." Has it never occurred to us, then, to think for a second and ask whether this question refers to our biological or our social identity? And if not, does that mean that "gender" is the same as "sex?" It seems they are synonymous in our daily lives. However, they are only superficially synonymous, and their meanings diverge sharply in some contexts. Although there is no sharp line between the meanings of the two terms, generally speaking, the term "sex" refers to biological characteristics whereas "gender" refers, in part, to biological realities and, in part, to arbitrary and changeable social characteristics. As Alison Shaw explains:

The term ‘sex’...refers to the biological characteristics located in anatomical features and physiological processes.... In this usage, ‘sex’ is analytically distinguishable from... ‘sexuality,’ which refers to sexual desire and behaviour.... ‘[G]ender’ refers to social categorizations of persons.... Sex and gender are not always either mutually exclusive or corresponding categories because ideas about the nature and significance of anatomical and physiological sex differences vary and can influence the rigidity or flexibility of gender categories, and, conversely, the social significance of gender in any given context may in turn influence the ways in which biological differences are perceived.³⁵³

Without sex differences, there would be no gender differences, and without gender differences, sex differences would be less significant. Each term needs the other to define its significance. Because “gender” is a social categorization, the connotations of “gender” are more complicated. The term “gender” is derived from the Latin “genus” meaning “kind,” “sort,” or “class,” so “[it] is a basis for defining the different contributions that men and women make to culture and collective life by dint of who they are as men and women. It is gender that absorbs sex rather than the reverse, because gender is the basis for the only sensible allocation of functions throughout a culture, rather than simply in its work and labour (civil) system.”³⁵⁴ So, we can distinguish “sex” and “gender” in the following broad way: “sex” refers to physical attribute, whereas “gender” refers to cultural and social characteristics—so gender ideology has more effects on one’s identity than sex does. The identity of one’s sex cannot be changed in ordinary contexts outside of surgical or magical operations, but gender identity can change in subtle and unpredictable ways between cultures or even within the same culture in the course of time.

Generally speaking, gender denotes culturally accepted differences in behavior and distinguishes men and women in “places, times, tools, tasks, forms of speech, gestures and perceptions.”³⁵⁵ But the distinction is not always clear between “sex”

³⁵³ Shaw 2005, 2-3.

³⁵⁴ Wilson 1989, 2.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 2.

and “gender” in Buddhist contexts: “[i]n large part, the Buddhist discourse on gender, whether from the elite perspective of the biographies or the blunter ideas expressed in folk beliefs, was fundamentally flawed because it did not distinguish between sexual characteristics (biology) and gender (social roles), but rather conflated them.”³⁵⁶ After all, “conflation” means that although two things are present, this fact is not recognized because one thing is mistaken for the other. Even so, in many cases in the Buddhist context, or in that of other religions, when the status of women was discussed, it was indeed from the gender perspective because of the prevailing gender inequality that characterized these contexts. Once one has been politically restricted because of one’s biological sex, this repression becomes an issue of gender inequality. And the same is true of cultural or religious restrictions made on the basis of sex differences, for example, barring women from Buddhahood: although the ban is specific to the woman’s biological sex, it is influenced by social or cultural gender perspectives. And in the same way, in a culture that conflates these terms, when a woman magically transforms her body into that of a man, she changes not only her biological sex characteristics, but also her social or cultural gender status. In the Buddhist context, ones’ karma results in the disposition of one’s body, so when a woman changes her body into that of a man, the inner reality of who she is and the value of what she represents to her society also changes along with it.

3.3 SOCIAL GENDER DYNAMICS OF AN INDIAN WIFE ILLUSTRATED IN *THE LIU DU JI JING*

Having discussed how social gender roles affected the characterization of biological sex differences, I now examine how gender and sex differences are characterized in

³⁵⁶ Young 2004, 183.

the stories in the *Liu du ji jing*. As discussed in Chapter 1, the *jātaka* literature follows the general trend and style of narration of the simple stories that form a considerable part of early Indian literature. Of course, the stories are not historical records, but represent contemporary cultural and social dynamics through the eyes of their male authors. As Stephanie Jamison once asked and suggested: “[h]ow can we even hope to glimpse women’s experience in these structures, and if we do glimpse something, how can we tell what it represents? We must make the texts tell us things that their composers did not think they were saying; we must read between the lines.”³⁵⁷ Here I try to reconstruct or unpack stories in order to learn how the status of women in Indian society percolated into popular Buddhist expectations as well as early Indian narrative literature, like the *jātakas* and *avadānas*. These collections bear valuable information about various aspects of their authors’ societies and what they try to present the societies to their audience, and thus help us to reconstruct the past and why the authors presented the way they did.

As Kalpana Upreti characterizes the stories in *avadāna* literature: “Thus the stories and fables reflect the prevailing conditions of the existing socioeconomic, political, and ideological conditions. Not only the Buddhist literature of this time, but the popular literature of any time, in general, provides a largely authentic account of the contemporary society.”³⁵⁸ That is, many of the stories, both the *jātaka* and *avadāna* alike, provide us with the original secular picture of old Indian daily life that I discuss latter. Apart from their literary value, this fact alone makes the *jātaka* collection of great interest; beside which, this is the “most reliable, the most complete, and the most ancient collection of folklore now extant in any literature in the world.”³⁵⁹ I use the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* to reconstruct the social gender

³⁵⁷ Jamison 1996, 4.

³⁵⁸ Upreti 1995, 5

³⁵⁹ Coomaraswamy 1964 [1916], 289.

dynamics of the relationship between men and women, or, more specifically, between husbands and wives, at the time these stories were composed. Based on this information, I explore the portrayal and status of ancient Indian women by determining when, in the history of women in India, these stories might have been composed and what might have been the intentions of their authors.

The *jātaka* tales, in contradistinction to other Buddhist literatures, have two main characteristics or major concerns: the Buddhist cosmological worldview of the operations of *karma* and human relationships. The former will be explored in my next project of the *Liu du ji jing*. A discourse of human relationships, in general, and of the relationship between husband and wife or on the nature of women, in particular, is not commonly a part of Buddhist literature. This state of affairs is probably the result of Buddhism's being monastically oriented; Buddhism emphasizes every possible aspect of the monastic life, so secular issues concerning husbands and wives are, after all, not its major concern. But there are a few texts that discuss the relation between husband and wife. For instance, in the *Singāla sutta*, the way to be a good or dutiful wife is described in the following way: "The wife: (1) should perform all her duties well; (2) be hospitable to the kin of both; (3) be faithful to her husband; (4) watch over the good she brings; and (5) be skillful and industrious in discharging all her tasks."³⁶⁰ The *Anguttara Nikāya* distinguishes seven types of wives, which are described to Sujātā, the daughter-in-law of Anāthapiṇḍaka, and the *Sujāta jātaka* states in a similar way, that, "These seven types of wives invariably depict the Indian wife...[and] three types, namely a destroyer...a thief and a mistress after death go to hell; while the remaining four types by their virtue reach heaven,"³⁶¹ Also, throughout our scripture, the *Liu du*

³⁶⁰ I directly quote from Serinity Young's translation on this text (2004, 85).

³⁶¹ *Anguttara Nikāya*, IV, 92-93. For more detailed information on the wives, see Talim 1972, 135 and Law 1981, 35-65.

ji jing, the ideal wife, who combines virtue and of devotion to her husband, is often highly recommended.

Let's now look at some of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* and examine some of the ways women are described. There are many stories in the *Liu du ji jing* in which women are praised for their virtue and devotion to their husbands. In all of these stories, one statement is made consistently: being a dutiful and virtuous wife, one can attain to a heavenly rebirth; otherwise, one will go straight to a worse rebirth or even to one of the hells.³⁶² Although these stories tend to express to the audience how Śākyamuni, in his past lives, eagerly strove to be a buddha, they inevitably and simultaneously provide rich information on how an ideal wife is loyal and performs her duty. The Bodhisattva is usually a layman and rarely a laywoman. As a layman, the Bodhisattva often had a wife during his previous lives, as he did in the life in which he attained buddhahood; sometimes he was lucky enough to be married to a supportive and caring wife—most of the time Yaśodharā. But other times he was not so lucky, and he was married to an evil wife, Ciñcāmāṇvikā, who obstructed his practice. My major concern is not whether he is married to good wives or evil ones, but rather to discover what message the authors of the stories were trying to convey in terms of the sex and gender status of all the possible wives of the Buddha—of the entire pool of women from which the Buddha might have drawn, imprudently or prudently, his mate. Whether his wife is Yaśodharā, whose subsequent incarnations will be favorable to her, or Ciñcāmāṇvikā, whose disobedience to her husband will mar her lives to come, their stories constitute coherent chapters in the handbook of a good woman in general and a good wife in particular. In showing this to be the case, I consider first those stories in

³⁶² “Those women, who were disobedient to their husbands, were censured by the society....The Buddhist believed that the housewife, who lives according to this ideal, goes to heaven after her death” (Talim 1972, 135).

which the woman is loyal and in what manner the author describes her, and then those stories in which she is not.

EXEMPLARY WOMAN: YAŚODHARĀ

Yaśodharā was known as the daughter of King Daṇḍapāṇī and the wife of the Prince Siddhārtha. As the ex-wife of the Buddha, Yaśodharā has not received enough credit from Buddhism nor the attention that is her due. We only know that she was beautiful, comely, intelligent, and self-assertive, that the most striking and prominent feature of her nature was that she was a woman of strong will, and that she was a single parent of Rahula and later became a nun. It is understandable that the majority of Buddhist literature neglects Yaśodharā as unworthy of mention concerning the monastic life of the Buddha. But nonetheless she has frequently appeared in the *jātakas*, as Todd Lewis reminds us: “Many *jātakas* chart the lifetimes of alliance shared by the future Shākyamuni and Yasodharā.”³⁶³ And in the *Liu du ji jing*, the authors trace Yaśodharā through her past lives as the wife of the Bodhisattva³⁶⁴ and give her a certain degree of credit and approval as both a woman and a wife.

A Wife Sold to Be a Servant

In story number 6 from the *Liu du ji jing*,³⁶⁵ after having donated all his possessions and even gone into debt through his practice of generosity, the Bodhisattva sells his wife and son to different families. The story further tells us:

妻侍質家女。女浴脫身珠璣眾寶以懸著架。天化為鷹撮衣寶去。
女云婢盜。錄之繫獄。其兒與質家兒俱臥。天夜往殺質家兒矣。

³⁶³ Lewis 2000, 45.

³⁶⁴ See appendix 2 for the chart.

³⁶⁵ T 152,3. 2c19-3b8; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 6, pp. 19-24.

死家取兒付獄。母子俱繫。飢饉。毀形。呼嗟無救。吟泣終日。
罪成棄市³⁶⁶

The wife [of the Bodhisattva] served an owner-lady. [Once] when the lady was bathing and had taken off her clothes, gems, and various precious stones and left them on a stand, Śakra transformed himself into a hawk, snatched the clothes and jewels, and flew away. The owner-lady claimed the maid [i.e. the wife of the Bodhisattva] had stolen them. She reported it and the maid was imprisoned. [Soon thereafter] the maid's son [who was sold to another owner] slept next to the owner's son. That night Śakra came to the owner's family and killed her son. The family of the deceased had [the Bodhisattva's] son put in prison. Both mother and son being imprisoned, they became emaciated and haggard. They cried out but only in vain, moaning and weeping all day long. [Later] they were sentenced to be executed in a public square.³⁶⁷

As we see in story number 6, its author was trying to convey the message that a good and exemplary wife and woman should be constantly devoted and dutiful to her husband. She sacrifices her personal comfort and is always ready to suffer all sorts of misery for her husband.

A Wife Serving as a Sweeper or a Gift to Be Donated

Another example is illustrated in story number 9,³⁶⁸ where the wife of the Bodhisattva was loyal and served him as a sweeper³⁶⁹ when he was away from home saving people.³⁷⁰ With few exceptions, the meritorious wife is always pre-Yaśodharā or Juyi 俱夷. This tells us that Yaśodharā is an exemplar of the wife of a Buddhist practitioner, a wife who supports her husband unconditionally. In addition, the tale of *Viśvantara-jātaka*, number 14, as discussed in the previous chapter, is a typical

³⁶⁶ T 152,3.3a18-3a24.

³⁶⁷ Before the wife and the son being executed, the Bodhisattva rescued them after all.

³⁶⁸ T 152, 3.4a17-5a19; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 9, pp. 30-38.

³⁶⁹ 箕帚之使(T152,3.4b7).

³⁷⁰ But it is interesting to note that the wife is called *daoshi nu* 道士女 (T152,3.5a15).

example of the portrayal of a woman in the literature. Viśvantara’s wife, Madrī, is the archetypal rendering of a devoted wife who, in addition to being obedient, plays an important role in his achievement.³⁷¹ “*Vessantara jāataka*...portrays an ideal wife, who encouraged and helped the Bodhisattva to fulfill his vows.... Thus, she helped him in pursuing the ideal of ‘*Dāna Parāmitā*,’ and did not prove herself an obstructing force. In a way as a Bodhisattva wife, woman, too underwent the same penance.”³⁷² The primary intent of these stories is to praise the generosity of the Bodhisattva, and for this reason they do not go further and also praise how loyal his wife was or even give her any credit for being so selfless a wife. At the end of these stories, we are told that, in each case, the life led by the loyal wife was a past life of Yaśodharā (Juyi 俱夷).

A Wife Forced to Kill Her Son

As in story number 13,³⁷³ insofar as men and women can both be encouraged and praised for obtaining the stage of enlightenment, there is no difference in terms of social status, regardless of biological sex differences. A woman with the same capabilities as a man is honored and praised. The story tells us how the Bodhisattva was a king and famous for being generous, for giving everything away. One day a brahmin comes to ask him and his wife to be the brahmin’s servants. The Bodhisattva happily consented, but was not certain about his wife’s intent, so he went and told her that he agreed to be a servant of a brahmin and asked for her decision. The wife said:

³⁷¹ Many scholars object to the way that Viśvantara treated his children and wife in order to pursue his own spiritual goal. For instance, Boonsue (1989, 38) asks: “From a feminist perspective, how could one consider this kind of merit accumulation as the ultimate step? It is in fact very inhumane and the way in which Vessantara wanted to prove his detachment from worldly things is very selfish. He thought only of himself and of the benefit to himself alone. He did not consider the feelings of his wife and his children.” In addition, Young (2004, 85) points out: “Along with sexual practices current at the time of the Buddha, Buddhists also followed the prevailing norm that wives and children were the property of the male head of household, who could dispose of them as he chose. We will see an example of this shortly in a past life story of the Buddha’s Prince Vessantara, who actually gave away his wife and children.”

³⁷² Talim 1972, 99-100.

³⁷³ T152,3.7a23-c26; Chavannes 1910-1934, no.13, pp. 53-57.

王為相棄獨自得便不念度我。是時夫人即隨王出。白道人言。

願得以身供道人使³⁷⁴

“King! What you are doing is abandoning me to obtain [enlightenment] for yourself without thinking of rescuing me,” the Lady said. At that time the Lady immediately followed the king to the brahmin to whom she said: “May I offer myself to be your servant?”

After being physically abused by the brahmin, the Lady, who was now pregnant, was later sold to a family. After she gave birth to a son, the wife of the family was so jealous that she ordered the queen, as her servant, to kill her own son. After killing her own son, when the queen went to bury him, she saw her husband, the king, who was a servant at the cemetery. Regarding the entire ordeal, the king and queen have no regrets. These, precisely, are the good qualities she possesses and expresses that result in her recovering her role as queen, (her husband also recovers his role as the king) and attaining the enduring of the nonarising of dharmas (王與夫人應時即得不起法忍 or *anupattika-dharma-kṣānti*).³⁷⁵

Wives Who Are Intelligent, Loyal, or Truthful

Also, in story number 45,³⁷⁶ in the section on the perfection of endurance, the wife of the Bodhisattva is described as a virtuous and wise woman, being thoroughly knowledgeable about good and bad luck, astronomy, and divination, and able to predict the weather.³⁷⁷ In number story 73,³⁷⁸ women were praised for their dignity and virtue.³⁷⁹ In addition, their social status was respected as, for example, in story number 46, where the loyalty of the wife of the Bodhisattva was questioned by her

³⁷⁴ T152,3.7b14-16.

³⁷⁵ T 152,3.7b26-c21.

³⁷⁶ T152,3.25c8-26c5. Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 45, pp. 165-173.

³⁷⁷ 女既賢明，深知吉凶，天文占候(T152,3.26b4-5)

³⁷⁸ T152,3.38a10-c3. Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 73, pp. 263-266.

³⁷⁹ 稟婦德儀 (T152,3.38b12).

husband after she had been rescued from abduction by an evil dragon. To her husband's suspicion of her infidelity, she responded:

「吾雖在穢蟲之窟，猶蓮花居于污泥，吾言有信，地其坼矣」
言畢地裂。曰吾信現矣

“Although I stayed in a cave of filthy worms, still I resemble a lotus dwelling in mud, [filth never attaches to it.] If my words contain any truthfulness may the earth then quake.” As soon as she finished speaking, the earth split before her. She said: “my truthfulness has been manifested.”³⁸⁰

Many of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* describe how loyal and virtuous a wife can be through narratives of her unconditional support for her husband. Because of her actions and stamina, not only is the Bodhisattva able to improve his practice, but his wife in turn also benefits through the merits she garners through enduring her ordeal. Thus, these stories also showed that women possess the same good qualities, personality, and intelligence as the men who take center stage there, that women are capable of improving themselves spiritually. Although in most cases, the major character is the Bodhisattva and his wife is only a supportive agent, when interpreted generously, these stories also show that she receives a share of the credit or honor as well. And this interpretation can be argued for most persuasively by reference to those few stories where she figures as a former incarnation of the Buddha himself. If, as a reward for her performance of her duties as a loyal and virtuous wife, she is praised and promised increasingly better rebirths, what would bar her from eventually achieving the full enlightenment that is the goal of her husband? But, of course, she might choose not to be the loyal wife, and so I now turn to the stories that portray the evil woman, *Ciñcāmāṇavikā*.

³⁸⁰ T152, 3: 27b5-7).

AN EVIL WOMAN -CIÑCĀMĀṄVIKĀ

In the *Liu du ji jing*, in contrast to the virtuous wife Yaśodharā, Ciñcāmāṇavikā is known as the wicked wife or the one who betrayed her husband with the famous evil man of Buddhism, Devadatta.³⁸¹ In the stories they often try together to destroy or even kill the Bodhisattva. As a result, they often earn negative descriptions and unpleasant destinies in the developing narrative. In contrast to the response of the narrative to a virtuous wife, a treacherous wife goes unappreciated. For instance, story numbers 12³⁸² and 31³⁸³ are very similar, with only minor differences in detail.

A Wife Who Betrays Her Husband

The wife of the Bodhisattva (pre-Ciñcāmāṇavikā) has an affair with a man (pre-Devadatta) whom the Bodhisattva has rescued. Together they try to kill the Bodhisattva by pushing him down a hill, but the Bodhisattva does not die, surviving and returning to the kingdom that he had given to his brother before going into the wilderness. After it is discovered what they did to the Bodhisattva, they are both punished by the ministers of the kingdom, and, after death, they descend into hell. Furthermore, in the handful of places where a woman is described negatively in the *Liu du ji jing*, such treatment is directed at an unfaithful wife rather than at women in general. In story number 28,³⁸⁴ where the Bodhisattva is an elephant king with two female elephants for wives, one of them was very jealous when the Bodhisattva was nice to the other. When the jealous wife died, she was reborn as a human being, and later became a wife of a king. As queen, this former wife of the Bodhisattva asked the king for a tusk of the elephantine Bodhisattva. In response, the king called a hunt to

³⁸¹ For the frequency of Devadatta and Ciñcāmāṇavikā as an evil couple trying to destroy the Bodhisattva, see appendix 2.

³⁸² T152,3.6c10-7a22. Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 12, pp. 49-52.

³⁸³ T152,3.18b20-c21. Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 31, pp. 111-114.

³⁸⁴ T152,3.17a19-b29. Chavannes 1910-1934, no.28, pp. 101-104.

please his wife. The Bodhisattva died in the course of events and went to heaven, but the wife was killed by a thunderbolt while holding the tusk and went to hell. We are told that the hunter is pre-Devadatta and the jealous wife is pre-Ciñcāmāṇavikā or Haoshou 好首。 .

These stories convey a single message concerning the wages paid to unfaithful wives: they die tragically and go to hell. These faithless wives are depicted negatively in the stories, not because they are female in sex or gender but because of what they have done as individuals. In other words, although we find both positive and negative descriptions of women or wives in the *Liu du ji jing*, there is nothing disgraceful about these women essentially. The stories present that a natural, though not entirely fair, relationship obtains between husband and wife. But this state of affairs is understandable and reasonable in these stories because the Bodhisattva is the main character, who deserves to be the center of attention. The good wife assists and supports him unconditionally and remains faithful to her husband. And yet one may ask why the wife isn't the main character in the stories. We need to keep in mind that the author or authors of these stories indeed were men who told the stories from their perspective in the milieu of ancient India. Naturally, it would have been very different if the stories had been told by women. But since they weren't, we can use them to detect the status of wives and women or what men expected women to be at that time.

WHO WERE THE POSSIBLE AUDIENCE OF THE STORIES?

The stories present us with glimpses of the role an ideal wife played in the family in ancient India. Since the *Liu du ji jing* puts a great deal of effort into this subject, one might wonder to whom the author of the collection tried to convey his message. It is very possible that the audience of these tales was the laity because the stories do not touch upon the concerns of monks. As is often repeated in the scholarship, “[t]hese

types of stories were invariably written keeping the common people in mind. The main objective was certainly to get more and more support, financial as well as moral, from the laity towards the clergy.”³⁸⁵ But the question remains, what group among the laity does the author have in mind? Were they women or men, married or unmarried, and can we tell if they were devotees or not? As I mentioned in Chapter 2, men as well as women were financial patrons of Buddhism, and both groups contributed their monetary aid to the production of the images of the *jātakas* at the *stūpas*. “Inscriptions from Sanchi indicated that prosperous lay people [many of whom were women] from many nearby towns donated stones when the great *stūpa* of Sanchi was enlarged and adorned in the second century B.C.E.”³⁸⁶ It is not difficult to find evidence of the immense contribution made by laywomen to the financial support of the Buddhist community. They played an indispensable role in the sponsorship of *stūpas* in India; laywomen have never been absent as significant patrons in the history of Buddhism. According to inscriptions, there were plenty of female donors who were mothers, wives, and daughters of the kings. Their multifarious donations and benefactions are recorded on the Āyaka pillars at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.”³⁸⁷ Likewise, according to Prakrit inscriptions from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa, Chāmtisiri, sister of the King Chāmtamūla, gave several Āyaka pillars and repaired the Mahā-caitya, while Mahādevī Bapisiriṇikā, the daughter of Hammasiriṇikā and wife of King Siri-Virapurisadata, gave a stone pillar.³⁸⁸ Besides, Aḍavi-chātisiri, the daughter of the Mahāuāja Vāsiṭhīputa Ikhāku Siri-Chātāmūla, donated “many crores [koṭis] of gold, hundreds of thousands of kine [cows], and hundreds of thousands of ploughs (of land).”³⁸⁹ Moreover there were also many *stūpas* built by women, for example, “site 7-8 of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa was built by

³⁸⁵ Upreti 1995, 20.

³⁸⁶ Barnes 2000, 20.

³⁸⁷ Dutt 1962, 128.

³⁸⁸ Vogel 1929-30, 13.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 18.

the sister of the King and the wife of the Mahārājā of Vanavāsi.”³⁹⁰ In light of the archeological evidence, it is not difficult to determine that not only generous men but also generous women participated in and supported the Buddhist community.

Given that epigraphical evidence, we know that in its earliest days, Buddhism was patronized by a number of wealthy women—by female merchants, wealthy courtesans, and royal queens—as is frequently described in the stories of the *Liu du ji jing*. There are also examples in the *Liu du ji jing* where women are not considered inferior to men. For instance, in story number 14,³⁹¹ the *Viśvantara-jātaka*, we are told that when the father of Viśvantara, King Sañjaya, tried to ransom his grandchildren from the evil, crippled Brahmin, the grandson insisted that his sister should be ransomed for more than he. The boy tries to make a point that his grandfather is the favorite of those dancing girls in the palace now that his father lives in exile from them. The conversation between the King and his grandson indicates that the status of a girl can be higher than that of boy. Evidence that the status of a woman was not always low but could be equal to the status of a man capable of performing in a spiritual and intelligent fashion can also be found in a wide range of stories. For instance, story number 13³⁹² is very similar to story number 6: therein a Brahmin comes to the Bodhisattva who is enthroned as a king and is famous for his generosity to ask, not for any material thing, but that his majesty and his royal wife might step down and become servants to him. The wife not only has no problem when her husband gives himself away, but also eagerly volunteers herself. In fact, when the King indicates some hesitation, she says to him: “King, you will abandon me and save yourself [for performing the perfection of generosity], do not think of saving me.”³⁹³

³⁹⁰ Stone 1994, 19.

³⁹¹ For translation of the story number 14 see Chapter 2, pp. 113-116.

³⁹² T. 152, 3: a23-c26; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 13, pp. 53-57.

³⁹³ 王為相棄獨自得便不念度我 (T152,3.7b14-15).

An implication of her sentiment is that a wife and woman can be a loyal and caring being, and can strive for spiritual improvement, so there is no difference between the practice of a husband and a wife, or a man and a woman. And indeed, at the end of the story, we are told that both the king and the wife have obtained the enduring of the nonarising of dharmas.³⁹⁴ Moreover, in story number 86,³⁹⁵ because of the merit of the servant girl, Yaśodharā-to-be, seven blue lotuses appeared from the lotus pond in order that she might make an offering to the Buddha Dipaṅkara. At that time, she made a deal with the Bodhisattva to the effect that if she would give him, the Bodhisattva who was called Rutong 孺童 at the time, five lotuses (keeping two for her own offering), he would in return make the earnest wish to have her as his wife in all his future lives—a bargain to which he agrees. In all these stories, women are as eager as men to strive for spiritual progress, and they are just as capable of doing so.

Apparently, then, in these tales, women are also, on at least some occasions, portrayed as making significant spiritual progress; in the *Liu du ji jing* being a woman is not as disgraceful as we have seen it to be in other Buddhist *jātaka* collections, especially in the *Pāli Jātakas*. In unrelenting contrast to the Indian tradition, the Bodhisattva is portrayed as a woman four times in the *Liu du ji jing*, in stories numbers 19, 72 (twice), and 73. In story number 19,³⁹⁶ the Bodhisattva was a female bird who sacrificed her own body for the sake of her baby birds. In story number 72,³⁹⁷ the Bodhisattva is depicted as a woman twice in succession, and it is very interesting to notice that, in that story, in both lifetimes her husband was Maitreya, the future Buddha.³⁹⁸ It is noteworthy that not only was the Śākyamuni a woman, but Maitreya was once incarnated as a woman as well, in story number 71, *Mile wei nuren*

³⁹⁴ 王與夫人應時即得不起法忍 (T152,3.7c21).

³⁹⁵ T152,3.47c20-48b24; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 83, pp.316-321; Young 2004, 91.

³⁹⁶ T152,3.13a5-14. Chavannes 1910-1934, no.19, pp.71-72.

³⁹⁷ T152,3.38a10-c3. Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 72, 259-263.

³⁹⁸ I intend to translate and discuss story no.72 in a future project.

shen jing 彌勒為女人身經.³⁹⁹ These stories tell us that being a woman was not a terrible thing to the authors of the collection since both Śākyamuni Buddha and the future Buddha Maitreya live in their stories as women. We will not go so far as to suggest that being a woman is the essential requirement of becoming a Buddha, but it is worth contemplating that the authors intended to communicate the message that although being female is still considered a lower condition, some unusual women can make noteworthy spiritual progress despite being female.

In this regard, it is very likely that the audience for Indian narrative literature, like the *Liu du ji jing*, was composed significantly of women. It was also to their female benefactors among their readership that the authors emphasized and praised the virtues of a dutiful wife. These women were promised rebirth in heaven if they devoted themselves to their husbands as ideal wives and to Buddhism as generous laypeople. If not, they were warned they will be reborn in the hells. The authors of the *Liu du ji jing* must have tried to convey their message to those women who were supportive women and considered devoted wives. The stories praise and honor the loyalty and generosity of these women. This is very likely the case, as I concur with Karen Lang, because “[T]he economic survival of the monastic order often depended upon the generosity of laywomen. Women, in the traditional role of household managers, were the principal almsgivers.”⁴⁰⁰ With that in mind, the authors may not have wanted to jeopardize their relationship as the recipients of sponsorship from those women by describing how terrible women are by nature.

³⁹⁹ T152,3.37b23-38a9; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 71, pp. 255-258. As for my next project on a study of Buddhist women in the *Liu du ji jing*, I will study both stories no. 71 and 72, along with no. 73, which I discuss in this dissertation.

⁴⁰⁰ Lang 1986, 64. Falk further suggests that the status of laywomen, somehow higher than that of nuns in the Buddhist community, is often depicted in positive terms: “Thus one cannot escape the impression that the community was more comfortable with its laywomen than with its nuns and that it probably found the latter’s presence to be an embarrassment” (Falk 2001, 204).

Given that laywomen were the major financial support of the Buddhist community, as illustrated by epigraphical evidence, and given that laywomen were the potential audience of the *Liu du ji jing*, it is surprising to discover how differently laywomen are treated compared to nuns in Buddhism. Based on the literary evidence, we are told that “Buddhist laywomen tend to be presented in much more positive terms than the nuns, and their deeds and virtue are almost invariably praised.”⁴⁰¹ Why would laywomen be favored over nuns by the monks who were the shaping hands of Buddhist literature? It is very possible that the monks (who were the authors of Buddhist literature) valued nuns and laywomen differently because they competed with the nuns for authority and funding, whereas laywomen were their unfailing supporters and friends. Perhaps these stories are not about being a woman at all, but about vocation. Nuns were indeed competitors and hostility toward them may indicate that they were very successful competitors. This might explain why the male monastic authors and editors of Buddhist literature made negative comments about their female counterparts, a point made by Falk: “The nuns’ troubles were compounded by an ambivalent image created in a tradition of Buddhist stories that sometimes praised their achievements but just as often undercut and attacked them.”⁴⁰² In contrast, laywomen were patrons, as a wide range of inscriptional evidence indicates, and monks may have been dependent upon them for their livelihood. The positive attitude toward women (i.e., the roles they are allowed to play and the respect they were granted) in the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* is significant evidence that were composed during the period when these Buddhist pilgrimages were established. Thus, given the competition for authority and funding between monks and nuns, the ranking in the Buddhist community, from the superior to inferior, which is illustrated by a wide range

⁴⁰¹ Falk 1981, 220.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 208.

of Buddhist literature, is likely monk, layman, laywoman, and lastly, nun, in contrast to the normal order (whatever the actual social dynamics) of monk, nun, layman, laywoman.⁴⁰³

3.4 ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN IN BUDDHISM

We have learned that the Buddhist attitude toward women as illustrated in the *Liu du ji jing* is far more than simply commendatory of women who function as loyal wives. In these tales, a woman, just like a man, is capable of being moral, intelligent, and pursuing a spiritual path. In light of the *Liu du ji jing*, Buddhist attitude toward women, from both the standpoint of socially constructed gender and biologically determined sex, seems positive, friendly, and almost egalitarian. But this expression or voice does not represent Buddhist literature as a whole. The Buddhist attitude toward women is not consistent. Not all Buddhist literatures or schools speak with the same voice when it comes to women and neither do scholars in the field of Buddhist studies.⁴⁰⁴ There are two major groups of scholars with very different opinions. The first group of scholars, such as Caroline Foley, I. B. Horner, Nancy Schuster, Kornvipa Boonsue, and many others, believe the *Pāli* literature of Theravāda Buddhism to contain ample evidence that women played decisive roles in Buddhist history and to evince a remarkable degree of religious egalitarianism. Foley suggests that Buddhist nuns have “laid down all social prestige...and gained the austere joys of an asexual rational being,

⁴⁰³ Barbara Watson Andaya (2002, 29), who works on modern Thai Buddhism, argues that because of favoritism toward the devout laywoman over the female ascetic of the Buddhist community “it is hardly coincidental that the disappearance of full ordination for nuns [in the Theravāda tradition.] was accompanied by a greater emphasis on merit-making or *dāna* as a manifestation of female piety.” We do not know the precise reasons for the disappearance of full ordination for nuns in Theravāda Buddhism, but this could be one of the factors, as Andaya suggests.

⁴⁰⁴ Gender studies in Buddhism is still in its infancy. Bernard Faure (2003, 3) summarizes the state of the field as follows: “Most recent studies tend to adopt one of two approaches: the first discusses the Buddhist bias against women, or the more or less successful Buddhist attempts to overcome this bias, while the second consists mainly in attempts to reveal the active role of Buddhist women, to emphasize female agency and thus counter the stereotype of women as passive cultural subjects.”

walking with wise men in recognized intellectual equality on higher levels of thought.”⁴⁰⁵ Schuster oversimplifies: “Doctrinally, Buddhism has been egalitarian from its beginnings. The same teachings were given by the Buddha to his female and male disciples; the same spiritual path was opened to all, the same goal pointed out.”⁴⁰⁶ Boonsue further suggests that “Buddhism was believed to be an egalitarian religion because it supported women more than other religions did, even though Buddhist institutions, like other religious institutions, were created by men and were dominated by a patriarchal power structure.”⁴⁰⁷

The second group of scholars, such as Diana Paul and Rita Gross, take the opposite tack and suggest women are treated as second-class citizens, inferior to men because Buddhism is androcentric or even misogynous. Paul points out: “This subordination of the women’s authority to that of the man’s reflects both the social order of India at that time and the monastic hierarchical structure of the community wherein even the most senior nun must be deferential to the youngest novice monk.”⁴⁰⁸ Rita Gross takes this even further by complaining that “we will see that though the Buddha is not represented as a misogynist, he does come through as androcentric and patriarchal.... [W]hile the misogynist comments may well be later editorial comments, the androcentrism and patriarchy are not.”⁴⁰⁹ For Gross, Buddhism is not only androcentric but also misogynist, and she even suggests that “Misogynistic texts, texts which preserve men’s spiteful and resentful comments about women, are found among early Buddhist records.”⁴¹⁰ But do these instances of misogynistic language represent the Buddhist attitude toward women as a whole?

⁴⁰⁵ Foley 1893, 348.

⁴⁰⁶ Schuster 1987, 105.

⁴⁰⁷ Boonsue 1989, 41.

⁴⁰⁸ Paul [1979] 1985, 170.

⁴⁰⁹ Gross 1993, 34.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

These two groups of scholars provide contradictory interpretations of the status of women in Buddhism. To my mind, the most fair and objective approach to, and analysis of, this issue is that of Alan Sponberg, who deals with the history and development of Buddhist literatures and describes the inconsistent attitude toward women of early Indian Buddhist literature as a multiplicity of voices. He enumerates four such voices of which three occur in the early canon. The first voice is *soteriological inclusiveness*, which holds that women follow the same religious path and attain the same goals as men: “[n]ot only is the path open to women...it indeed is the same path for both women and men.”⁴¹¹ This statement is similar to that of the first group of scholars who focus on the spiritual path of Buddhism, namely Arhatship, which was open to both men and women. But there is also another voice frequently occurring in Buddhist literature as Sponberg points out that “sexual differences are real and the male sex is by nature superior to the female sex, both socially and spiritually.”⁴¹² This leads to the second voice of *institutional androcentrism*, which holds that men have the authority in the community and that women are subordinate to them on a social and institutional level. Women are threatening to the integrity of the monastic institution.⁴¹³ This statement corresponds to Paul’s on the inferiority of nuns in the Buddhist community. Furthermore, the threat posed by women is characterized differently in the third voice, *ascetic misogyny*, which is hostile to women and perceives them as a threat to male celibacy.⁴¹⁴ This voice is what Gross focuses on when she concludes that Buddhists were misogynist. Thus, it seems that when a group of scholars claim a certain voice in Buddhism defines its attitude toward women—egalitarianism, androcentrism, or misogyny—they speak only from one

⁴¹¹ Sponberg 1992, 9.

⁴¹² Ibid., 12.

⁴¹³ Ibid., 15-16.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., 24.

particular period's or literature's perspective. Their arguments, therefore, become myopic. Sponberg, on the other hand, is more accurate in his treatment of Buddhist attitudes toward women as they surface in different Buddhist literatures. Throughout the history and development of Buddhist literature and its schools, different schools have produced literature tailored to their times, each one influenced by their social milieu, and its intellectual, doctrinal, or institutional/sectarian dynamics. Therefore, when scholars claim that the majority of Buddhist literature displays a negative attitude toward women, two questions are in order: *which* Buddhist literature and *which* group of women are being referred to? But even within the same literature, the voice is not always consistent as a particular example as the *jātaka* literature in both *Pāli Jātaka* and the *Liu du ji jing*.

CONTRASTING THE PĀLI JĀTAKAS'S AND THE LIU DU JI JING'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WOMEN

Overall, the attitude toward women illustrated in the *Liu du ji jing* is very friendly and even displays a certain degree of gratitude, especially for laywomen who are devoted and loyal to their husbands and to Buddhist practice generally. Regarding Sponberg's analysis of the four voices of the Buddhist canon, does the *jātaka* literature as a whole fit well into Sponberg's category of *soteriological inclusiveness* and within a more specific subcategory, such as *friendliness toward laywomen*? The answer is *yes* and *no*. The friendliness toward laywomen of the *Liu du ji jing* is just one voice of the *jātakas*, but there are other voices in the literature.

In Sponberg's impressive analysis of the four voices, each expressing a different attitude toward women, from a doctrinal perspective the first three are found in Buddhist canons in different periods of time. The first canonical attitude, *soteriological inclusiveness*, indicates that women like men were not exclusively allied

with any particular practice of Buddhism and that “women were accepted as fully and equally enlightened. This is the most significant point regarding the place of women in early Buddhism,”⁴¹⁵ and “[j]ust as the Buddhist goal was not limited to those born in a certain social group, so it was not limited to those born as males.”⁴¹⁶ The majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* fit pretty well into this category of *soteriological inclusiveness*, and it is even worth considering creating a specific subcategory such as *friendliness toward laywomen*. But one particular story in the *Liu du ji jing*, story number 73, fits into another attitude, the one Sponberg categorized as *institutional androcentrism*, which is “the view that women indeed may pursue a full-time religious career, but only within a carefully regulated institutional structure that preserves and reinforces the conventionally accepted social standards of male authority and female subordination.”⁴¹⁷ In this androcentric social structure and institutional development, monks dominated the Buddhist community, and in the interests of enforcing their authority in the community, they degraded the status of women, namely the nuns. In this period of institutional androcentrism, as in the period of soteriological inclusiveness, it was admitted that women were capable of pursuing the path, but they were nonetheless considered a threat to the integrity of the monastic institution.⁴¹⁸ As illustrated in the story number 73, the story suggests that the female body is impure so that transformation of female body into male one is the prerequisite of becoming a buddha. I discuss the story in detail in the latter section of this chapter.

However, *Pāli jātakas* embrace what Sponberg calls the attitude of *ascetic misogyny*, in which women are described as temptresses or, worse, as evil incarnate. . . Similar to Buddhist hagiographic literature, women were believed to be biologically

⁴¹⁵ Sponberg 1992, 10.

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁴¹⁷ Sponberg 1992, 13.

⁴¹⁸ Sponberg 1992, 15-16.

determined to be sexually uncontrollable and were considered to be Māra, the demons of Buddhism. As Lang suggests: “Implicit in this use of these images of the hunter and his snare is a common misogynist theme in early Buddhist androcentric writing that associates women with the body and the profane world of sensual desire. Women, according to the androcentric bias of some of these texts, are ‘on Māra’s side.’”⁴¹⁹ This view was not only shared by Buddhist men but also by women themselves: “[T]he women of this community were seen and (perhaps more importantly) saw themselves through an androcentric ‘I’—a religious subjectivity that approximates the male gaze in viewing the world from a male perspective.”⁴²⁰ The *Pāli Jātaka* is apparently misogynist. We are told that, for instance, “Cursed be the land where women rule supreme and cursed the fool that bows to women’s sway.”⁴²¹ “All women work iniquity.”⁴²² “Wrathful are women, slanderers, [and] ingrates”⁴²³ and nothing more. “I for my part in womenfolk can never put my trust....Like river, road, or drinking shed, assembly hall or inn, so free to all are womenfolk, no limits check their sin.”⁴²⁴ “In speech they no distinction make betwixt the false and true....dishonest, fierce and hard of heart, as sugar sweet their words.... Surely all womenfolk are vile, no limit bounds their shame.”⁴²⁵ “With womankind it is hard to discover the truth.”⁴²⁶ “Full of seductive wiles, deceitful all, they tempt the most pure-hearted to his fall....whom so they serve, for gold or for desire, they burn him up like fuel in the fire.”⁴²⁷ “They are so passionate that no guard can keep them right.”⁴²⁸

⁴¹⁹ Lang 1986, 67.

⁴²⁰ Wilson 1995, 42.

⁴²¹ *Jātaka* no. 13, vol. 1, 43.

⁴²² *Jātaka* no. 62, vol. 1, 151

⁴²³ *Jātaka* no. 63, vol. 1, 43 and 158.

⁴²⁴ *Jātaka* no. 536, vol. 5, 241.

⁴²⁵ *Jātaka* no. 536, vol. 5, 242.

⁴²⁶ *Jātaka* no. 519, vol. 5, 52.

⁴²⁷ *Jātaka* no. 264, vol. 2, 228.

⁴²⁸ Law 1981, 43.

According to the *Pāli Jātakas*, women, solely in virtue of being female in sex, are described everywhere in its stories as wicked, deceitful, mentally unstable, fragile, and single-mindedly lusty. In the *Liu du ji jing*, on the other hand, women are both appreciated and honored if they are faithful to their husbands, but if they are not, they are presented negatively. In this collection, stories presenting positive wives are more numerous than those presenting wicked ones, but this is not the case in the *Pāli Jātaka*. In the *Pāli Jātaka* there are only a few stories with exemplary devoted wives, such as the *Sambula-jātaka* (number 519),⁴²⁹ and the *Kakkaṭā-jātaka* (number 267), but there are cases and cases of tales of wicked spouses. The *Kunāla-jātaka*, for instance, indicates twenty-five types of wicked women, and in the *Sujāta-jātaka* (number 269) there seven kinds of wife classified,⁴³⁰ and the proportion of negativity is the same in many others, as in the *Kaccāni-jātaka* (number 417), *Culla-Padum-jātaka* (number 193?), and so on. According to Bimala Churn Law, “such awful instances of wife’s ingratitude and lechery are numerous in the *jātakas*.”⁴³¹ But this dismaying state of affairs is not the case in the *Liu du ji jing*, so it would be useful for his fellow scholars

⁴²⁹ The story details that, “The husband being attacked with leprosy left the city and came to a forest. The devoted wife, frustrating all attempts of her husband to stop her, followed him to the wilderness to wait upon him. Her devotion to her husband was so very great that being the chief consort of a prince and bred and brought up in luxury, she nursed her diseased husband like one habituated in doing all strenuous household duties” (Law 1981, 35).

⁴³⁰ “1. A wife who is bad-hearted, relentless to the good, hates her husband but loves others and who is a destroyer of everything that is obtained at the expense of her husband’s wealth. Such a wife is called Destructive wife. 2. A wife who steals something from whatever her husband obtains for her by trade or skilled profession or the farmer’s spade. Such a woman is designated as Thievish wife. 3. A wife who is lazy, passionate, covetous, foul-mouthed, full of anger and abhorrence, careless of duty and oppressive to her subordinates. Such a woman is termed High and Mighty wife. 4. A wife who sympathizes with the good, takes a motherly care of her husband and guards everything her husband brings. Such a wife obtains the designation of “Motherly wife”. 5. A wife who is modest, obedient to her husband’s will and respects her husband like a young sister paying homage to elders. Such a wife is called Sisterly wife. 6. A wife who is virtuous, comes of a high family, takes such a pleasure in her husband’s sight as a friend takes in seeing a friend after long absence and depends entirely upon her husband. Such a woman is called Friend wife. 7. A wife who is patient, passionate, true to her heart, quiet when abused, afraid of violence and submissive to her husband’s will. Such a wife acquires the title of Slavish wife” (Law 1981, 57-58).

⁴³¹ Law 1981, 40.

and for the accuracy of scholarship generally if Law specifically pointed out that his argument concerns only the *Pāli Jātaka*, not the *jātaka* literature as a whole.

Based on the characteristics of the stories in the *Pāli Jātaka*, the majority of scholars in the field agree that the *jātaka* literature is the most misogynist in Buddhist literature. For instance, I. B. Horner observes: “Before the days of the *jātakas* there was admiration for the wife, and less insistence on her servility and unreliability,”⁴³² but she further suggests: “By the time the *jātakas* and their Commentaries were written down, the brief heyday of Indian women was already passed. The reviving antifeminism has left its mark in sentiments not stressed in the earlier literature, but which in the *jātakas* crystallize into stories calculated to show the ingratitude, deception, untrustworthiness, and sensuality of women.”⁴³³ Paul explains that “the negative aspect of the woman was not only due to the mythological context Buddhism inherited. It is true that early Buddhist texts such as the *jātakas* tales of the Buddha incorporated many strident misogynist remarks from the orthodox tradition of Brahman ascetics.”⁴³⁴ Chapla Verma claims that “such *jātaka* tales have effectively damaged the image and position of women in Buddhism,”⁴³⁵ and Gross extends her view: “Jataka literature, which is often evaluated as quite misogynistic, became increasingly popular.”⁴³⁶ In addition, in John Garrett Jones’s words: “the *Jātakas* reflect the canonical aversion to marriage, though they tend to make misogyny rather than a high doctrine of detachment the basis of their objection.”⁴³⁷ Sponberg sums up the issue as follows: “The most blatantly misogynous texts of the Pali literature are found in the *Jātaka* stories.”⁴³⁸ But we must stress that this scholarly consensus is only

⁴³² Horner 1930, 50-51.

⁴³³ Ibid, 50.

⁴³⁴ Paul 1985 [1979], 6.

⁴³⁵ Verma 2000, 79.

⁴³⁶ Gross 1993, 43.

⁴³⁷ Jones 1979, 116.

⁴³⁸ Sponberg 1992, 35, notes no.29.

right about the misogynous attitude of the *jātakas* if they specifically mention that they are referring to the *Pāli Jātaka*. Otherwise, they over-generalize to the detriment of objectivity. I assume that they refer to the *Pāli Jātaka*, not to the *jātakas* as a whole, and certainly not to the *Liu du ji jing*. As we have learned from the women and wives as they are described in the *Liu du ji jing*, there is no overarching misogynous element in these stories, quite unlike the situation in the *Pāli Jātakas*.

As discussed above, women, in general, and nuns, in particular, were competitors for patronage, in which case these misogynist attitudes may be an attempt to put women (nuns) in their place. The literature of the period when the stories of the *Pāli Jātakas* were created was influenced by the attitudes found in developing Buddhist institutions, so both female gender and female sex were regarded as inferior. In other words, the stories in the *Pāli Jātakas* are more misogynous and probably were modified as Buddhist institutions developed. We may not understand why they differ, but we can at least determine in what way they differ by examining some of the stories in these two collections. The *Pāli Jātaka* is famous for its misogyny, which is indeed the opposite of the friendliness of the *Liu du ji jing*. And so, to illustrate the misogyny of the *Pāli Jātaka* in general, I study and compare one of the *jātakas*, *Kuṇāljātaka*, in both the *Pāli Jātaka* and the *Liu du ji jing*.

THE KUṆĀLA-JĀTAKA

Among all the misogynous tales in the *Pāli Jātakas*, the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* stands far and above its competitors as venting the most misogynous expressions about the negativity of women.⁴³⁹ But there is no trace of this orientation in the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* in the *Liu du ji jing*. I examine them side-by-side, beginning with my translation of the

⁴³⁹ Boonsue 1989, 43.

Kuṇāla-jātaka, story number 62 of the *Liu du ji jing*, for which no specific title is given. From just these few examples from the *Pāli Jātakas*, we can see the impression that women made in the eyes of its misogynist authors: they were evil betrayers and thieves; they were unreliable, wild, fickle, lustful, and immoral beings. In addition to these passages found throughout the *Pāli Jātakas*, the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* is particularly worthy of discussion because of its misogyny, and, more interestingly, because its counterpart in the *Liu du ji jing* has no such misogynous elements at all.

昔者菩薩。為鸚鵡王。徒眾三千。有兩鸚鵡。力幹踰眾。口銜竹莖以為車乘。王乘其上飛止遊戲。常乘莖車。上下前後左右鸚鵡各五百眾。六面輔翼合有三千。貢獻所珍。娛樂隨時。王深自惟。眾謹亂德無由獲定。吾將權焉託病不食。佯死棄眾。其諸眾者以簞覆之。各捐而去。王興求食。諸鸚鵡眾詣他山鸚鵡王所曰。吾王喪矣。願為臣僕。曰爾王死者以屍相示。若其真喪。吾將納爾眾。還取屍霍然不見。四布行索獲其王矣。僉然為禮復故供養。王曰。吾尚未喪爾等委捐。諸佛明訓。觀世無親唯道可宗。沙門以鬚髮為亂志之穢。故捐棄之崇無欲行。爾等謹聞。邪聲亂志。獨而無偶。上聖齊德。言畢翻飛。閑處窈寂。棄欲無為。思惟定行。諸穢都滅。心如天金。佛告諸比丘。時鸚鵡王者吾身是。菩薩銳志度無極精進如是。

Translation:

Once upon a time the Bodhisattva was a king of parrots flying around with three thousand companions. The king rode carried by two mighty parrots holding bamboo stems in their mouths like a cart and five hundred parrots supporting him from each of the six directions like wings. Displeased by their indulgence in pleasures throughout this activity and to deter them from that which was disadvantageous to their virtue and meditation, the parrot king faked his illness, stopped eating, and pretended to die in order to get rid of his companions. After having learned of his death, the parrots covered him with grass, gave him up, and flew to another parrot king of whom they asked for refuge. When they arrived at the parrot king's place over another mountain

and asked for acceptance of their services due to the death of their king, the other king declared he would accept them only if they could show him the corpse of their previous lord. But when they returned for the former king's corpse, they discovered that he had gone. After they had recovered their lord after an exhaustive search of the four directions, they all paid homage to him and served him as their king as before. The king spoke to them: "You left me even before I had died. All Buddhas teach that one should not cling to this world. Only the Way/Path is what you should depend on. Śramaṇas (the monks) treat their beards and hair as polluted and disturbed of resolve, and likewise abandon the pleasures of the world and live a life without desires. But you all take pleasure in a noisiness the evil sound of which is the disturbance of resolution. Being solitary without companion is a virtue equal to that of the supreme saint." After finishing his speech, the king left them, flew to a solitary place, forsook desire and action, and practiced contemplation and the insight of meditation. All of his impurity was therefore destroyed and his mind was as pure as celestial gold. [After having told the story,] the Buddha furthermore told the Bhikṣus that he had been the first parrot king of the tale. A Bodhisattva's vigor and perfection practicing energetic effort is thus.⁴⁴⁰

The *Kuṇāla-jātaka* as rendered in story number 62 of the *Liu du ji jing* conveys nothing beyond the importance of solitude and the injuriousness of residing in a boisterous environment. However, its counterpart in the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* (number 536) of the *Pāli Jātakas*, in addition to the Kuṇāla bird⁴⁴¹ story as it appears in the *Liu du ji jing*, provides more extensive and rather different information that mostly disparages women. The *Kuṇāla-jātaka* contains a series of stories, and they all emphasize the wicked nature of women. Examples can be effortlessly assembled. "Poor fickle

⁴⁴⁰ T152,3.34a9-26; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 62, pp. 228-230

⁴⁴¹ *Jātaka* no. 536, vol. 5, 222.

creatures women are, ungrateful, treacherous they, no man if not possessed would deign to credit aught they say.... Transgressing every law of right, they play shameless part.”⁴⁴² “Like river, road, or drinking shed, assembly hall or inn, so free to all are women folk, no limits check their sin. Fell as black serpents’ heads are they, as ravenous as a fire. As kine the choicest herbage pick, they lovers rich desire.”⁴⁴³ “Women are pleasure-seekers all and unrestrained in lust, Transgressors of the moral law: in such put not your trust.... Surely all womenfolk are vile, no limit bounds their shame, impassioned and audacious they, devouring as a flame.”⁴⁴⁴ “Women like flames devour their prey; women like floods sweep all away; women are pests, like thorns are they; women for gold oft go astray.”⁴⁴⁵ Unlike its counterpart in the *Liu du ji jing*, there seem to be endless negative descriptions of women in this exemplary tale, and the impression we take away from it is that the tale concerns itself above all with women’s wicked nature. As W. B. Bollée points out, there is major difference between the two versions of the *Kuṇāla-jātaka*. The tale in the *Liu du ji jing* has no misogynous aspects, and the illness of the parrot king is a device through which his companions might recognize the hatefulness of revelry, but in the *Pāli Jātakas*, the illness of the parrot-king leads him to recognize the wickedness of women.⁴⁴⁶

The impression we have received from the *Pāli Jātaka* in general and from the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* included in that collection in particular is of its shamelessly misogynist character. Why do these two *jātaka* collections present not only different but also contradictory voices on women’s nature? It seems that the *Pāli Jātakas* and the *Liu du*

⁴⁴² *Jātaka* no. 536, vol. 5, 240. Bollée (1970, 160) has also provided a translation as “No man who is not possessed should trust women, for they are base, fickle, ungrateful and deceitful. They are ungrateful and do not act as they ought to; they do not care for their parents or brother. They are mean and immoral and do only their will.”

⁴⁴³ *Jātaka* no. 536, vol.5, 241.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁴⁴⁶ Bollée 1970, 129-130.

ji jing must have had very different audiences despite the fact that they belong to the same genre and can be said to convey the same general, abstract teachings. Faced with the contrast between the striking and misogynist tales in the *Pāli Jātakas* and the woman-friendly ones in the *Liu du ji jing*, we begin to wonder what explains this striking difference. What were the intentions of their authors and to whom did they convey these messages? We have already seen how attitudes toward women changed as Buddhism developed institutionally and doctrinally. So, these two collections of the *jātakas* might have been twins after transmission from a common source, but then might have diverged drastically under different institutional pressures concerning the subject of gender. As far as the gender issue is concerned, it is very possible that the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* were not exposed, for whatever reason, to the same institutional forces as were those of the *Pāli Jātakas*. One might begin to wonder why other Buddhist literature and the *Pāli Jātaka* were able to describe women negatively in relative safety because the composition of their audience and the networks of their patronage were probably different or because the motivation of the authors, namely monks, who compete authority and financial support with nuns. There are various unknown reasons for the different voices in Buddhist literature and *jātaka* collections that I will discuss later. But to pursue this possibility, we must first examine another story in the *Liu du ji jing*—one where the Buddha himself is a woman.

3.5 THE BUDDHA ONCE WAS A WOMAN

Could the Buddha himself have ever been a woman in any of his previous lives?

According to the *Pāli Jātaka*, the answer is “no.” As Jones and Schuster point out:

“The most striking single fact is that, in spite of the tremendous diversity of forms

which the bodhisattva assumes, he never once appears as a woman or even as female

animal. Even when he appears as a tree-spirit or a fairy, he is always masculine.”⁴⁴⁷ But in light of the *Rūpāvātī* story in the *avadāna* literature and in light of the *Liu du ji jing*, the answer is “yes.” In the *Rūpāvātī* story, the Buddha, in one of his previous lives, was a woman named Rūpāvātī who cuts off her own breast in order to feed a starving woman who is about to devour her own newly born child. Due to her selfless generosity, her husband later performs an Act of Truth by which she is transformed into a man, who is then named Prince Rūpāvata.⁴⁴⁸ In addition, the female Bodhisattva appears four times in the *Liu du ji jing*: once as a female bird (story number 19) and three times as a woman (stories number 72 and 73), a frequency that is extraordinarily rare in the *jātaka* literature. So, unlike those in the *Pāli Jātakas*, the tales in the *Liu du ji jing* not only treat women with the pervasive friendliness as I discussed earlier, but also promote her to the rank of Buddha-to-be more than once. I translate and discuss one of these instances, story number 73, the *Ran deng shou jie jing*,⁴⁴⁹ to explore whether the attitude of its author toward women is consistent with the rest of stories in the collections I have discussed above.

⁴⁴⁷ Jones 1979, 20; Schuster (1987, 116) later also strongly claims that “the Buddha-to-be is reborn in many forms....but never appears as a female.”

⁴⁴⁸ The story contains four episodes before the Bodhisattva “is reborn as a brahmin’s son named Brahmaṇḍa, who gives his body as food to a starving tigress about to devour her own cubs” (Ohnuma 2000, 105). Reiko Ohnuma (2000, 108) has done an intensive study on the story Rūpāvātī and argues that “Rūpāvātī is not engaging on a heroic mission of generosity, determined to give away her body because she has run out of her gifts to give, or determined to fulfill the perfection of generosity....Rūpāvati first attempts to enact a number of *other possible solutions* to the problem, asking the woman if there might be food in the house and offering to fetch food for her if she will only wait for Rūpāvātī’s return.”

⁴⁴⁹ Since not only the Buddha but also Maitreya was once a woman according to the *Liu du ji jing*, I plan to translate, compare, and analyze these two stories and argue that being a woman actually is not as terrible as seen in most Buddhist literature. In addition, in one of the stories in the *Liu du ji jing*, the Buddha was Maitreya’s wife twice in his past. I will probably also study the story along with Maitreya’s female former life. It should be a very interesting project and will include an investigation of what the authors’ intention might have been.

STORY NUMBER 73, *THE RAN DENG SHOU JIU JING* 然燈受決經 (THE
SCRIPTURE ON THE PREDICTION OF DIPAMKARA)

昔者菩薩。身為女人。少寡守節。歸命三尊。處貧樂道。精進不倦。蠲除兇利。賣膏為業。時有沙門。年在西夕。志存高行。不遑文學。內否之類謂之無明矣。禮敬有偏終始無就。分衛麻油以供佛前。獨母照然。貢不缺日。有一除饑。稽首佛足叉手質曰。斯老除饑。其雖黠明戒具行高。然燈供養。後獲何福。世尊歎曰。善哉問也。是老除饑。却無數劫。當為如來無所著正真道最正覺。項有重光。將導三界。眾生得度。其為無數。獨母聞之。馳詣佛所。稽首陳曰。除饑然燈。膏即吾所貢云。其當獲為無上正真道。將導眾生還神本無。天人鬼龍靡不逸豫。唯願加哀。復授吾決。佛告女人。女身不得為佛。緣一覺道。梵。釋。魔天。飛行皇帝。斯尊巍巍非女人身所得作也。夫欲獲彼當捐穢體受清淨身。女稽首曰。今當捐之。還居淨浴。遙拜而曰。夫身者四大之有。非吾長保也。登樓願曰。以今穢身惠眾生之飢渴者。乞獲男躬受決為佛。若有濁世眾生盲冥背正向邪無知佛者。吾當於彼世拯濟之也。自高投下。觀者寒慄。佛知至意。化令地軟猶天統縊。觀身無害。即化為男。厥喜無量。馳詣佛所踊躍而云。受世尊恩已獲淨身。唯願加哀授吾尊決。佛歎之曰。爾之勇猛世所希有。必得為佛無懷疑望。然燈除饑。其得佛時當授汝號。天人鬼龍聞當為佛皆向拜賀。還居咨歎。各加精進。爾時勸發群生不可計數。佛告鷲鷲子。時老比丘者錠光佛是也。獨母者吾身是。菩薩銳志度無極精進如是。⁴⁵⁰

Translation

Once upon a time, the Bodhisattva was born as a woman. As a young widow, she upheld chastity and took refuge in the Three Gems (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha). She lived in poverty, but nevertheless took delight in the Religion. She diligently exerted herself without laxity. Without giving herself to illicit gains, she sold lamp oil for a living. At that time, there was a śramaṇa [renunciant or monk] whose years were in decline. Although he applied his ambition to noble conduct, he never had the leisure to learn [the teaching of Buddhism]. Superficial people called him ignorant and did not respect and support him properly. The bhikṣu [monk] collected

⁴⁵⁰ T.152,3.38c4-39a7; Chavannes 1910-1934, no. 73, pp. 263-266.

hemp oil to offer before the Buddha without error.⁴⁵¹ After having been illumined⁴⁵² by (the lamp), the widow offered him lamp oil each day without fail.

There was another bhikṣu who [came and] prostrated at the feet of the Buddha. Having joined his palms together, he inquired: “That aged bhikṣu, although he has little intelligence, he observes all the precepts and takes up high conduct. For having illuminated a lamp as one type of offering, what merit will he obtain in the future?” The World-Honored One proclaimed: “Excellent question! The aged bhikṣu, in innumerable kalpas [eons], will become a Tathāgata, Arhat, and Samyaksambuddha. There will be a double radiance around his neck that will guide those who are in the three worlds. The numbers of sentient beings who he will rescue will be uncountable.”

The widow, after having heard the prediction, hurriedly arrived at where the Buddha was, prostrated, and said: “The oil that the bhikṣu used to illuminate the lamp was provided by me. You have indicated that he will obtain Samyaksambuddha and guide the sentient beings to reach⁴⁵³ the stage of supernatural and fundamental no-being. Devas, humans, demons, and nāgas all will be delighted [by his accomplishment]. My only wish is that, with your sympathy, you may also confer a prediction that concerns me.” The Buddha told the woman: “with a body of a woman one cannot reach to the paths of Buddhas or Pratyekabuddhas nor the honors of Brahmā, Śakra, Māra, or Śakravartin. These are too majestic to be obtained from the body of a woman. If you desire to obtain their likes, you must abandon your filthy body and get a pure body.” The woman prostrated to the Buddha and said: “Now I ought to abandon [my body].”

⁴⁵¹ T152,3.38c9. In *Taishō*, it is “jiu,” 就, which could mean “to receive” but in other editions, it is *jou* 言尤, which means “fault.” Based on the context, I will go with the latter, as “to make a mistake.”

⁴⁵² T152,3.38c9-10. The act is very similar to the Indian tradition of *draśan*, seeing, one of the important rituals.

⁴⁵³ T152, 3.38c17. In *Taishō*, it is “huan” 還, which means “to return,” while other editions have “dai” 逮, meaning “to reach.” It is more likely that it is “to reach” to a certain stage.

After having returned to her place and cleansed herself with a bath, she made a prostration from a distance and said: “This very body is an arrangement of the four elements [earth, water, fire, and air] and is not mine to retain permanently.” She then climbed up to a tower and made a vow: “I give up this filthy body for the sake of sentient beings who are hungry and thirsty. May I beg you to obtain a body of a man and receive a prediction of becoming a Buddha. If there are sentient beings in this troubled world so ignorant that they turn their back on the truth, are led toward evil, and do not recognize the Buddha, I will rescue them.” She then jumped from the top of the tower to the bottom. Those who saw the incident shivered and were terrified.

The Buddha knew the supreme aspiration of the woman so he made a miracle of endowing the earth beneath her with softness like a celestial net.⁴⁵⁴ The body was apparently not harmed and was transformed into a male one. She was extremely joyful, so she hurriedly came to where the Buddha was and happily said: “Grace received from World-Honored One, I have obtained a pure body. My only wish, with your sympathy, is that you confer a prediction that concerns me.” The Buddha proclaimed thus: “Your valiance is rather rare in the world; you will certainly attain Buddhahood. Do not doubt this consideration. When the bhikṣu who illuminates the lamp, or Dipaṃkara, has obtained Buddhahood, he will confer on you a title. After having heard that you have become a Buddha, devas, humans, demons, and nāgas will come to greet and congratulate you. Then they will return to their place and acclaim [your accomplishment]. Each of them, therefore, will increase in energetic effort. At that time, the number of those who are convinced and inspired by you will be uncountable. The Buddha then told Śāriputra: “the old bhikṣu then is Dīpaṃkara Buddha; the

⁴⁵⁴T 152,3.38c27. I cannot locate the Chinese meaning of these two characters, but the compound probably means a long and winding thread or a net.

widow then is me. A Bodhisattva's vigorous perfection practicing energetic effort is thus.

Story number 73 is very similar to the story of *Rūpāvatī* in two respects. First, the Bodhisattva starts as a woman, but in order to go further in her practice of the bodhisattva path, she is required to change her female sex into a male one. Second, the Act of Truth is performed in both. Some significant differences between the two stories are that *Rūpāvatī* does not perform the Act of Truth by herself, but her husband performs it in her stead, whereas the widow in story number 73 performs it on her own, and unlike the widow in story number 73, *Rūpāvatī* is not told that her body is impure and needs to be changed, but draws perfection from the power of her gift. These two features raise the following questions: Why is the transformation of the female-sexed body so important in the literature? Would the need for this kind of transformation be any different in the Mahāyāna? Why can the widow perform the Act of Truth herself? Is she more trustworthy than *Rūpāvatī*?

SEX CHANGE

The theme of sex change as part of a person's spiritual career is not uncommon in Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, whereas it is quite rare in non-Mahāyāna Buddhist literature, such as *jātakas*, to the best of my knowledge, it is found only in the *Rūpāvatī* story and story number 73 in the *Liu du ji jing*. In this section, I explore this theme in these two stories and in some stories from the Mahāyāna literature. The demand in story number 73 that a woman violently exchange her female-sexed body for a male one makes one wonder whether this story evinces an attitude that is less friendly toward women than the attitude of the *Liu du ji jing* generally. Although I am excited to see that the author situated the spirit of the Buddha in a female body, the fact that the female-sexed body had to be changed to a male one makes us wonder just

how much better its attitude toward women is compared to other Buddhist literature. And although its intention is clearly better than that of the stories in the Pāli, can it really be described as being favorable toward women? Is there more than one voice in the *Liu du ji jing*?

According to Alison Shaw, because of the dual system of classification of sex/gender into male and female in society, “Sex changes and gender transformation are often associated with supernatural power, with magic and with danger *precisely* because they occur at boundaries and thus challenge conventional categorizations...found in folktale and myth.”⁴⁵⁵ Note that it is accepted by the literature without argument that the change of sex from male to female is unexpected and unwelcome, whereas the change from female to male, though it may well be unexpected, is also welcome and desirable.⁴⁵⁶ The theme sex change is actually pre-Buddhist; there is a variety of popular stories with the motif of sex transformation in early Indian narrative literature. There are five discernible means by which this change can be accomplished: “by bathing in an enchanted pool or stream, by the curse or blessing of a deity directed at a specific individual—a curse to change man to woman, a blessing to change woman to man, by exchanging one’s sex with a Yakṣa, by magic or by the power of righteousness or in consequence of wickedness.”⁴⁵⁷ The motif of sex and gender transformation found in popular tales and ancient mythology represents the imaginations and fantasies of people, namely male storytellers, who intend to challenge conventional boundaries or ideologies by describing magic power or power originally connected with celestial beings. The authors of stories like *Rūpāvatī* and story number 73 systematized or Buddhicized these popular tales.

⁴⁵⁵ Shaw 2005, 2.

⁴⁵⁶ Brown 1927, 6.

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

In addition to the challenge to conventional boundaries of the society and the attempt on the part of men to break through the boundaries fixed by the stereotypes of gender roles in their societies, as in Young’s word, “[t]his view of sexual characteristics as the inevitable outcome of karmic retribution or reward highlights additional dimensions of Buddhist gender ideology.”⁴⁵⁸ Both Rūpāvātī and the widow in story number 73 of the *Liu du ji jing*, via different means, attained the same result of transforming their female bodies to male ones. One difference between these two stories is that Rūpāvātī is not concerned with the sex of her body. She simply wants to save the baby from its mother by feeding the starving mother with the flesh of her own breast, reasoning, according to Ohnuma, that, “Because the body is totally worthless and doomed to destruction anyway...it might as well be abandoned and put to use in feeding others.”⁴⁵⁹ In story number 73, on the other hand, the widow sees her female body as an unfit and impure object and wishes to get rid of it altogether and acquire a male body instead. That is to say, in story number 73, only the female body is impure and worthless,⁴⁶⁰ whereas the male body is good for pursuing the spiritual path. The male body is an instrument for the female body or woman to obtain Buddhahood she desires. In Ohnuma’s words, “in this case it is the male body—perhaps a trope for Buddhahood itself?—that constitutes the desired ideal, while the female body is cast as ordinary and imperfect.”⁴⁶¹ That is, women could attain Buddhahood if they transformed their body through the practice of generosity and devotion, earning promotion to a male body as a final result because women are originally not pure

⁴⁵⁸ Young 2004, 203.

⁴⁵⁹ Ohnuma 2007, 205. The negative or worthless views of the body are discussed in Ohnuma’s new book, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood*. According to Ohnuma (2007, 201-202), “Gift-of-the-body *jātaka* exhibit at least two traditional lines of Buddhist thinking about the ordinary human body. We might refer to one line of thinking as the *worthlessness* of the body: the body is impure, foul, and disgusting...; the body is afflicted by old age, disease, suffering, and death; the body is transient and impermanent.”

⁴⁶⁰ When she was told that a female body is filthy, the widow did not just directly jump from the top of a tower as the Act of Truth, but took a bath first. It seems she strived for the purity of a body.

⁴⁶¹ Ohnuma 2007, 221.

enough to obtain Buddhahood. Thus, the transformation from a female to a male body comes as the reward for meritorious deeds—the widow offering hemp-oil to fuel the light for the Buddha and Rūpāvatī feeding a woman with her breast to save an infant.

Furthermore, sex transformation is a device found in a wide range of Mahāyāna texts, and each example of the device bears the mark of the era of historical Buddhism in which the text was composed. In its earlier development, following, the motif of sex transformation in Mahāyāna is not very different from what is portrayed in the *Rūpāvatī* or in story number 73 of the *Liu du ji jing*. For instance, in the *Lotus Sūtra*, a dragon princess transforms her female body into a male one just before becoming a Buddha.⁴⁶² The story informs us that attainment of Buddhahood is exclusive to a man and that a woman is unable to obtain it. Likewise in the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines*, the Goddess has to change from being female to being male before being reborn in the Land of Buddha Akṣobhya.⁴⁶³ Thus, the theory that a woman is incapable of becoming a Buddha and the idea of a woman changing her sex as a solution existed in early Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁴⁶⁴

However, the development of this device continued, and the emphasis laid upon it in the Mahāyāna changed; the theme of changing sex abandons the conventional boundary of the Five Obstacles and creates a new philosophy of emptiness,⁴⁶⁵ even as it becomes a playful and magical transformation of an advanced bodhisattva. For instance, as it is represented in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa*, *Śrīmālādevī*, the *Questions Concerning the Daughter Sumati*, the *Sutra of the Dialogue of the Girl Candrotarā*, and in other *sūtras*, a woman can be enlightened while remaining female, and the

⁴⁶² Kern 1963, 253.

⁴⁶³ Conze (1973) 1995, 219

⁴⁶⁴ KAJIYAMA 1982, 55.

⁴⁶⁵ Faure 2003, 100.

magical change of a woman into a man displays her understanding of Emptiness.⁴⁶⁶

Ohnuma explains that

in the pattern generally found within these episodes, a woman (in some cases just a girl) debates or discourses with various men (including monks, male bodhisattvas, and the Buddha)... the woman is...challenged in some way by one of the males, who expresses doubt about the abilities of women to practice the bodhisattva-discipline, be advanced bodhisattvas, or attain Buddhahood. In response to this challenge, she transforms herself into a man (often a young male novice or monk), either spontaneously or through an Act of Truth.⁴⁶⁷

Whereas the non-Mahāyāna school applies the theme of sex transformation to challenge the boundaries of the society, the Mahāyāna school applies it to challenge the doctrine of the Five Obstacles in non-Mahāyāna Buddhism. Unlike both the *Rūpāvatī* and story number 73, in which the major themes are karmic progression, generosity, and devotion, in the Mahayana texts, sex transformations are a device for conveying the Mahāyāna teachings of emptiness and the illusoriness of gender distinctions: “the sexual transformation of the woman is not primarily depicted as a necessary step or as something that makes the woman better. Instead, it is a magical display—a transformation-body or *nirmāṇa-kāya*—playfully engaged in for the benefit of the benighted male.”⁴⁶⁸

But no matter which theory sex changes serve to illuminate, their occurrences in the literature of both traditions are associated with the power of righteousness and challenging traditions. The theme of sex transformation as it occurs in story number 73 of the *Liu du ji jing*, the *Rūpāvatī*, or in Mahāyāna texts (earlier or later) represents a challenge to conventional boundaries while it propagates the central concepts of karma, emptiness, or illusion. Aside from later developments of the Mahāyāna

⁴⁶⁶ Paul 1985 [1979], 178.

⁴⁶⁷ Ohnuma 2000, 125.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid.,127-128.

concerning the theory of emptiness, the canonical motif is that an aspirant to Buddhahood must take rebirth as a man and that changing from female to male is a prerequisite for a female to receive a prediction of Buddhahood. Therefore, the answer to the question of whether the attitude toward women in story number 73 is positive or not, the answer is “yes,” the story sends a message to women that when they accumulate enough good merit by performing devotional and generous activities, they will have the chance to become a Buddha. However, it provides a slight different voice or attitude toward women from the majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* as we have discussed earlier; it does seem that, although Buddhism tries to open the door of Buddhahood to women, it hesitates to open it widely. This qualified acceptance of gender equality is evident in the message that for women a prerequisite for reaching the goal of Buddhahood is to perform the sex-changing Act of Truth in order to purify and masculinize their bodies.

THE ACT OF TRUTH

In story number 73 in the *Liu du ji jing*, the widow performs the Act of Truth when she first makes a vow to give up her body for the sake of sentient beings and then jumps from the top of the tower to the earth to transform herself and receive a prediction from the Buddha. Throughout the entire story, the Act of Truth is the peak scene or moment of the story. Why is it so important to perform the Act of Truth? Eugene Watson Burlingame, who has done an extensive study on the Act of Truth, suggests that “An act of Truth is a formal declaration of fact, accompanied by a command or resolution or prayer that the purpose of the agent shall be accomplished.”⁴⁶⁹ The idea and practice of the Act of Truth is not unknown in ancient

⁴⁶⁹ Burlingame 1917, 429.

Indian literature, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Many examples can be found in the Buddhist *avadānas*, *jātakas*, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā prajñāpāramitā*, and the *Milindapañha*, and in non-Buddhist texts such as the *Mahābhārata*, the *Ramāyāna*, as well as in the earlier Vedic literature. But the definition and connotation of an Act of Truth is far from uniform among these literatures since the “truth” that one is striving for through this act is different in different traditions. From the earliest *Rig-Vedic* times, it is about fulfilling one’s personal duty properly, which is reflected in the well-known phrase of the *Bhagavad Gīta*: *it is better to do one’s own duty poorly than another’s well*.

Regardless of one’s occupation, so long as the duty performed is one’s own, and so far as one is devoted in and through the act and performs it perfectly, then the Act of Truth in fact has been accomplished. Even so, this does not mean that an Act of Truth was open to everyone in early India. Women (those who perform the female gender role) are traditionally marked out for either wifehood or prostitution, and females (those with female sex characteristics) are indiscriminately treated as untrustworthy. Thus, “a Truth Act is very wide for men, but narrow for women.”⁴⁷⁰ That is probably why, in the story of Rūpavātī, the woman’s Act of Truth is performed by her husband instead.

But there are some exceptions. Prostitutes, for instance, if they have performed their duty perfectly, are capable of performing an Act of Truth. The story of a prostitute Bindumatī, who performs an Act of Truth, and so reverses the river’s flow, highlights “the great power of the truth; in other words, so powerful is the truth that even an immoral and lowly person such as a prostitute can make the Ganges River flow backward by means of its awesome power.”⁴⁷¹ As for wives, they “have to base an Act of Truth on the perfection of their sex life... basing it upon her chastity.”⁴⁷² In addition, as we have seen in story number 73, the widow is rewarded for her devotion

⁴⁷⁰ Brown 1940, 39-40.

⁴⁷¹ Ohnuma 2001, 69.

⁴⁷² Brown 1968, 172.

and generosity with the change of her female body to a male one in recognition of the Act of Truth. Norman Brown comments that having established the basis for an Act of Truth by “perfectly perform[ing] one’s duty,” the Act of Truth, “a spell, a kind of magic... [can] be used to achieve ‘supernatural’ or ‘miraculous’ results not normally within human capability.”⁴⁷³ As a result, the magical happens: the widow is not harmed when she jumps down from the high tower and moreover, she transforms her sex as she wished. In Rūpāvātī’s story, she too practices generosity and restores her body through an Act of Truth, although that Act is performed by her husband, not by herself. Does this difference indicate that the author of story number 73 gives more credit to women than does the author of the story of Rūpāvātī? In Ohnuma’s opinion, “This appropriation of Rūpāvātī’s Act of Truth by her husband... must be seen as a reflection of a social and cultural milieu in which husbands possess and legally speak for their wives—where wives, in fact, are seen as the direct extension of the male householder’s self, such that Rūpāvātī’s husband is almost restoring his own ‘body’ by means of the Act of Truth.”⁴⁷⁴ Overall, compared to the authors of the *Pāli Jātaka*, the author(s) of the *Liu du ji jing* have portrayed women as having more opportunities to obtain Buddhahood insofar as they have empowered their fictional women to exchange their fallen female bodies for those of men. In story number 73, a woman sets her course independently toward Buddhahood, using her own will. The author gives women more credit, independence, and capability in contrast to the story of Rūpāvātī, in which the female aspirant is still dependent on her husband and appears to be incapable of performing the Act of Truth on her own.

⁴⁷³ Brown 1968, 173-174. “In Buddhism the Ten Perfections often come to form the basis for the Truth Act, especially the first of them, which is generosity. The Bodhisattva, as we have seen, executes Truth Acts with its aid....A woman, to change her sex, uses a Truth Act based upon the perfection of generosity. These are specialized Buddhist doctrinal usages” (Brown 1968, 175-176).

⁴⁷⁴ Ohnuma 2000, 118.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The distinction between the connotations of “sex” and “gender” is unclear; they overlap each other and are inseparable. But, generally speaking, the term “sex” denotes biological characteristics, whereas “gender” signifies a range of characteristics including both biological features and sociocultural roles. However, it is often the case that the socially constructed notion of gender shapes the conception of each gender’s typical sex characteristics, and thus determines the status of men and women in relation to each other in the ever-changing conventions of evolving society.

Throughout this chapter I have endeavored to examine the status of women in the *Liu du ji jing* from both secular and spiritual perspectives. Secularly, the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* often depict women in their roles as wives. There seem to be two types of wives portrayed, the meritorious, pre-Juyi or pre-Yaśodharā wives and the wicked, pre-Ciñcāmāṇavikā wives, a split typical in the *jātaka* literature. But unlike this tradition, the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* honor the ex-wife of the Buddha, Yaśodharā, and give her an independence that is rare in most Buddhist literature. As a devoted, faithful, and supportive wife, Yaśodharā was encouraged, honored, and praised in her previous lives—and as result, she will obtain a better rebirth, be reborn in heaven, or even reach enlightenment. And even though the unfaithful wives, like Ciñcāmāṇavikā, without fail are blamed and sent to hell, this is not the result of their being impure because they are women, but because what they did as persons merited damnation. That is to say, in the *Liu du ji jing*, women are granted the free will to act well or ill; there is no disgrace in simply being a woman.

There are many stories in the collection where women are depicted with honor and graced with positive qualities. They are endowed with intelligence, capability, and virtue no differently than are their male counterparts. More interestingly, in the *Liu du ji jing*, the Bodhisattva is a woman four times and Maitreya is a woman once, which

indicates near-parity of spirit between a woman and a man. I am not suggesting that in the *Liu du ji jing* being a woman is a prerequisite for Buddhahood—even though both Śākyamuni and Maitreya are portrayed as having had former lives as a woman—but only that a woman is also capable of progressing along the Bodhisattva path. However, the situation of women in the Buddhist context was always the result of a mixture of influences, some converging on Buddhist culture from without, from the political strictures of contemporary non-Buddhist political forms, and others rising from within Buddhism itself, as various responses to the press of extra-Buddhist, Indian ideals.

What we have found is that the Buddhist attitude toward women, as expressed in the *Liu du ji jing*, that has arisen in this way is impeccably friendly and appreciative. This view is an uncommon one in Buddhist literature. Some scholars suggest that Buddhism is a philosophy of religious egalitarianism, whereas others suggest that Buddhism is androcentric or even misogynous. Sponberg analyzed the complex nature of Buddhist attitudes toward women manifested in its literature within the context of Buddhism's institutional development. He affirmed the multiplicity of voices found in the literature and enumerated four major ones, three of which emerge in the early literature: *soteriological inclusiveness*, *institutional androcentrism*, and *ascetic misogyny*. Using Sponberg's analysis, I have explored the different voices of the historical Buddhist attitude toward women from the earliest and most equalitarian, to an androcentrism wrought by political pressures and the processes they engendered within Buddhism over time, to its later misogynistic form. The status of women in Buddhism varies over time and across the developments of literatures and institutions. Even within the same genre or the same collection, the attitude toward women is not uniform because of this complex history of the texts as they are transmitted from period to period—a remarkable example is the great gulf between the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Pāli jātakas*.

It is generally agreed by scholars that the most deliberately misogynous texts of the Pāli literature are found in the *jātaka* tales in which women are depicted as wicked, deceitful, mentally unstable, physically fragile, and slavishly overwhelmed with lust. Among all the misogynous stories that occur in the *Pāli Jātakas*, the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* holds the most negative appraisal of women, consisting of twelve misogynous stanzas—and yet a version of this very tale exists in the *Liu du ji jing* that contains, not only no opprobrium toward women, but not even a single criticism of them, conveying as it does only a lesson in the need for solitude and the spiritual detriment of residing in a boisterous environment. As discussed in Chapter 1, the same story could have been modified, extended, or omitted outright by the storytellers due to any practical circumstance. That is probably why the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* in each collection expresses very different ideas, but it is fascinating to consider why the *Liu du ji jing* speaks in a voice so different from that of most Buddhist literature, and so pointedly different from the Pāli collection, on the subject of women.

Furthermore, the Buddha was never incarnated as a woman in the stories composing the *Pāli Jātakas*, but nonetheless the story of *Rūpāvatī* in the *avadāna* literature and story number 73 in the *Liu du ji jing* converge in at least two ways. First, in both stories the Bodhisattva starts as a woman, but in order to go further in her practice on the bodhisattva path, she is required to transform her female sex into a male one. Second, they both obtain a male body by means of the Act of Truth. In both of these stories, women are still inferior to men, and their bodies not pure enough to obtain Buddhahood, but because of their generosity, they are granted the opportunity to transform their bodies into male ones and reach their goal later. But unlike the widow in story number 73, *Rūpāvatī* is not told that her body is impure and needs to be changed (although this is implied). The female body (in contrast to the male body) is considered to be a filthy and impure object, and it is because of this that the widow

in our story wishes to get rid of it altogether and acquire a better one, namely a male one, which is a prerequisite for qualifying for the prediction that she will become a Buddha in the future. The literary theme of changing one's sex can be seen as an attempt by the authors to break through the boundaries of stereotypical gender roles in their societies. By depicting the transformation of a female body into a male one as the reward for meritorious deeds, such stories as the *Rūpāvatī*, story number 73, and stories found in both earlier and later Mahāyāna texts represent the authors' intention of challenging conventional boundaries while simultaneously propagating their respective concepts of karma, emptiness, or illusion.

If we consider the *Liu du ji jing* as whole, its attitude toward women is friendly; its stories give women credit and respect uncommon in the literature. Women are honored and appreciated in most of the stories. It even includes four stories in which the Buddha is a woman in his previous lives. But it seems that even these innovative authors of the collection, while trying to open the door of Buddhahood to women, are hesitant to open it widely—allowing ultimately, not that women can become Buddhas, but only that women can become men, who can then attain Buddhahood. That is, there is more than one voice within the collection of the *Liu du ji jing*; the majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* retains their friendly attitude to women and fit into Sponberg's category of *soteriological inclusiveness* and deserves a specific subcategory of *friendliness toward laywomen*. A few stories in the *Liu du ji jing*, however, such as story number 73, express a different voice, that of *institutional androcentrism*, whereas the *Pāli Jātaka* was refashioned to express *ascetic misogyny*.

The attitudes (more than one) toward women expressed in the *Liu du ji jing* are radically different (and higher) than those expressed in the *Pāli Jātakas*. But what might be the reasons for the divergent attitudes as seen in the same literature in different two collections? That is the question we intend to explore. We might not be

able to find the answer, but it is worth presenting some possibilities. One is that the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* are probably less modified, and thus present the earlier shape of the literature when laywomen formed the great majority of the audiences of the tales, were the primary patrons of the Buddhist community, and were persons of status and respect. The literary evidence discussed in this chapter and the epigraphical sources discussed in Chapter 2⁴⁷⁵ suggest that one attitude of the *jātaka* literature, or an attitude of this literature in its earlier stage, was friendly to women—this friendly attitude toward women is also probably the result of the fact that wealthy and devoted laywomen, who at that time played a significant role in nourishing and sustaining the growth and development of Buddhism, were a major part of the audience of the *Liu du ji jing*. But under different social/institutional circumstances, more precisely a certain degree of competition between monks and nuns over patrons and the financial support by laypeople, the monk-authors of certain Buddhist literature, such as those misogynous stories in the *Pāli Jātakas*, intentionally portray women with negativity. Thus there comes to be more than one voice expressed in the *Jātakas* literature.

⁴⁷⁵Laywomen have played a significant role in support of early Buddhist community as in Sponberg's words (1992, 5), "Canonical sources, even with their androcentric bias, note that some of Gautama's most prominent patrons were women, indicating both that there were a significant number of women of independent means during this period and that their support was instrumental in fostering the early community."

CONCLUSION

I have now surveyed not only the *Liu du ji jing* but also the *jātaka* literature from three perspectives: literary, artistic, and gender. My motivation for this endeavor stems largely from an interest in understanding whether the *Liu du ji jing*, a collection of Chinese translations of *jātakas*, would illuminate several aspects of the *jātaka* genre: the history and development of Indian narrative literature, the function of artistic presentation of the *jātaka* stories, and Indian Buddhist attitudes toward women.

The fundamental problem of the first chapter was this: what can the *jātaka* literature, considered as a form of narrative, tell us about the cultural, linguistic, and religious milieu in which these stories were shaped, and how might the *Liu du ji jing* add to our understanding of this milieu? Narratives are a valuable source of cultural wisdom; they serve as a cultural storehouse of shared knowledge and belief in every culture. The significance of the *jātakas* is evident in the fact that they were initiated and transmitted from generation to generation in the forms of literature, art, drama, and other media in India, and later these forms spread to other countries.

With regard to the question—how "Buddhist" is the *jātaka* literature in India in the ancient period—we found that the *jātaka* do share a great deal of similarities with Indian non-Buddhist narrative literature. For example, we compared the features of *jātaka* literature to the features characteristic of Indian narrative. We found many similarities between the two traditions stylistically, linguistically, contextually, and culturally. They share parallel subject matters, story contents, and a mixed prose/verse style. For example, a wide range of similar animal tales appear in the *Pañcatantra*, the Buddhist *jātaka* and the Jain *Dharmapadaṭṭakathā*. Because of these similarities, it is likely that these two

narrative traditions shared the same social context and networks of transmission. Although these traditions started with shared story materials, in order to make their teachings accessible to a wider audience, each tradition reconstructed and modified (for example, Buddhicized or Jainized) the shared folklores that were familiar to the common people.

Through a long period of transmission and modification, the *jātakas* came to maturity and developed the stable characteristics of a genre. Although a genre has some established features, it may be modified to some extent under the influence of particular historical moments and people. Therefore, we find that the *jātaka* genre is slightly different in each collection. In other words, the boundaries of a genre are not fixed, so the *jātaka* genre continuously changed, reconstructed itself, and developed to optimize its effectiveness for a specific people, time, or place. For instance, the Pāli *jātaka* and the stories in the Chinese *Liu du ji jing* usually include “the story of the present,” “the story of the past,” and “the Buddha identifies the different actors in the story in their present births,” but these do not appear in the *Cariyāpiṭaka* or the *Jātakamālā*. Or the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, the *Jātakmālā*, and the *Liu du ji jing* are organized according to the perfection they illustrate, whereas the Pāli *jātakas* are not. The most unusual aspect of most of the *Liu du ji jing* stories, differentiating them from the other three collections of *jātakas*, is that they were not written in the mixed style of verse and prose, but in prose only. Why does the *Liu du ji jing* alone have almost no verse between its prose sections, unlike the Pāli *jātaka* and the *Jātakamālā*, and why was it not written entirely in verse, like the *Cariyāpiṭaka*? Perhaps we should question the received view that the verse portion is the oldest part of the *jātaka* literature, a view that is based on the current Pāli *Jātaka*.

The *jātakas* are also illustrated at many Buddhist pilgrimage sites, such as Bhārhut, Sāñcī, Amarāvātī, Ajañṭā, Gandhāra, and so on, that were established from

the third century BCE to the seventh century CE. If one expected to be able to read or narrate the *jātaka* tales via the images at these *stūpas*, one would probably be quite frustrated. Based on their manner of presentation, their placement, and their use in ritual, it is very likely that the *jātaka* scenes at the Buddhist sacred sites did not serve a didactic function, as many scholars have assumed, but a devotional one. Most of the modes of presentation utilized in the depiction of the *jātakas* turn out to be either illogical or incoherent from the perspective of a narrative function. In a narrative, communication or participation is involved, and in a text, a narrative is presented logically in sequence. In contrast, the artistic presentations of the *jātakas* at *stūpas* are incomprehensible as narratives and cannot serve as a medium for communication or participation between artists and audience. In my case study of the *Viśvantara-jātaka*, I found that the literary and the artistic presentations provide very different messages. The paintings and sculptures at the *stūpas* were not designed to be read, understood, or narrated; therefore, no one should expect them to be presented logically and analytically as in textual narratives. Text and illustrated image, of the sort found at Buddhist sacred sites, are two different forms of presentation, with very different functions.

Because of their association with *stūpas*, which contain the relics of the Buddha or his disciples and are centers of devotional practice, these scenes very likely function as icons that are worshipped. When visiting a *stūpa*, pilgrims were expected to perform certain rituals there such as *darśan* (seeing) and circumambulation, which served a variety of purposes, mundane and spiritual. Many scholars assume that while performing the rite of circumambulation at a *stūpa*, pilgrims intended to read and interpret the stories illustrated there. But if these pilgrims had any such intentions, they would have been frustrated by the impossibility of making sense of these images and would have become dizzy from going back and forth due to the disorganization of the

scenes. Furthermore, these scenes are always located at positions inaccessible to human observation: for example, three feet above eye-level, twenty centimeters from the ground, or in dark caves. All these types of evidence make for a compelling case that these sculptures and paintings function primarily as objects of worship not as visual narratives.

One of the themes of this dissertation will also form the subject of a long-term research project I envision on the *jātakas*: the representation of women in the *Liu du ji jing* and the *jātakas*. Posing the question regarding the attitude toward women in the *jātakas* is tricky since the *Pāli jātakas* express a different voice from that of the *Liu du ji jing*. This topic deserves attention as the central thematic study of this dissertation. It is often the case that the socially constructed notion of gender shapes the conception of each gender's typical sex characteristics. Thus, in order to investigate the Buddhist attitude toward women in the *Liu du ji jing*, I examined the status of men and women in relation to each other as illustrated in the stories. The stories in the *Liu du ji jing* often depict women in their roles as wives, and there seem to be two types of wives portrayed: the meritorious wife, who is often a pre-Yaśodharā figure, and the wicked one, who is often a pre-Ciñcāmāṇavikā figure. Yaśodharā, a devoted, faithful, and supportive wife, was encouraged, honored, and praised in her previous lives—and as result, she is expected to obtain a better rebirth, be reborn in heaven, or even reach enlightenment. Ciñcāmāṇavikā, on the other hand, as an unfaithful and wicked wife, was blamed and sent to hell. But her fate is not depicted as being the natural result of her being a woman who is innately impure, but rather as the result of her unmeritorious action. That is, in the *Liu du ji jing*, women are represented as having the freedom to act well or ill; there is no disgrace in simply being a woman. Women are endowed with intelligence, capability, and (sometimes) virtue. For example, in the

Liu du ji jing, the Bodhisattva is a woman four times, and Maitreya is a woman once, which indicates near-parity of capability and status between a woman and a man.

Second, the attitude toward women found within Buddhist literature is complex since it is always the result of a mixture of influences within the context of Buddhism's institutional development. There is a multiplicity of voices found in different literatures. Alan Sponberg enumerated four voices, three of which emerge in the early literature: *soteriological inclusiveness*, *institutional androcentrism*, and *ascetic misogyny*. Applying Sponberg's analysis, I have explored this multiplicity of voices regarding the status of women, spanning developments in both Buddhist literature and institutions. Even within the same genre, the attitude toward women might vary because of this complex factors of the texts as they were transmitted from period to period and/or school to school—a remarkable example is the great gulf between the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Pāli jātakas*.

Scholars generally agree that the most misogynous texts of the Pāli literature are found in the *jātaka* tales in which women are depicted as wicked, deceitful, mentally unstable, physically fragile, and slavishly overwhelmed with lust. But this kind of attitude toward, depiction of, or message about women is not found in the stories in the *Liu du jing*. Furthermore, among all the misogynous stories that occur in the *Pāli jātakas*, the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* holds the most negative appraisal of women—and yet a version of this very tale exists in the *Liu du ji jing* that contains, not only no opprobrium toward women, but not even a single criticism of them. It contains only a lesson in the need for solitude and the spiritual detriment of residing in a boisterous environment. As I discussed in Chapter 1, storytellers modified, extended, or omitted outright *jātakas* as a result of various circumstances, including institutional influences. That is probably why the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* in each collection expresses a very different attitude toward women. I argued in Chapter 3 that the differences between the two

versions of the *Kuṇāla-jātaka* in the *Liu du ji jing* and the *Pāli Jātaka* can best be explained by their having been written (or modified) at different times or by different schools: the stories in the *Liu du ji jing* preserve one attitude of the *jātakas*--they retain their friendly attitude to women, whereas the *Pāli jātaka* was refashioned in the image of the *ascetic misogyny*, as Sponberg calls it, of its times. Furthermore, as I discussed in Chapter 2, inscriptional evidence shows that women, as patrons, actively played a very important role in the early development of Buddhism, which corresponds to the status of women as depicted in the *Liu du ji jing*; women were not as silent as most of Buddhist literature typically presents them.

In addition, the Buddha never appears as a woman in the stories comprising the *Pāli Jātaka*, but appears as a woman four times in the *Liu du ji jing*. It would be easy for us to over-generalize and claim that the authors of the *Liu du ji jing* have provided women with the same opportunity to attain Buddhahood as men. However, this is not true, as my case study of story number 73, *Ran deng shou jue jing* 然燈受決經, in the *Liu du ji jing* shows. In this story, a woman needs to first transform her female body to a male one by means of the Act of Truth in order to receive a prediction that in the future she will attain Buddhahood. Women are still regarded as inferior to men, and their bodies too impure to obtain Buddhahood, but because of their practice of generosity, they can be granted the opportunity to transform their bodies into male ones, and thus reach their goal later. The impression we receive from this story is that the male body is better and is a prerequisite for qualifying for the prediction that one will become a Buddha in the future.

If we consider the *Liu du ji jing* as whole, its attitude toward women is friendly—women are honored and appreciated in most of its stories—but it seems that while trying to open the door of Buddhahood to women, the authors of these stories are hesitant to open it widely—allowing ultimately, not that women can become

Buddhas, but only that women can become men, who can then attain Buddhahood. The suggestion could be made that the majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* fit into the category of *soteriological inclusiveness*, which corresponds to the early period of the development of Buddhism, when women were almost equal to men. Although story number 73, which contains the mandatory transformation of a female body to a male one in order to qualify for receiving the prediction of future Buddhahood, still shows traces of the voice of institutional authority or *institutional androcentrism*, it is in marked contrast to the *Pāli Jātakas*, which always express the voice of *ascetic misogyny*. Thus, overall, the *Liu du ji jing* presents us with a new vision of Buddhists' attitudes toward women: in its view, there were a few good women after all! Given the literary evidence that indicates how Buddhist attitudes toward women changed over time and the epigraphical evidence that women participated in, and contributed to, Buddhist pilgrimage sites, I conclude that the majority of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* express a "sub-voice" under *soteriological inclusiveness*, a voice of that is women friendly.

I am afraid to admit that this dissertation only skims the surface and leaves many questions unresolved about the *Liu du ji jing* and the *jātaka* literature. But it is important at this stage to raise questions and to examine the scripture in all possible aspects, literary, social, historical, and functional, with an open mind. There are still many aspects of the *jātaka* and the *Liu du ji jing* that need to be explored. For instance, karma theory, an ideology common in Indian religions, is the central theme of the *Liu du ji jing*, as is the case with the other *jātakas*. However, the theory as it occurs in a wide range of stories in the *Liu du ji jing* differs significantly from, or even disagrees with, the general understanding of karma theory found in other sources of Buddhist literature. In this regard, I plan to explore the nature of these differences and the reasons for these diverging theories. For instance, in the *Liu du ji jing*, being reborn in

the heavenly realms seems to be the major concern of the authors and audience, not enlightenment—the aim depicted in this scripture is creating better karma, not relinquishing all karma, which is the aim found in mainstream Buddhism. There are various other questions I intend to touch upon related to this matter. For instance, why do these stories strongly emphasize heavenly rebirth instead of promoting the rigorous practice of the Bodhisattva path? Who is the potential audience of this scripture: those striving for Buddhahood or those aiming for rebirth in heaven? Is the scripture about the Bodhisattva path, regarded as a path for more advanced practitioners, namely the monastic, or about attaining a better heavenly rebirth, the motivation for the common laity?

Moreover, I also plan on providing an appendix that will provide the correspondence of every story in the *Liu du ji jing* with the stories in the other Buddhist literatures, languages, traditions, and other types of presentations. It is my modest hope that this circumscribed reference will provide a narrow window into the study of Buddhism, in general, and into the *jātaka* literature, in particular, through which the value and importance of using Chinese artistic and epigraphic sources to supplement the deficiencies of relying on textual evidence alone in the field of Buddhist studies will come at long last into view.

APPENDIX No. 1

Who the Bodhisattva Is in the *Liu du ji jing*

布施度無極⁴⁷⁶

大國王	貧人	婆羅門	大理家	沙門	太子	梵志	鹿王	鵠鳥	孔雀王	兔
no.2	no.3	no.4	no.8	no.9	no.14	no.17	no.18	no.19	no.20	no.21
no.5			no.22	no.26		no.24				
no.6			no.25							
no.7										
no.10										
no.11										
no.12										
no.13										
no.15										
no.23										

⁴⁷⁶ There is no indication of who he is on no.1, and no.16 is not a former life of the Bodhisattva.

持戒度無極二

清信士	象王	鸚鵡王	太子	國王	凡夫	貧人	貧道士	獼猴	商人	長者
no.27	no.28	no.29	no.30	no.31	no.32	no.33	no.34	no.36	no.37a ⁴⁷⁷	no.37b
			no.38	no.40	no.35 ⁴⁷⁸				no.36a	
				no.41					no.39	

忍辱度無極三

隱士	梵志	貧人	大國王	獼猴	龍	道士/沙門	雀王	凡夫
no.42	no.44	no.45 ⁴⁷⁹	no.46	no.47	no.48	no.49	no.51	no.52
no.43			no.53		no.50			

⁴⁷⁷ In the story the Bodhisattva was reborn with different occupations.

⁴⁷⁸ Tong zi 童子

⁴⁷⁹ tong zi 童子

精進度無極四

女人 凡夫 獼猴王 鹿王 馬王 魚王 龜王 鸚鵡王 鴿王 比丘 清信士 商人 天王 天帝釋

no.72 no.55 no.56 no.57 no.59 no.60 no.61 no.62 no.63 no.64 no.65 no.67 no.69 no.71

no.73 no.68⁴⁸⁰ no.58

no.70

禪定度無極五

比丘/梵志

nos.75, 82.

智慧度無極六

國王 太子 凡夫 梵志 長者

no.87 no.83⁴⁸¹ no.85 no.86 no.88

no.89 no.84

no.90.

⁴⁸⁰ du mu zi 獨母子

⁴⁸¹ huang sun 皇孫

APPENDIX No. 2

The Bodhisattva's Connection/Relation with Others in the Past Lives Shown in the *Liu du ji jing*

布施度無極一

No. Bodhisattva Devadatta Wife Śāriputra Maitreya Ānanda Maudgalyāyana Mañjuśrī Mahākāśyapa Dīpaṅkara 優陀耶

5 大國王 逝心

6 大國王 天帝 梵志-舍⁴⁸² 彼國王

7 大國王 理家-秋 國相

9 沙門 琉璃中天-舍 銀城中天 金城中天

10 大國王 貪王 太子⁴⁸³

11 國王 鄰國王

12 國王 罪人 懷杼

13 國王 文殊師利⁴⁸⁴

14 太子 賣兒梵志 旃遮⁴⁸⁵ 天帝 父王 阿周陀道士 射獵

⁴⁸² 舍—舍利弗 秋-秋/鷺鷥子

⁴⁸³ A statement on neutral relationship between Ānanda and Devadatta in the past lives is given by the Buddha

⁴⁸⁴ Mañjuśrī plays a role like Indra who concerns about his position that could be taken by the Bodhisattva.

⁴⁸⁵ Zhan zhe, known as Ciñcāmāṇavikā in the Pāli version, also appears as Haoshou 好首 in other stories of the *Liu du ji jing*.

18	鹿王		國王-舍			
19	鵠母		子-舍	子	子	
20	孔雀王	獵士	獵士妻	國王-舍		
21	兔		獼猴-秋	狐	獼	梵志
22	理家	蕩子				
24	梵志					童子
25	理家	漂人	狐-秋	國王	鼈	蛇

持戒度無極二

No.	Bodhisattva	Devadatta	Devadatta's wife	Śāriputra	Maitreya
27	清信士				國王
28	象王	獵者	好首-小夫人		
29	鸚鵡王	人王			
30	王太子	相國	嬖妾		
31	國王	跛人	好首-淫婦		
35	童子	貪舅			
36	獼猴	雄鼈	雌鼈		

37 長者 城中天人-秋

忍辱度無極三

No. Bodhisattva Devadatta Devadatta's wife Śāriputra Maitreya Ānanda 拘隣 青蓮花除謹女

43 隱士 天帝釋 國王

44 梵志 弟 國王

45 童子 四姓

46 國王 舅 天帝釋

47 獼猴 谷中人

48 龍 毒虵 龍

49 道士 獵人 懷槃女子 烏-秋 蛇

50 龍王 酷龍人 弟-秋 國王 妹

51 雀王 虎

52 叔 伯

精進度無極四

No. Bodhisattva Devadatta Wife Śāriputra Maitreya Ānanda Mahāmaudgalyāyana Dīpaṅkara Buddha Kassapa Buddha

- 55 凡人 凡人⁴⁸⁶
- 56 獼猴王 國王
- 57 鹿王 人王
- 58 鹿王 溺人 王妻 國王-秋 烏
- 60 魚王 臣-秋 臣
- 61 龜王 另一龜王⁴⁸⁷
- 64 比丘-精進 懈怠比丘
- 66 小兒 比丘
- 67 商人 天帝釋
- 69 天王 魔天王
- 70 兄 毒龍 弟
- 71 天帝釋 *婦人
- 72 女人 隣凶夫 獨母-秋 *婿
- 73 女人-獨母 老比丘

⁴⁸⁶ Unlike in most cases, Devadatta here even gives a lesson of the four verses to the Bodhisattva.

⁴⁸⁷ Here Devadatta neither supports nor harms the Bodhisattva.

禪定度無極五

No. Bodhisattva Maitreya

82 梵志 梵志

智慧度無極六

No. Bodhisattva Śāriputra Maitreya Maudgalyāyana Mahākāśyapa 車匿

83. 皇孫 梵志-秋 道士 父王 道士

84 太子 天帝釋

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