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## Painting the Path to Perfection with a Book on the Walls: The Buddha's Former Lives in Shalu's Circumambulatory Passage

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We find at the temple of Shalu (fig. 1, 2) an explicit example of an opened and illustrated book painted into the long circumambulatory passage of the ground floor.[1] In this great circumambulatory passage (the *skor lam chen mo*) a space was designed to allow people to move in walking circuits around the temple's unseen sacred contents. During the fourteenth-century renovations at Shalu, this long and fully enclosed circumambulatory passage, the Korlam (*skor lam*) or "encircling path," was built around the shrines of Shalu's first floor (fig. 3). This tall passage, unusually long and narrow, with an interior space nearly six meters high and only two meters wide, was not left blank. Onto the outer wall of the passage, a specific book is painted as both word and image, a book of stories made traversable.

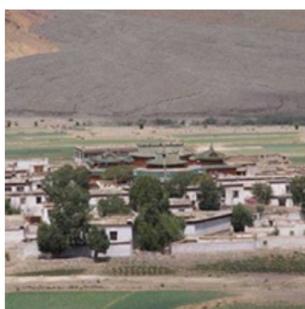


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

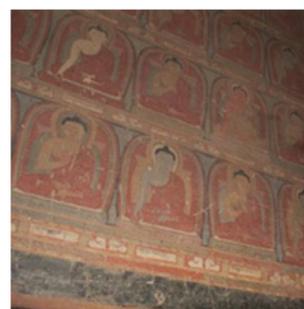


Fig. 4

Tibetan visitors to the temple today often visit the circumambulatory passage first before proceeding to the four inner shrines on the ground floor. This passage is painted in exquisite detail, its outer wall being covered with narrative scenes of the Buddha's former lives (Skt. *jātaka*) and its inner wall painted with sets of frontal Buddhas in repeating patterns (fig. 4).[2] The topic of the *Jātakas*, the Buddha's previous lives before he was born as Siddhārtha Gautama, were a new narrative subject for Tibetan art when it was produced at Shalu. Specifically, the walls of the passage depict an important new book, a contemporary collection produced by the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (1284-1339), entitled the *The Life Stories of the Buddha (Sangs rgyas kyi skyes rabs)*. This text was a new collection of former life stories, texts that had previously been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan, but which were now being collected together into a new whole.[3]

The book featured in painted form here, the Karmapa's new collection, was a book he had authored in 1314.[4] It was featured on the walls of the Shalu circumambulatory passage as both image and text.[5] Each of the single *jātaka* stories, like for example, story 63, the *jātaka* of the Youth Karma (*khye'u skar ma'i skyes pa'i rabs*) is shown as a large horizontally aligned rectangular image below which a corresponding version of the story is inscribed in redacted form to fit the space of the wall (fig. 5). To give just one example from the one hundred stories of how these painted stories work, in this tale the bodhisattva is a beautiful youth who is living and practicing a celibate lifestyle for many eons, but who then, one day when he visits a kingdom, is seen by a woman who falls desperately in love with him. Although he does not want to, he ultimately reluctantly agrees to marry her to save her from enduring the suffering she would feel if he abandons her. The pathos of the climactic scene of a woman falling at his feet crying "If I am not able to be with you, then at this place I will die" is placed centrally at the bottom of the composition (fig. 6), and is flanked by a king in a palace at the lower left (the king he visits) and a Newar style two-tiered structure at the right (occupied by a male and a female, hence representing the house he comes to cohabit with her as a householder for twelve years).[6]



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

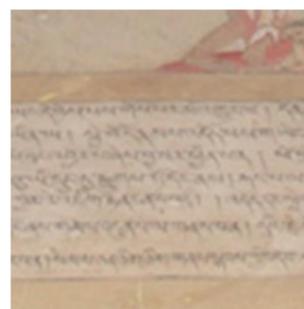


Fig. 8

This painting fills much of the visual field with rolling multi-coloured hills of red, white, blue and green, representing the idyllic natural sites that contrast with the cities and palaces, (in the story "he stayed at a place far away from the city, full of various fruit trees where pure roots and fruits grew"), thus depicting in the spaces the conflict between the worldly life he is briefly pressed into, and its opposition, the space of religious practice away from cities. At the end of story, he returns to practice, and this is depicted as the large bare-chested and bearded figure in the stylized red cave, in the paintings upper center left (fig. 7). The story told below in the inscription is framed at the start and end with a lesson related to the bodhisattva's perfection,[7] that he is able to endure his own suffering to create temporary happiness for others, and that even when noble beings appear to practice actions based on desire, they are in fact acting on the power of their compassion and are using skillful method. The stories are interpreted as painted pictures throughout the passageway above their accompanying long inscriptions (fig. 8).

Across the walls of the outer corridor, one hundred such stories proceed as both painted and inscribed descriptions of actions and events. This choice of subject shows the karmic ascent of the bodhisattva on his path to Buddhahood, thus inscribing the physical walking path of the temple visitor with the karmic path that the Buddha himself traversed across many lifetimes. The colophon passage added at the end explains the collection as a logical completion of a formerly incomplete set. The rhetoric of the complete set, and the Tibetan author's ability to create an effectively complete set, is expressed here as both text and visual image.

These are some of the most visually marvelous and detailed paintings at Shalu, and in early Tibetan art. The long, tall, narrow passage of over one-hundred-and-ten meters in length is painted in exquisite detail. Furthermore, this painting cycle represents the first systematic representation of the Buddha's former lives that we can locate in Tibetan art. While earlier subjects for narrative in Tibetan art often focused on the final life of the Buddha as Śākyamuni, or the Pilgrimage of Sudhana (Tibetan: Nor bzang) from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* sutra,[8]

the jātakas themselves were, until this fourteenth-century depiction at Shalu, not, it seems, a common subject for representation in Tibetan art. This seems surprising, given the early popularity of jātika depictions in the early Buddhist art of South, Central and East Asia at famous sites like Bharhut, Sanchi, Ajanta, and Dunhuang. Yet, in the art of late Indian Tantric Buddhism as it was transmitted to Tibet, the Jātakas did not seem to figure very prominently, with just a few exceptions.[9] Thus, the innovation of Shalu's paintings cannot be overstated: what we have is an explosion of creative new narrative imagery surrounding an expansive set of jātakas at Shalu.

So we must also analyze the emergence of the theme and its images in the context of a new literary interest in the genre of former life stories itself. In this regard, the choice to represent these specific jātakas at Shalu is also related to emerging ideas about rebirth and the lineages and institutions that were embracing and adapting it. Specifically, the author of this Tibetan collection of jātakas, the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, found the subject particularly appealing and useful in his moment. In the early fourteenth century, Tibetan lineages, and particularly his own lineage of the Karmapas within the Kagyu, were institutionalizing reincarnation in a new and significant way which would become hugely important in future centuries.[10] Specifically, Rangjung Dorje, the author of this collection, was the first lama to be recognized and to claim he remembered his life as his earlier incarnation, the Second Karmapa Karma Pakshi (1203/04-1283), laying the groundwork for a form of institutionalized reincarnation, Tulku (*sprul sku*), that would become hugely important in Tibetan Buddhism.[11]

This was the first time that reincarnation was used in the service of political continuity and the explicit inheritance of property.[12] In Rangjung Dorje's case, the lineage, titles, and their attendant wealth and land investitures were explicitly passed through what were being claimed as reincarnated lineal lines. In fact, reincarnation was about to become an important political reality for Tibetan lineages from this time on, and the Karmapa Rangjung Dorje was actively involved in making claims himself. In her study of his life and work, Ruth Gamble shows how Rangjung Dorje used the Jātakas as a model for a short work he composed which included descriptions of his own earlier lives; and he also wrote life stories of earlier lineage holders and the first two Karmapas. Gamble shows that the jātakas were an adaptable form for the Karmapa, and more specifically were used as models for recounting his own and his predecessors reincarnations and previous life stories.[13]

It is also interesting to consider how epic and historical narratives had a special appeal throughout and across the vastly wider Mongol realms during this period. In Mongol-ruled Iran from the thirteenth century on, artistic patronage became almost entirely focused on the production of illustrated historical epics like the *Shahnama*, or the Book of Kings.[14] This overt confluence of an expanded political realm and a renewed interest in representing historical narratives in art is suggestive, and resonates with this sudden florescence of the jātika theme here in the Tibetan context.

The choice to represent these specific one hundred jātika stories and paint them in exhaustive detail on the walls at Shalu was made within a constellation of religious, political and social factors. First and foremost among these, the choice was made to represent a particular, recent, Tibetan-authored book. This contemporary collection of tales presented itself not merely as a straightforward translation of Indian sources, though the name of the Indian author was given, but the mural representation of the organized book painted on the walls is primarily demonstrating and visualizing the Tibetan lama Rangjung Dorje's editorial and organizational prowess: his capacity to carefully edit and organize a previously disparate group of texts into a logical, and useful, sequence. This intellectual project was conceptually close to the intellectual and book organizing activities that were being undertaken at Shalu in these same years, where Shalu's important religious abbot, the famous textual scholar, Buton Rinchen Drup (Bu ston rin chen drup, 1290-1364, served as abbot at Shalu from 1320-1354), was actively producing an early edition of the Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*). Indeed, the visual presentation of the book on the walls highlighted the planning and organization of the stories, their conceptual organization into sets of ten, their regularized lengths (standardized for inscription), and their progress towards the final story of Śākyamuni.

Other reasons to choose these jātakas at Shalu must also relate to their basic appeal and potential for artistic representation. In contrast to other available religious subjects, the jātakas are morally didactic, visually rich, and easily accessible to the larger public audiences that the temple hoped to influence. These stories opened up unprecedented possibilities for painting rich landscapes and visual pleasures: the machinations of royal courts and worldly dramas play out in them.

There may also have been a utility to placing these narratives—a form foregrounding sequence, causality, and themes of the everyday—into a space meant primarily for lay people's circumambulation. At Shalu the linear sequence of narratives of the jātakas is elaborated against this long linear passage space, where people were expected to traverse them in a predictable direction (clockwise). In the earliest Indian Buddhist art at stūpasites like Sanchi and Bharhut, dating back to the first century BCE to the first century CE, narratives of the life of the Buddha and scenes of the jātakas had been the major iconographic subjects represented on the stūpa drums, railings and gate crossbeams, which were also spaces for circumambulation.[15] In earlier Tibetan temples, sequential narratives like the life of Śākyamuni were sometimes also featured around circumambulatory spaces as at Tabo.[16] Indeed, it seems that while narratives do not only appear in encircling spaces, they were often a preferred and natural subject for such spaces.[17]

While both inner and outer walls of the passage were painted, they were not necessarily painted at the same time. In contrast to the paintings of the inner wall, the paintings and stories of the outer walls are in a non-devotional position, and so are both expected and able to be more didactic than devotional in their content. Indeed, there evidence that the inner wall of the circumambulatory passage were painted before the outer walls. As the fourteenth century passage was built around two earlier existing shrines, remnants of an earlier passage also decorated with Buddhas remains visible at the site, showing that an earlier, smaller, Korlam encircled the freestanding twin shrines, had existed and had been painted earlier. Paintings on walls that were once exterior along both the south and north of the "twin shrines" preserve this (fig. 9). Thus, after the construction of the great circumambulatory passage, some of the walls were already previously painted, particularly the exterior west wall of the conjoined shrines. Yet the painted jātakas of the exterior wall facing these are most likely later, not painted until after the death of their collector and author Rangjung Dorje, who passed away in 1339, placing the jātika paintings in the 1340s. The absence of any contact between the textual collection's author, the Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, and Shalu, and the fact that in his own autobiographical works he does not mention even knowledge the project at Shalu, makes it very probable that the jātika story paintings and inscriptions were added after his death in 1339.



Fig. 9

### The Chosen Book: Collecting Narratives from Ancient India in Contemporary Tibet

The book that was painted on the walls of Shalu's circumambulatory passage lists and cites two separate authors: two men whose lifetimes were separated by over a thousand years, and who lived geographically far apart, one in India and the other in Tibet. Rangjung Dorje's compilation begins with a much earlier Indian-authored collection, and then claims to "complete" it.[18] For this collection, the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje expanded on the Sanskrit text, known as the Indian *Jātakamālā*, the garland of birth stories, a collection of thirty-four former life stories by the fourth-century Indian poet Āryaśūra. Āryaśūra's text was translated in its entirety into Tibetan and then "completed" by the fourteenth-century lama Rangjung Dorje with the addition of a further sixty-seven stories, creating a linked collection of one hundred stories leading up to the penultimate life, the one hundred and first story which is the life of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni.

Āryaśūra, called Pa bo (*dpa 'bo*) in Tibetan (meaning "hero"), was a fourth-century Indian poet about whom we do not have much concrete information.[19] Later Tibetan literature claims that he was once a prince who, like Śākyamuni, abandoned the palace and became a monk, although this cannot be verified.[20] In Tibetan sources he is a figure around whom some confusion swirls: Tāranātha conflated Āryaśūra with Aśvaghōṣa in his 1608 *History of Buddhism in India*. [21] While five works are attributed to him in the Tibetan Tengyur,[22] most of these other attributions are dubious.[23] Among his attributed works, his *Jātakamālā*, is his most famous work.

The Sanskrit *Garland of Life Stories* was a work in which pre-existent folk tales were adapted into a text of high classical courtly-style Sanskrit. These were stories from the vast sea of known tales of the Buddha's past lives,[24] and these adhered closely to explaining the first three perfections of generosity (*dāna*), virtue (*śīla*) and forbearance (*ksānti*). Since these three perfections were more suited to householders than monastics, it has been suggested that the text may have been intended to serve as instruction for the laity.[25] This literary gem was written in an elaborate *campū* poetic style, which combined mixed verse and prose.[26] As a Sanskrit text it was refined poetry, characterized by a variety of poetic meters, a wealth of vocabulary, and numerous sophisticated literary devices.[27]

The text was admired immediately in India and abroad, and famed for its beautiful style. Its popularity was likely due in part to its subject matter, including stories of dramatic intrigue and ultimate sacrifice leading to selfless deaths. Its popularity was evident in its almost immediate translation into a topic ripe for artistic depiction. The *Jātakamālā* stories of Āryaśūra were made the subject for some fifth-century cave paintings at Ajanta,[28] as well as an extended program of stone carvings from the eighth century at Borobodur in Indonesia[29] Yet despite the popularity of art based on the jātika stories in South and Southeast Asia centuries earlier, it was, before this extended depiction at Shalu, not a theme we find often or extensively depicted in Tibetan art.

Although we do not have numerous earlier artistic depictions of the jātika stories predating Shalu in Tibet, we do know that this Indian literary work already had a presence in Tibet. The *Jātakamālā* was one of six core treatises for the Kadampa (*Bka' gdams pa*) school, the lineage established by Dromtön ('Brom ston, 1004-1064) the chief disciple of the eleventh-century Bengali master Atiśa. The set of thirty-four jātika stories authored by Āryaśūra was translated into Tibetan in the eleventh century, and was one of the six texts that were emphasized for study by that school.[30] However, it had evidently not been popular enough to warrant the frequent creation of art on its theme, a fact that is surprising given the early popularity of jātika tales in art from other parts of the Buddhist world. Yet in Tibet it seems that while the text was read, for about three centuries the jātika were not a popular topic in art. Rangjung Dorje's use of the text as the basis for his collection gave it a renewed life and a much-expanded popularity in Tibet. However, the *Jātakamālā* was not the only text about the Buddha's former lives that was of interest in Tibet at the time. Ksemendra's *Wish-Fulfilling Vine* had been translated from Sanskrit in the thirteenth century and included in Buton's Tengyur in the 1330s; around 1360, a revised edition of it was sponsored by the lay leader Jangchup gyeltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan).[31]

Rangjung Dorje was a hugely influential Lama from the Kagyü lineage (*bka' brgyud*), a prolific scholar and an important teacher. He held high positions at the Mongol court, where he traveled several times to resolve disputes and serve as a religious leader. Turrell Wylie believed that he may have been being groomed to take over as a spiritual head for the Mongols, and that this was one reason he enjoyed their ongoing patronage and support throughout his life.[32] He was the first of his recognized lineage to don the black hat which would come to be a characteristic attribute of his lineage and position.[33]

Born in 1284, he was only a few years older than Buton, and was the first of the Karmapa lineage to be recognized as a direct reincarnation of his predecessor in his own lifetime. He authored many works, including works on "Great seal" (*phyag chen*, Skt. *Mahāmudrā*), and Tibetan "Cutting through the ego" (*gcod*), as well as the highest yoga tantras (Anuttarayogatantra, *bla na med pa'i rgyud*).[34] His work on Buddha-nature (*Tathāgatagarbha*) highlighted the conceptual belief, paraphrased by Kurtis Schaeffer, that "because all beings possess the enlightened heart of Buddhahood that they are, but for obscuring defilements, essentially Buddhas." [35] He was also the very first Tibetan author to organize his own set of jātikas.

The inscriptions of the introduction and concluding textual panels which were painted in the circumambulatory passage explain much about the book that is being painted. Both Āryaśūra's introduction, which Rangjung Dorje preserved in his text, appears in-full at the beginning of the circumambulatory passage, and Rangjung Dorje's own colophon text appears as the last painted inscription at the end of the corridor. These were each transferred to the wall largely unchanged from the textual versions, showing that the processes of redaction that were necessary and used in many of the story inscriptions, where long stories had to be significantly redacted for the wall format, were not necessary or desired in the application of these "book-end" explanatory texts to the walls. These inscribed texts painted as inscriptions at Shalu each warrant a close reading for what they tell us about the intention behind the text and its visual representation.

### Āryaśūra's Introduction as Inscription



Fig. 10

The textual introduction that appears in the murals is not redacted, but reproduces the Tibetan translation of Āryaśūra's introductory homage in full as it appeared in Rangjung Dorje's work.[36] It does not, however, begin with a possible textual frontispiece that accompanied later printings of Rangjung Dorje's collection, a page that briefly explains in the collected works the respective contributions of each of its two authors, though this is an editorial addition that reflects and explains the text in the context of the collected works of the author.[37] The circumambulatory passage inscription begins just as a Tibetan manuscript of this text would, by listing the title of the text that follows in both languages, Sanskrit and Tibetan (fig. 10): "rgya gar skad du/ dza ta ka ma la/ bod skad du/ skyes pa'i rabs kyi rgyud" In the Indian language: *Jātakamālā*. In the Tibetan language: *The Continuum of Life Stories*. The homage and introduction were kept intact. The Tibetan phonetic rendering of the Sanskrit title is a direct copy of Āryaśūra's title, *Jātakamālā*, which in Sanskrit means specifically a garland (*mālā*) of birth stories or former lives (*jātika*). The Tibetan title that follows offers a nearly direct translation of this title, using the term "continuum" for garland (*rgyud*). Though the

same Tibetan term, rgyud, is used for the general classification of a text as a "Tantra," the *rgyud* here does not connote a tantra, and instead must be intended only in the sense of a continuum.

The inclusion of two language titles is a conventional beginning of a Tibetan religious manuscript, which always begins with titles first in Sanskrit, then in Tibetan, which are readily visible in an early manuscript displayed open in the Segoma Lhakhang at Shalu in 2009 (fig. 11). The inscription follows the title section with another reference to the organization of a book that reads, "The first section" (*bam po dang po*), before proceeding to a poetic homage that follows. This homage is the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit homage originally offered by Āryaśūra.[38] From here until the end of story thirty-four, all texts are a direct Tibetan translation from this Sanskrit source. The dedicatory homage reads:

I bow to the Lord Buddha Mañjuśrī.[39]  
I respectfully offer flowers of poetry with cupped hands,  
To the incomparable previous lives of the Buddha,  
Which are the foundations of auspiciousness, fame, are indisputable,  
extremely beautiful and completely hold supreme knowledge.

These exalted signs of becoming (ie. *jātikas*),  
Will show all the paths to Buddhahood.  
Even the mind of the faithless will become faithful.  
By this speech endowed with dharma (all) will become very happy.

In order to make my poetry suitable to listen to  
By ones who are the best among worldly beings, and partially noble  
I compose (*brtsams*) with complementary text and logic,  
Thinking of benefiting sentient beings.

I bow to the Sangha, the Dharma, and the incomparable Buddha  
Who is famous for his omniscience, [who is] without error,  
Who is unlike some other beings,  
Those who only achieve qualities for others in order to benefit themselves.

We must have pure devotion to the Buddha  
Because even in his former lives  
He had the nature of extreme compassion,  
Without the expectation of reward, towards all sentient beings.[40]

This homage to the Buddha explains in religious terms the author Āryaśūra's interest in exploring the theme of the Buddha's former lives. These stories are described as signs or indications of something else, likened to exalted signs of becoming (*grags pa'i mtshan mar gyur pa bzang po*), which are brought together to demonstrate and teach all the paths to Buddhahood (*bde bar gshegs gyur lam rnam*). This implies that these paths are various and multiple, and that the study of many different paths can be instructive for others. The lives are thus proposed as models of virtuous action, intended to inspire faith and devotion, to be admired, and perhaps even to be followed. Extolling the deeds of the bodhisattva has the power to convert, making even the minds "of the faithless" become faithful. The aim of inspiring and supporting widespread devotion through this modeling of ideal selfless behaviour is Āryaśūra's stated goal.



Fig. 11

The fact that the lives are also the "foundations" of the Buddha's fame is symbolically important and useful here, as well. Āryaśūra presents the argument that the stories themselves are like foundations, situated structurally lowest in the meaning-hierarchy of Buddhism, making the often-used metaphorical association between Buddhist teachings and built structures. As foundations, the stories are structures upon which other systems and beliefs rest. They are thus accessible, supportive and useful. They are foundational because they are didactic and easily understood, and are important because they have the capacity to explain something as conceptually difficult as enlightenment in ways that more people can understand.

While the stories are meant to be didactic and accessible, it is also clear that the author wants them to be appreciated as beautiful literature, and by "ones who are the best among worldly beings, and partially noble" (*'jig rten mchog gi spyod pa dam pa'i phyogs tsam*). Āryaśūra explains that his words are composed so as to be beautiful, likening them to individual flowers, a fitting metaphor for the larger text being described as a garland, made to beautify and ornament, composed of many flowers (stories) strung together into a continuum. [41]

His stories are "suitable to listen to" (*mnyan du rung ba*) because his own speech both follows tradition and is in keeping with logic—he has composed it with "complementary text and logic" (*lung dang gtsug lag rigs par mi 'gal*). Here *lung* refers to tradition and scriptural precepts, while *rigs pa* connotes rational reasoning. The words thus are both correctly following precedents and crafted by the author himself. Being composed by the author with the intention to help others, the act of writing is thus modeled on the Buddha's own "extreme compassion without the expectation of reward." In this way, the stories are meant to stir the emotions and have an aesthetic effect on listeners, who the author plans to move and influence both through the stories' compelling narrative and their beauty. [42] Āryaśūra thereby flatters his audience while also extolling the aesthetic qualities of his own work in his homage.

The introductory inscription reproduces in complete form the translated dedication of Āryaśūra as Rangjung Dorje also included it in his text. The inscribed panel, painted in gold ink on black, recalls the first page of a book in its colouring. The words it contains spell out clearly the author Āryaśūra's intention in writing the text, and his stated intentions are related to providing accessible and persuasive stories that would move people to devotion through their clarity, as well as their emotional and aesthetic appeal. It is one of only two inscriptional panels in the circumambulatory passage unaccompanied by painted images.

### Rangjung Dorje's Colophon Inscription

The other inscription unaccompanied by image is the explanatory text that comes at the end of the passage, as it would also come at the end of the book—the colophon from the Tibetan author Rangjung Dorje that appears at the end of the passage (fig. 12). This passage echoes and expands the theme of the didactic power of narratives, providing further reasons not just to write them in the first place, but explaining the rationale to collect them together and the power that arises from their organization into a new set. In contrast to the Indian author, Rangjung Dorje argues for the value of his set as a usable, organized system.



Fig. 12

The colophon inscription is the final inscription on the outer wall, located at the end of the passageway (fig. 12). It is placed where the walls have lowered struts and is, like the introduction, also unaccompanied by any painting above it. In this colophon the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje offers his own dedication and explanation for his textual and organizational work. Rangjung Dorje's colophon picks up on many of the themes established in Āryaśūra's introductory dedication, particularly around the explanatory power of the *jātakas*, but he further expands on these to include his own rationale for creating the collection as a whole. He ultimately posits his project as the completion of a formerly incomplete set. This rhetoric of the complete set, and the Tibetan author's ability to create an effectively completed set, is what the entire painted cycle also seeks to capture and convey.

Rangjung Dorje begins his colophon by explaining why and how the *Jātaka* stories are effective teaching aids:

The glorious Buddha's deeds are vast like the sky. Without bias, they cover everywhere, like the sun. But it is because of individual sentient beings' karmic connections that they appear as different things. [Like that, the Buddha's deeds] show the great path of enlightenment, and become beneficial to sentient beings. They have incomparable great qualities, and demonstrate both worldly activities and world-transcending activities. [43]

Rangjung Dorje repeats the argument about the illustrative power of the Buddha's deeds, tying it even more explicitly to the concept of a diverse audience. He specifies that it is because people have different "karmic connections" that there is a need for multiple stories wherein the Buddha appears differently and puts his beneficence into practice in diverse ways. Rangjung Dorje explains that the *Jātakas* are purposely numerous and different from one another to demonstrate diverse paths to enlightenment for diverse kinds of people. This goes beyond Āryaśūra's divisions of assumed readers into only two categories: the "faithless" and the "faithful." Conversely, Rangjung Dorje celebrates the diversity of stories as a necessary treatment for an unspecified but vast diversity of people who may hear them and be helped by them.

This invocation of a wider (and karmically diverse) audience for the stories uses the metaphor of an overarching sunlit sky that has the power to illuminate the whole world. Thus, Rangjung Dorje presents the Buddha's past lives as global and universally present. Further, they are likened to something natural, likening the author's role more to revelation than to craft. This is also a change of tone from Āryaśūra, who "composed with complementary text and logic," whereas Rangjung Dorje reveals the unmediated natural "sunlight" of the stories, changing the relationship posited between the author and his text—he is a revealer.

The stories have value for Rangjung Dorje, because they demonstrate to people and instruct them about actions necessary in this world and beyond it. The distinction between "worldly activities and world transcending activities" (*'jig rten 'jig rten 'das pa'i spyod pa*) on which the stories are strongly based (*brtan pa*) expresses a belief, also found in his work on Tathāgatagarbha, that there is a systematized relation between absolute and ordinary human reality. He is thus able to explain methodically "the continuum of existence from ordinary human existence to Buddhahood." [44] The *jātakas* demonstrate above all else that even with and through actions in the human world, the bodhisattva became the Buddha. Rangjung Dorje has thus temporally extended the benefits and relevance of the *jātakas*—they are relevant for this life and beyond it.

This is followed by the specific attribution of the first thirty-four stories to Āryaśūra "All these (stories) the being called Āryaśūra (dPa' bo) decorated (*rgyan pa*) with poetry like beautiful flowers. Generosity, discipline, patience and diligence, in thirty-four Buddha life stories he explained these perfections." [45] Here the author directly credits Āryaśūra, but also implies that his work was incomplete. By referring to thirty-four stories that extol only the first four of a set of ten perfections, Rangjung Dorje is setting up his claim that his own work is a logical completion of the work that Āryaśūra began but did not finish. He borrows and repeats Āryaśūra's own metaphor likening the stories to flowers, and attributes to the Indian author the power to "decorate" (*rgyan pa*) them with poetry—a reference to aesthetic craftsmanship.

He goes on to justify his project of completing the incomplete work in terms of the set of ten perfections (Tibetan: *pha rol tu phyin pa bcu*, Sanskrit *pāramitā*). The ten perfections are virtuous qualities that explain the bodhisattva's ascent to Buddhahood over many lifetimes, and in the history of Buddhism, began as a set of six that were later expanded to ten. Rangjung Dorje states that the work had been begun but had not been completed, further insisting that he alone was equipped for the task:

In India, although many scholars knew the five major sciences of knowledge (*gnas na rigs pa*), they tried to explain the ocean of poetry (of Buddha's lives), but their individual wisdom was just like a river, so they could not compete (with Āryaśūra). Further they were cowardly, and gave up in the attempt (to bring all the stories together and explain them). Similarly in Tibet, ones who assume presumptuously that they are scholars, they also could not bring together (these stories). Although the incomparable Āryaśūra did not appear here (in Tibet), he is a poet who was prophesied by the Buddha. By myself, one who during this age of degeneration has strong devotion to the deeds of the bodhisattva and Buddha, and unshakeable devotion to the self-arisen Buddha, with faith strong like the vajra, my own wisdom of poetry comes from the great compassionate Mañjuśrī. I clearly explained sixty-six stories of Buddha's incomparable deeds, explaining the path of enlightenment, and completing the body of meaning of the religious commentary (on the Buddha's Jātakas). That is the reason why my hard work/diligence is meaningful, and it is suitable for scholars to rely on them.[46]

Rangjung Dorje implicitly criticizes other scholars, both Indian and Tibetan, who have been unable to complete dPa' bo's work, despite their attempts. These others before him, he claims, had wisdom merely like little rivers, and were therefore limited in their ability to conceive of the vast ocean of the Buddha's deeds, as he and Āryaśūra have. Rangjung Dorje claims that he and Āryaśūra alone have been able to capture and convey this otherwise naturally occurring "ocean" of wisdom.

He claims authority and states value for his work by means of two arguments: that his explanations are clear, and that they have completed a "body of meaning" (*don gyi lus*) for the religious commentarial text (*bstan bcos*). This all leads up to the author introducing himself, stating that he has strong devotion and wisdom that has come directly from the Bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī. With his skill and devotion, he tells us that he has been able to "to make completely whole" (*yongs su rdzogs par 'gyur*) the collection by his addition of sixty-six stories.[47]

The completion of meaning is an oblique but direct reference to his claim that the one hundred stories illustrate ten perfections with ten stories each. This is a claim he makes in his closing lines, and that he expands and explains in another short commentary on the Jātakas. [48] Rangjung Dorje's fundamental claim is that he has completed Āryaśūra's text because he has placed the Buddha's lives and deeds into a meaningful set related to the set of ten perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa bcu*, Skt. *pāramitā*).

The ten perfections are virtuous qualities that explain the bodhisattva's ascent to Buddhahood over many lifetimes. These qualities were originally a set of six perfections, to which an additional four were added in later Mahāyāna Buddhism. The original six perfections, listed in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra and the Lotus sūtra (among others), are generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, contemplation and wisdom.[49] To these six another four were added in the Mahāyāna *Ten Stages Sūtra* (*Daśabhūmika Sūtra*) by the sixth century; these are: skillful means, resolution, strength and knowledge.[50] This expanded list was also interpreted as a complement to the ten stages (*bhūmis*) that a bodhisattva traverses on the path towards becoming a Buddha.

These perfections represent virtues that are fully developed by a bodhisattva and that are practiced across multiple lifetimes.[51] Their combination with the ten stages of a Bodhisattva as the set of ten to which Rangjung Dorje refers implies that through perfected actions the bodhisattva acquires more merit through action, and so eventually becomes the Buddha. This reinforces that real enlightened activity is possible for everyone in the world, regardless of station. The generosity of a king will necessarily look different than the generosity of a rabbit, but both can nevertheless put extreme bodhisattva-like generosity into action. The jātakas so organized thus illustrate how all beings can practice the perfect virtues necessary to ascend along the path, regardless of their starting point. Their enumerative inscription and illustration in a path itself was an ideal, harmonized expression of the concept of a progression through lives and stages of perfection.

Rangjung Dorje also advertises his merits to an intended audience of "other scholars," who he promises can "rely" on his text. This reminds us that no matter how broadly accessible the subject itself was held to be, another very real audience for him was, quite naturally, other scholars. This is also an invitation to others to use his commentary on their own, to "rely" upon it as they interrogate or explain their own commentaries. Rangjung Dorje sees himself as contributing to an active discourse of authors and scholars who, like himself, are explaining and coming to better understandings of the Buddhist teachings. We can imagine the appeal of a line like this to a reader like Shalu's abbot Buton, whose commentaries inscribed at the temple attendant to the upstairs maṇḍala paintings reveal his own desire to be a thorough scholar who can be relied upon by others.

Towards the end of his colophon Rangjung Dorje becomes explicit in his defensive criticism of his work. He asserts that he has attended to both the poetic style and the subject of the Buddha's deeds, and even implies that anyone who would criticize his writing lacks the wisdom to properly appreciate these aspects:

Some people don't care about meaning but they care about the way of writing poetry [i.e., style], whereas some intelligent ones focus on the Buddha's deeds and want to follow only his activities. Some people don't care about either of these [deeds or poetic style], and have no wisdom to understand those things. Those people are not allowed to place blame on this text.[52]

This pre-emptive response to imagined critics implies that any criticism of the work on the basis either of content or style reveals a poor understanding on the part of the critic, not any failing in his original text. He asserts that he has taken care to follow a logical meaning while also maintaining a beautiful, poetic style.

He follows this with another, even clearer explanation of his motives, along with an interesting caveat regarding his expected outcome:

These jātakas, which are not contradictory to either scriptures or logic, I did not make in order to improve my ego or to increase my fame or wealth. During the age of degeneration, it is impossible to spread them everywhere, so I don't have this motivation. Instead, just like the Buddha's activities were for the great benefit of sentient beings, I myself also try to benefit sentient beings. That's why the supreme actions of the bodhisattva, I have clearly explained.[53]

These statements reflect the somewhat ambiguous position of the author signing his work in a structure where self-recognition must be downplayed lest it be misunderstood as ego-invested self-promotion. While of course the writing of a good text or commentary is arguably exactly what increases any particular Buddhist teacher's fame, it is an important statement to place for the record that this is not his motivation, even if fame could be an accidental outcome.

The colophon closes with dedicatory verses, whose first words are rubricated, by being highlighted through the fact that they are painted in red, in contrast to the rest of the text in black (fig. 13). I have indicated with underlining here the phrases that appear in red:

By this pure virtuous action  
May countless sentient beings enter the path of bodhisattva's actions,  
And achieve great wisdom,  
And cut all ignorance  
And so become Buddhas.

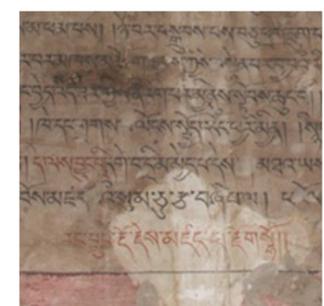


Fig. 13

The text expresses the desire to share these stories so that others can become enlightened beings. This is followed by a concluding summary of the two authors, which also highlights the name of Rangjung Dorje in red:

Like that, *The Continuum of the Jātakas*, Slob dpon dpa' bo (Āryaśūra) wrote thirty-four, and in order to thoroughly complete the ten perfections and ten stages, the next sixty-seven, which are the actions of the bodhisattva from many sutras, were composed by Rang byung rdo rje, the person who follows the dharma of the profound Sūtras. The end. May auspiciousness spread everywhere in the world. The writer [scribe] is called Snar thang pa blo ldan bkra shi.[54]

The end of the text corresponds to Rangjung Dorje's longer written text, with the notable omission of a series of mantras that fill one more line of text in the printed version. In the Shalu inscription, instead of mantras, the last line is a scribal incursion, a signature from the scribe who artfully wrote the words of this verse onto the wall.[55]

Thus the colophon inscription has given us a very clear attribution and explanation for the book that appears on the walls. It tells us that

this is a book authored by the fourteenth-century Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, and that he took the first thirty-four stories from the famous Sanskrit poem, *Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā*, and followed this with sixty-seven more stories from other sources. In the introductions and colophons as they are included on the walls, both of these authors, the ancient Indian poet and the fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar, have asserted their reasons for composing their texts. While *Āryaśūra* sought primarily to “decorate” and “beautify” the deeds of the Buddha to inspire faith and devotion, Rangjung Dorje emphasizes his ability to create through them a complete, and usable, set.

### The Rhetoric of the Completed Set

As both the colophon and his commentary text explain, Rangjung Dorje saw his textual project as one of “completing” an unfinished collection of stories begun by *Āryaśūra*. His claim that the *Jātakamālā* text was incomplete was later repeated by *Tāranātha*, who also claimed that *Āryaśūra* had planned a collection of one hundred stories.[56] While it is possible that *Āryaśūra*'s collection was moderately unfinished,[57] there is little to support the contention that the collection he planned would have comprised one hundred stories, organized according to ten perfections. When Rangjung Dorje states in his colophon that he made complete (*yongs su rdzogs par 'gyur*) the body of meaning of the Buddha's *Jātakas* (*bstan bcos don kyi lus*), he claims validity for his work specifically because it represents a logical unification of meaning, a composite thing he describes as a body (*lus*). Meaning is produced through compilation and collection, and assembling the many parts into an organized whole.

*Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā* was probably not intended to follow the structures Rangjung Dorje later adapted in his scheme. Peter Khoroché explains that whereas the first three “decads” (a group of ten) of *Āryaśūra*'s stories do correspond to the first three virtues (generosity, morality and forbearance), the scheme falls away for the last four of the thirty-four stories, making it unlikely that *Āryaśūra* had any intention of completing them as the Karmapa suggests.[58] Though *Āryaśūra*'s text does lack a closing colophon, making it possible that he intended to add more stories, it is unlikely that he ever planned to reach one hundred.

Instead, we must see the assertion that Rangjung Dorje was completing the work of the famed Indian scholar as a rhetorical claim from the Tibetan scholar himself. By making this claim for himself and his work, Rangjung Dorje placed himself and his work in a continuous line with the much earlier Indian poet-scholar. He depicts himself, as in his colophon, as a worthy member in front of the “ocean of wisdom,” and one of the few qualified enough in either India or Tibet to follow in that wise scholar's footsteps. For an author himself invested in being recognized as a rebirth of the second Karmapa, the claim of a continuous line of wisdom and skill serves a clear purpose.

This claim must be read as an indication of Rangjung Dorje's interests, rather than as a reflection of *Āryaśūra*'s unfinished work. Indeed, this claim for making a set complete through perfect sets of ten stories, each illustrating one of the ten perfections, further organizes the Buddha's lives into a logical schema. Much like a ritual that is divisible into performed parts, the sequence of lives here is explained as a rational grouping of ascending perfections, each consistent in scale. This organizational impetus, together with the creation of numerically organized sets, were at the core of the book-editing work of the fourteenth-century with which authors and editors like the Karmapa and the abbot Buton were involved.

The genre was intended to reach out to a larger populace, to show more easily accessible examples of perfected, bodhisattva-like action across all imaginable types of lives (animal and human) and stations (king, dancer, outcaste). An important aspect of Rangjung Dorje's intervention was that he offered a collection that had been meticulously organized around the perfect numerical set—ten by ten—that reflected pragmatism and interest in order. His collection gained popularity almost immediately and represented an important authorial act in the early fourteenth century.[59] The text also likely benefitted its author directly during his lifetime, as Rangjung Dorje was the first Tibetan teacher to claim to be the direct reincarnation of his predecessor and to have complete memory of his past lives.

Rangjung Dorje's collection of *jātakas*, a small but important and popular piece in his larger oeuvre of writing, represented an important writing act. With this text, he became the first Tibetan author to actively engage and creatively take up this genre of literature, the *jātakas*, which represented an explicit, didactic explanation of progressive rebirth and the possibilities of perfecting oneself through the extended example of the Buddha himself. As we are about to explore further, the theme of reincarnation, and more specifically directed rebirth, had special political importance for this author. He was actively engaged in re-interpreting his religious role as connected to an explicit lineal descent based on reincarnation, and was the first to claim he was a direct descendent of his predecessor.

### Stories of Reincarnation by the First “Tulku” Rangjung Dorje

The Tibetan institution of recognized reincarnations or Tulku (*sprul sku*), who are religious heads of particular lineages like the famous Dalai Lamas, Khyentses and Karmapas, are now commonly associated with Tibetan Buddhism, but the institution in fact was just developing in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Indeed, it was among the line of the Karmapas, of which our author was the recognized third in the line, that the institution was first established. While his immediate predecessor, the second Karmapa, was recognized to be a “directed rebirth” of the first, it was Rangjung Dorje who was the first Tibetan lama to claim that he was a direct reincarnation of his predecessor himself.[60] Turrell Wylie argued that this form of reincarnation was a political strategy that developed as a direct response to the political turmoil of Mongol-administered Tibet. Arguing that the third Karmapa was being groomed as the next Tibetan religious head for the Mongols, who found in him a “new sectarian hierarchy to replace the Sa-skya lamas as regents of Tibet,”[61] Wylie argued that the seed for the institution was planted by the Mongol Emperors but took root in Tibet thanks to the special efforts of the prolific and charismatic Karmapa himself.[62] Indeed the third Karmapa did have dreams and hear rumblings that he would be requested at court because of rising concern over Sakya infighting.[63] In this context, we can see the Karmapa's decision to author a collection that brought the specific topic of the Buddha's reincarnations into view, and to claim for himself a continuity of wisdom with a revered earlier poet, as strategic claims intended to bolster his own memories of past lives.[64]

The doctrine of recognizing lamas as reincarnations would become so pervasive and fundamental to later Tibetan Buddhism that Wylie warns it is easy to forget “the innovative and unorthodox nature of the concept in the beginning.”[65] In his argument, the adaptation arose in the lifetime of the third Karmapa in direct response to Mongol imperial needs. When Rangjung Dorje was invited to the Mongol court to participate in the 1333 enthronement of Toghon Temur as the Shunti Emperor, Wylie suggests this move effectively “signaled the end of Sa-skya religious supremacy at the Mongol Court.”[66] While nuancing the reading of sheer political expediency, Ruth Gamble's study of the Third Karmapa shows that although it was quite the opposite of his intention to end up founding a new model of religio-political leadership, the Karmapa did so nonetheless. Though the Karmapa bemoaned his long visits at the Mongol court where he felt himself a prisoner in “the emperor's gilded cage.”[67] Nonetheless, he was certainly a religious leader surviving in a time of real and potential political threat—and so his actions were responses and methods for survival. Gamble discusses the new form of tulku, the arising of the transference of identity, as composed of “all the cultural, material, religious and knowledge traditions that had already been accumulated by the Karmapas,”[68] highlighting the institutional precedents that the Karmapa responded to. Further, the distinctive new form of recognized reincarnation that he helped to establish, she shows, was partly enabled through his own writing practices (biographical liberation-stories or *nam thar*, and songs *mgur/glu*), forms that were integral to these cultural transformations.

The decades from the 1320s to the 1350s represented a moment of declining fortunes and stability for Sakya. The house of Sakya had been in turmoil since the death of its head Dakchen (Bdag chen) in 1322, after which four of his sons had established separate lateral branches of the lineage, leaving Tibet in a disintegrating power vacuum from the perspective of the also-floundering Mongol court. The myriarch Jangchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan, 1302-1364) of the house Pagmodrupa (*phag mo gru pa*) had been appointed as myriarch of his area in 1321, and was already plotting to politically overturn Sakya. This would plunge parts of Tibet into years of civil war. Until Jangchub Gyaltsen's tacit recognition by the Mongols as leader in 1354, he was a major potential adversary and military rival for them and for Sakya.

In contrast, the Karmapa had not been appointed as a myriarch and so “was overtly free of complicity in the conspiracy for political and patrimonial power then developing in the regency.”[69] Basically, in this reading the third Karmapa had the right affiliations or more correctly, at least not the wrong ones, to become the next religio-political leader in a Mongol administered Tibet. The fact that Mongol supremacy ended soon thereafter with the dissolution of centralized Mongol power at the Yuan court means that this remains hypothetical history. In this reading, reincarnation itself is, however, being politically aligned and used in Tibet in a new formation. Moreover, the Tibetan author of the text about the Buddha's previous lives is particularly invested in a reinterpretation of “directed rebirth,” the ability of a bodhisattva to control and direct their rebirth, which Ruth Gamble explains “provided the conceptual model for the *jātaka* genre.”[70]

## The Chosen Text: Adapting and Redacting the Text for Inscription

Who chose Rangjung Dorje's text for the walls and when? It is my belief that this project must have begun after his death in 1339, since the Karmapa never mentions knowledge of the project. I thus assume the choice was made to honour his work posthumously, and posit that this must have been a choice made by the temple's primary lover of both book collections and book organizations: the abbot Buton, who had also worked on his own collection of a Tengyur at the site. Indeed, although Rangjung Dorje does not mention ever visiting Shalu, he did go into retreat in Khams with the lay leader of Shalu, the Kushang Drakpa Gyaltsen, in 1327, and possibly interested the lay-leader of Shalu in his work and himself at this time.[71] Rangjung Dorje had also been meditating and in retreat in the area of southern Tibet as late as 1329-1332, his last years of retreat in that area, but spent the last seven years of his life going back and forth to the Yuan court. [72]

If the abbot Buton selected this text for depiction at Shalu—and these two Tibetan lamas were very much contemporaries and towering religious figures at the same time—was there a direct relationship between them? There is no evidence these two prominent teachers ever met. Nonetheless, they were both prominent writers and translators, albeit associated with different schools and temples, who both received favour from the Mongols and managed to not only survive but thrive, in their own ways, through the political turmoil of the early fourteenth century. Rangjung Dorje did not ever visit the temple of Shalu, and did not state any knowledge about its paintings made after his book. This is, I believe, a sound hypothesis then to suggest that the paintings of his *jātaka* text produced at Shalu were made after his death in 1339.

Indeed, the lack of direct connection between Buton and Rangjung Dorje is curious, given that these important religious figures were contemporaries. They do not mention each other directly in their work, although they were both towering figures of their time. Buton was slightly younger, and although Rangjung Dorje came and went between Central Tibet and the Yuan court for much of the 1330s, a trip that itself must have kept him very occupied and would have taken almost a year in any one direction,[73] they never had any direct contact. This might have been different if Buton had ever accepted any of the numerous invitations he had received to also go to the Yuan court, but Buton managed to use his health as an excuse to never have to accept these invitations and go to China. The two great teachers did, however, have teachers and students in common.[74]

Hence I suggest that the *jātaka* paintings were actually among the last to be completed at Shalu, most of whose paintings have, in recent scholarship, been dated to the moment closely following the known gift of patronage, 1306.[75] Instead, I think that the *jātaka* paintings at Shalu must be placed later, and were likely painted in the 1340s, painted based on a text by the then recently deceased, famous Tibetan author Rangjung Dorje. This text would have been of interest to the abbot Buton, and the student Yakdē Panchen.

Adapting the book to visual form as it appears on the wall required a great deal of work, for this process of placing the book onto the walls did not represent an easy or direct translation. The inscriptions provide short versions of the longer *jātaka* stories, which have been edited to fit into the wall space. These mural texts are redactions, with all of their text derived from longer stories, and just a few notational words added to suit their function as inscriptions. There are far fewer additions than there are omissions from the longer texts. The stories as they are inscribed are partial but for the most part very logical representations of the longer story texts, and their creation would have necessitated a literate group of editors and scribes. This must have involved a long process of editing and reducing each story to the amount of text appearing on the wall, which itself must have involved a workforce of several monastic editors.

The process of reducing the text was another form of authorial manipulation that happened as the book was made into a series of wall texts, and the editors (and scribes) producing these site-specific redactions for the Shalu circumambulatory passage were making new and different texts in the process. They variously adhered to rules and standards: some inscriptions directly indicate their editorial interventions through the use of editorial phrases like "and so forth" (*zhes pa nas*), though in some other cases they left the textual ellipses unmarked. As in the case of narrative inscriptions at Tabo discussed by Steinkellner, the inscriptions at Shalu represent, for the most part, texts that have been copied onto the walls in a "painstakingly correct way." [76] Apart from two minor forms of addition (redaction phrases and scribal signatures) made to the text of the inscriptions, the words on the wall are directly excerpted from the longer written stories.

## The Look of a Book: How the Book was Placed on the Walls

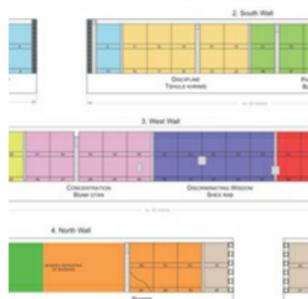


Fig. 14

The *jātaka* stories and paintings exposed visitors to a broad range of historical moments, peoples and places enumerated in the Buddha's former lives. These episodes were arranged, following the Karmapa's logic, into a rubric of ten stories to represent each of the ten perfections of a bodhisattva (see diagram in fig. 14). One hundred former lives as various kings, animals and merchants all lead up to the penultimate one hundred and first life, the life of Śākyamuni, which is painted at the end of the passage (figs. 15-33). These narrative paintings open up many possibilities for study, but here I want to focus in particular on the manner in which the book was placed visually onto the walls of Shalu—the processes of selection, representation, and organization that informed the mural-book.

A good deal of space was devoted to inscription in the semiotic scheme of the decorated circumambulatory passage, as part of this project aimed to represent a complete book on the walls. This was a book that was accessed through physical proximity and vision, allowing a non-word based, embodied, experience of

"reading." The painted images themselves, similarly often enabled the visual depiction of the complete narrative arc of a story, making a story that was constructed to be seen instead of read.

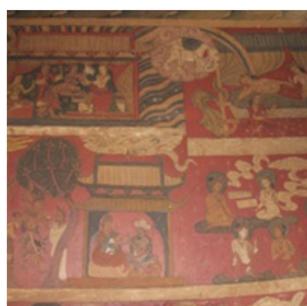


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

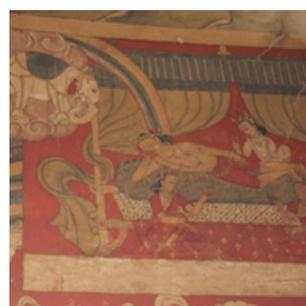


Fig. 17



Fig. 18

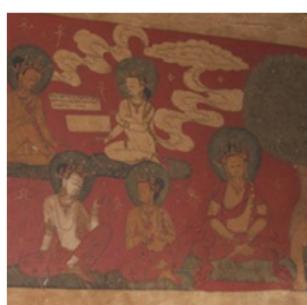


Fig. 19

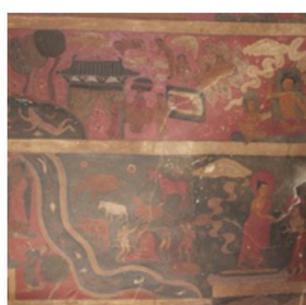


Fig. 20

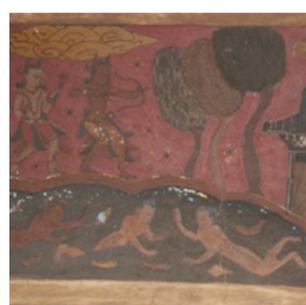


Fig. 21

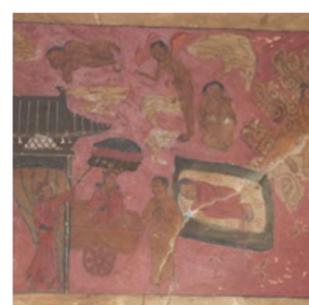


Fig. 22

While driven by the book collecting and organizing interests of the abbot Buton, the inscriptions and paintings are evidence of a process of creative decision-making by a large group of people who were involved in the project of translating the book to a monumental and visual scale and format. In addition to Buton, who would have chosen this particular book as the source for the passage's paintings, the production of these paintings and inscriptions would have involved significant numbers of editors making new redactions of the stories, and even more artists and designers transforming these often complex stories into images. The act of "authoring" the book on the walls

at Shalu can be attributed not merely to the book's authors, but also to the editors, scribes and artists who gave these stories visual form.

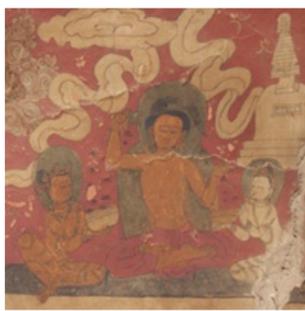


Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25



Fig. 26



Fig. 27



Fig. 28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30

The inscriptional passages inscribed in the mural are all made on spaces that mimic the size and shape of paper book pages: rectangles that are dimensionally about twice as wide as they are tall and aligned horizontally (fig. 8, fig. 12). Yet the decision to replicate the appearance of a book on the walls was not merely expedient. While the visual format of making the inscriptions look like book pages was certainly also practical and in keeping with what scribes knew how to do, this format also retained and expressed the visual formal properties of a book active on the wall. The walls thus are designed and painted to communicate the significance of books as cultural and intellectual objects through their replication in another format as mural art.

The visual conventions of books dictated all the choices about how and where to place the inscriptions. These conventions determined the shape and dimensions of inscription panels, the relative scale of the words to their pages, and the choices of colouring for both background and lettering. These visual components further bolstered the literary expression of the walls, where the content and organization of the wall paintings contained the contents of the book. The text stories follow on from each other as they do in the book, but were fashioned to be walked past, not read.



Fig. 31



Fig. 32



Fig. 33

The pages and stories dwarf and impress human viewers through their scale and placement on the wall (fig. 3). The paintings begin above human eye level, about five feet up from the floor, and proceed up to the height of the tall ceiling. A person must crane their neck to see the upper register paintings and inscriptions. It is only as one approaches the corners of the passage that one can see the upper registers at enough distance to fully appreciate their impressive scale and the consistency of inscriptional and pictorial detail. These paintings are not just a book, but a larger than life book, a book at once too large and detailed to fully appreciate as a whole at once with the limitations of human scale. The size of the painted book, its ability to tower over viewers, is a major part of its visual power.

While the book of the passage is "open," many of its pages are still beyond reading access. What is visible though, what leaves its greatest impression, are the consistent use of borders, and the relentless pictorial detail of the images and words, which make a visitor, cognizant that they cannot see them all, but can see enough that they understand that they have been produced with great care. In the remote darkness of the passage, the book physically immerses a visitor both with parts seen and parts unseen.

The direct visual references to a book, and the explicit inclusion of a textual introduction and conclusion, make Shalu's inscriptions significantly different from other known sites of mural inscriptions in Tibetan art. Inscriptions in earlier murals at Alchi and Tabo do not express themselves so visually and directly as books, as a collection of stories on equally sized and scaled pages. At Shalu the murals, by making the inscriptions explicitly look like book pages of a single unified book, facilitate a physical encounter with a whole book with each of its pages opened, allowing the act of walking past pages to replace the act of reading.

### Intervals and Rhythm: Dividing up the Wall

By being placed on the walls in separated quadrants, the arrangement of the words and images of the stories impresses the viewer with their impression of visual regularity. The complete book is a set of unlike objects made, in some sense, alike. The different stories have been made comparable, since each is reduced to the same amount of regular, divided, rectangular spaces. This visual collection of isolated, individual pages and their painted individual stories is spread across the wall, each "page" organized by and contained within a border. The introduction and colophon text panels are included at the beginning and end of the corridor, and these are the only two panels of text unaccompanied by painted images. The stories are organized across an upper and lower register, while each inscription and image is divided from the next by thin yellow bands.

The inscriptions look like an opened, fully visible Tibetan book. The most obvious visual reference to books occurs through the shapes of the inscription spaces. Each inscription is written in clearly printed Tibetan U-chen letters, and is contained within a white horizontal rectangle. These rectangular frames follow the dimensional shape and proportions of the pages of a traditional Tibetan book, a *pecha* (*dpe cha*) in a format of unbound horizontally formatted pages that are at least twice as wide as they are high, with the long edge along the horizontal axis.<sup>[77]</sup> Looking at the wall, the framed inscriptions give the impression of so many book pages spread out across the surface. Above these "pages," the stories are animated as pictures in rectangular spaces of equal width but double the height of the inscriptions to which they correspond.

The horizontal division of painted walls for Buddhist narratives also had earlier precedents. In the murals at Ajanta, wall spaces were habitually divided horizontally with separate stories narrated visually in upper and lower registers.<sup>[78]</sup> However, these much earlier Indian paintings at the caves of Ajanta proceed from floor to ceiling, and often used the wall's vertical middle point, roughly around the height of the doorframe, to separate their two registers. In contrast, the height of the doorframe is instead where the Shalu murals start, and the division into upper and lower sections happens at Shalu even higher up the walls.

At Shalu, the double register (one upper and one lower) of stories is separated from an unpainted section below (fig. 3). The artists made this same organizational choice in all of the ground-floor paintings at Shalu painted in the fourteenth century, including the paintings of

the shrine rooms and the assembly hall. This choice to leave the lower five feet of the walls unpainted in is both reverential and functional: in the shrine rooms this leaves space for the placement of furniture, altars and statues below the paintings. In contrast, the narrow circumambulatory passage could never have been meant to house furniture as the space would not permit it. Instead, the choice to leave the bottom of the wall unpainted, or rather, to keep it painted black, must be read as an effort to keep the paintings of sacred texts higher than the height of the encircling humans below, placing them into a position intentionally higher than the viewers. This choice has definitely also contributed to the preservation of these paintings, as they are mostly placed well above the easy reach of human hands.

The mathematical division of the wall into separated spaces for inscriptions and paintings would have required extensive planning, and must have preceded the paintings and inscriptions. While the dimensions of individual panels for painting and inscription vary slightly from wall to wall,<sup>[79]</sup> the overall effect is one of ordered visual regularity, where pages of nearly the same size are repeated across the wall with individuated painted stories above each of them, regularized through being divided by straight yellow borders. While the height and darkness of the hallway would have made reading or carefully examining the details of each painting or inscription impossible, the impression of organization and collection is conveyed through the meticulously planned and bordered spaces that contain within them a rich diversity of images.

The yellow border used as a framing device throughout the circumambulatory passage is a visual convention adapted into *tangka* paintings from this period from Newar art. David Jackson has characterized this convention as a visual hallmark of Tibetan painting in the Nepalese style (“*Beri*” or *Bal ris*), which was particularly dominant in Tibet from the twelfth century onwards.<sup>[80]</sup> This use of yellow bands was most often used to separate and order assemblies of figures, as in a twelfth-century painted manuscript cover in the British museum where the central goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* is attended by eighteen figures, each divided from the next by a thin yellow band (fig. 34). These narrow borders control and regularize the spaces, and give a visual impression of order. The use of yellow borders is also common in thirteenth-century paintings, and can also be seen in several paintings used to separate lineage figures, or in other paintings to divide rows of repeating Buddhas.<sup>[81]</sup> Yellow borders were most often used to separate and organize groups of subjects of equal size, showing the components to be part of a meaningful set. Borders help to make the parts contained within them equivalent, thus the adaptation of these yellow bands to order the stories at Shalu is a logical way for painters familiar with Tibetan *tangka* painting conventions to separate individual stories and further to enforce the impression of regularity, equality and organization that the wall paintings convey.



Fig. 34

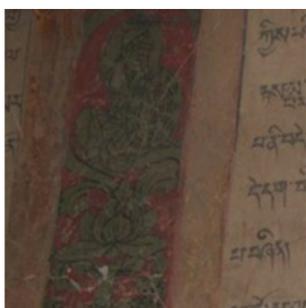


Fig. 35

The overall plan of the wall stories also rigorously follows this set of the ten perfections that Rangjung Dorje expressed as the organization of his completed text. Just as within the literary text, the stories are grouped into sets of ten, the paintings of the wall also follow this arrangement (fig. 14). These sets of ten reflect Rangjung Dorje’s organization of the text, ten stories for each of the ten perfections, as explained in his colophon. At the end of each set of ten stories a concluding phrase summarizes the ten together by short titles, a line included at the end of each painted decad at Shalu. For example, following the conclusion of the last line of story ten, stating “This was story ten, the life story of the merchant,”<sup>[82]</sup> comes this brief review: “Tiger, Shibi, Kosal person, two merchants, Rabbit, Agasti, Sha jin, Tamché dröl, and the Sacrificer. These are the first ten (stories).”<sup>[83]</sup> A similarly simple synopsis, describing each story by only by one word or name summary appears at the end of each decad of stories, and these lines are included in the painted Shalu inscriptions as well, following stories ten, twenty, thirty etc.

The plan of ten stories representing each of the ten perfections was explained in Rangjung Dorje’s colophon text featured as Shalu as well as a commentary text that he wrote.<sup>[84]</sup>

The organization of the painted stories and inscriptions proceeds in sets of ten, with the first five stories progressing left to right in the upper register, and the following stories six through ten proceeding directly below these. Between each group of ten stories, a decorated vertical band interrupts both upper and lower registers with painted floral scrolling patterns emerging from vases, a motif for abundance here used to divide sections of ten stories from the next (fig. 35).

### Illustrating a Book on the Wall

The stories that were painted as both inscriptions and images on the outer wall of Shalu’s great circumambulatory passage were not there simply to share narratives; rather, they were made to communicate and depict the complete contents of one particular, recently-authored, book. The book was a contemporary collection made by a recently-deceased Tibetan teacher, the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, who in his formulation of the one hundred former lives of the Buddha had offered an organized collection: arranging the former life stories (*jātaka*) according to the Buddhist conceptual program of a progressive path towards self-perfection. These were not just great stories, but great stories that were also arranged in relationship to a system of understanding a great being and a perfected mind, and so their arrangement here in the passage, visually depicted in sets of ten, explains an ascent in stages towards the perfection of enlightenment across many lifetimes.

Although depicted as a book on the walls whose stories had been redacted with great care, this mural “book” was not made or meant as a book to be read. It was instead a book that could be entered, walked into and through, exposed to the eyes and bodies of any visitor to Shalu. The text that was selected was not just represented as content but shown as accessible and important through its organization: it was arranged and organized by the author, the Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, whose role as an organizer and systematizer of materials was being explicitly communicated in the circumambulatory passage. At the end of the passage, in the painted colophon, his name was emphasized with red ink, appearing at eye level.

It would be a mistake, however, to view Rangjung Dorje as the text’s sole author in this particular context, where a unique version of a large book was produced on the walls of Shalu. Instead, the book on the walls was a collection of the minds and hands of many, an aggregate of those who chose what to include and exclude, how to include it, and who had to actively transform the often long stories into this significantly different context for the temple walls. This specific painted book on the walls was not the reflection of a single author, but was made by many people. Beyond the textual “authors” of the text whose intentions were recorded in both the introductory dedication and the colophons, we should see the process of this book’s creation on the walls at Shalu as a put there by many other minds and hands—those who choose it, who designed it, and who painted it were all involved in translating the meanings and uses of the book into this new context.

Another key “author” communicating with this book on the walls is the person who selected this book and designed this massive scale format, pictorial and textual, for its representation, and for whom the idea of a traversable wall-book in a circumambulatory passage was worth the hours of planning, labour, and sheer expense that would have been required. At Shalu in the 1340s this must have been none other than the abbot Buton who had spent the previous decades of his life involved in massive editorial book-work and must have admired the organizational work of Rangjung Dorje from afar.

For this particular book on the walls of Shalu, even more unnamed authors would have been involved in the production: teams of editors chose what to include or exclude from the stories, and scribes transferred the stories into inscriptions on the walls. Further, there were many choices involved in illustrating the stories, and these represent the agency and power of yet another group of “authors” of the painted images—the artists responsible for interpreting stories to be communicated through a set of visual signifiers for their depiction on the walls. Today, we are indebted to these anonymous editors and scribes, but above all to the artists for their commitment and creativity in this visual expansion of the *jātakas* onto the walls of Shalu.

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## Footnotes

1. The temple of Shalu, founded in the eleventh century and renovated again in the late thirteenth, was greatly expanded in the mid-fourteenth century. The schedule of renovations is extensively discussed in Sarah Aoife Richardson, "Painted Books for Plaster Walls:

Visual Words in the Fourteenth Century Murals at the Tibetan Buddhist Temple of Shalu” (PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2016), and also treated in Michael Henss, *The Cultural Monuments of Tibet* (München: Prestel, 2014) vol. 2. 582-629. Shalu also forms a chapter of Roberto Vitali’s work, as the chapter “Shalu Serkhang and the Newar Style of the Yuan Court.” Roberto Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London: Serindia, 1990), 89-122; and the first English language treatment of the site in scholarship came in the seminal work by Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan painted scrolls* (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949), 659. Shalu’s construction history is included in the biography of Shalu’s abbot Buton Rinchen Drup translated by David Seyfort Ruegg. David Seyfort Ruegg, *The life of Bu ston Rin po che: with the Tibetan text of the Bu ston rNam thar* (Roma: Istituto Italiano, 1966), 90-91. A modern Tibetan history of the temple based on these sources is given in Skäl bzang dang rgyal po, *dPal Zha lu’i gtsug lag khang rten dang brten par bcas pa’i dkar chag byang chen thar lam*. (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987). A number of articles have appeared on specific elements of Shalu’s paintings: Helmut Neumann and Heidi Neumann, “11th Century Wall Paintings of Zhwa Lu,” *South Asian Archaeology 2007: Proceedings of the 19th Meeting of the European Association of South Asian Archaeology in Ravenna, Italy, July 2007*, 2133, II Historic Periods’ (2010): 233-42; Ricca and Fournier, “Notes Concerning the Mgon-Khañ of Žwa-Lu.” Helmut F. Neumann, “Shalu’s Hidden Treasure: The Paintings of the Shadakshari Chapel,” *Orientalia* 32, no. Number 10 (December 2001): 33-43; Amy Heller, “The Vajravali Maṇḍala of Shalu and Sakya: The Legacy of Butön (1290-1364),” *Orientalia* 35, no. Number 4 (May 2004): 69-73.

2. These are not all one set and represent several iconographies: First the thousand Buddhas, then a repeating pattern of the five Tathāgatas, and finally Akshobya.

3. Some important work on the inscriptions of the first part of the passageway, studying the first ten stories inscribed in the Korlam, of which the Shalu murals are the earliest known extant texts, was made by Kurt Tropper in “The Buddha-Vita in the Skor Lam Chen Mo at Zha Lu Monastery,” in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ: Papers Dedicated to Ernst Steinkellner on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, vol. 2 (Wien: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien, 2007), 941-73; Kurt Tropper, *Die Jātaka-Inschriften Im Skor Lam Chen Mo Des Klosters Zha Lu: Einführung, Textkritische Studie, Edition Der Paneele 1-8 Mit Sanskritparallelen Und Deutscher Übersetzung* (Wien: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien, 2005).

4. The text has been dated by Ruth Gamble, who located a date for his composition stated at the end of his song number 58 from Rangjung Dorje’s *mgur ’bum*, in a line that concludes with: “He sung this when he had finished composing the *Hundred Jātaka Tales* of the Buddha in bKra shis gsar ma, on the fifth day of the second month of the tiger year [1314].” Ruth Gamble, “The View from Nowhere,” 227, 368.

5. We can compare the wall text inscribed at Shalu with longer print versions of Rangjung Dorje’s text, *Sangs rgyas kyi skyes rabs*, (“Life stories of the Buddha”), which have been printed and published recently as two books in the collected works of Rangjung Dorje. The first thirty-four stories, which are translations from Āryaśūra, are published in Rangjung Dorje’s collected works as *Skyes Rabs so Bzhi Pa (The Thirty-Four Former Lives)*, and the next sixty-seven stories are published as *Sangs Rgyas Kyi Skyes Rabs (Garland of the Buddha’s Lives)*. Āryaśūra and Rangjung Dorje, *Thirty-Four Former Lives (skyes Rabs so Bzhi Pa)*, vol. TBRC W30541. 1: 117-514, Gsung ’Bum Rang Byung Rdo Rje (Zi ling: mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006), [http://tbr.org/link?RID=O00EGS105549|O00EGS1055495568\\$W30541](http://tbr.org/link?RID=O00EGS105549|O00EGS1055495568$W30541); Rangjung Dorje, *Garland of the Buddha’s Lives (Sangs Rgyas Kyi Skyes Rabs)*, vol. TBRC W30541. 2: 5-670, Gsung ’Bum Rang Byung Rdo Rje (Zi ling: mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006), [http://tbr.org/link?RID=O00EGS105549|O00EGS1055495570\\$W3054](http://tbr.org/link?RID=O00EGS105549|O00EGS1055495570$W3054).

6. My translation of this story is available in Richardson, “Painted Books for Plaster Walls,” Volume 2 Appendix. 97-98.

7. in this case related to the perfection of ‘method’ (*thabs*).

8. Both these narrative subjects are painted at Tabo, see Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, *Tabo: A Lamp for the Kingdom: Early-Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Art in the Western Himalaya* (New York, N.Y.: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 120-133.

9. There are a few painted depictions of jātakas per se in Tibetan art before Shalu. The story of the starving Tigress, the first jātika story of Āryaśūra’s set, which was featured on the twelfth-century dhoti of a standing colossal Maitreya figure in the temple at Mangyu in the Western Himalayas. Rob Linrothe has written about the five scenes painted onto the textile designs of the dhoti that together represent the jātika of the tigress (*Vyāghri jātika*). Yet it is likely that the textual association of these scenes is probably reliant on the *Gaṇḍavyūha/Suvarṇaprabhā Sutra*, where the story of the Tigress is also included among Maitreya’s reflections on his previous lives. Rob Linrothe, “Skirting the Bodhisattva: Fabricating Visionary Art,” *Études Mongoles et Sibériennes, Centrasiatiques et Tibétaines*, no. 42 (December 1, 2011): fig. 18-21, 24, 25, doi:10.4000/emscat.1803. Some jātika scenes appear in the carved wooden lintels at the Jokhang, where Ulrich Von Schroeder has identified jātakas (in *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*, Hong Kong: Visual Dharma, 2001). Amy Heller hypothesizes that in particular a depiction at the Jokhang takes the *Gaṇḍavyūha* as one of the sources for a lintel showing the previous birth story of king Bimbisara and the hare from the *Amitayurdhyana sutra*. Amy Heller, “The Lhasa *gtsug lag khang*: Observations on the Ancient Wood Carvings,” *The Tibet Journal*, vol. xxix, no. 3 (Autumn 2005), 3-24.

10. Rangjung Dorje himself was the first teacher to directly claim to be a direct reincarnation of his lineal predecessor. Turrell V. Wylie, “Reincarnation: A Political Innovation in Tibetan Buddhism,” in *Proceedings of the Csoma de Kőrös Memorial Symposium Held at Mátrafüred, Hungary, 24-30 September, 1976* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1978), 580.

11. Gamble, “The View from Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang Byung Rdo Rje in Story and Songs,” 40-43. Gamble, Ruth. *Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism: The Third Karmapa and the Invention of a Tradition*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

12. Ibid., 111.

13. Ibid., 40-43.

14. See Linda Komaroff, ed., *The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353* (New York; New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2002); Anthony Welch, *Calligraphy in the Arts of the Muslim World* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

15. Vidya. Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997).

16. At Tabo the life of the Buddha appears in portions of the walls of assembly hall which is de facto a circumambulatory space. Klimburg-Salter, *Tabo*. 125-131. However at Alchi, the Life of the Buddha appears not in spaces for circumambulation, but inside the sanctuary on the walls of the assembly hall, on a lower register of the wall where scenes are arranged in horizontal sequences based on the Lalitavistara. In the Sumstek, life scenes are found on the dhoti of the Maitreya statue. And later in the Lhakhang gsar ma, life scenes are shown in horizontal frames on the sanctuary walls. Peter van Ham with Amy Heller and Likir Monastery. *Alchi: Treasure of the Himalayas* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2018).

17. Understanding the placement of narrative art in relation to other religious spaces and themes in Tibetan temples more broadly, and perhaps in historical survey, would be a fascinating subject for further investigation. This idea emerges from the kinds of studies like the important study of Renaissance Italian narrative art and how and where it was placed within monuments. Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, *The Place of Narrative: Mural Decoration in Italian Churches, 431-1600* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

18. The title of the book is inscribed as *Skyes pa’i rabs kyi rgyud (The Continuum of Previous Lives)* in the colophon inscription at Shalu, but given as *Sangs rgyas kyi Skyes rabs (The Garland of Buddha’s Lives)* in the recent collected works.

19. The Indian poet Āryaśūra is conjecturally dated to the fourth century based on the style of his writing and references made about him by a later Indian poet Haribhaṭṭa in 445 CE. Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha’s Past Lives*, trans. Justin Meiland (New York: New York University Press: JJC Foundation, 2009), xviii.

20. A fact stated in a much later, fourteenth-century commentary, the *Jātakamālāṭīkā*. Ibid.; Āryaśūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra’s Jātakamālā*, trans. Peter Khoroché (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), xi.

21. Āryaśūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, xi; Jonangpa Tāranātha, *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, ed. Debiprasad. Chattopadhyaya, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya (Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1970).

22. Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, xix.

23. Carol Meadows argues that doctrinal divergences between two texts attributed to him, the *Jātakamālā* and the *Pāramitāsamāsa*, imply different authorship. Carol Meadows and Āryaśūra, "Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections: Translation and Analysis of the *Pāramitāsamāsa*" (Columbia University, 1978).18f.

24. There are over 500 jātika stories known in the Pali canon. K. R. Norman, *Pāli Literature: Including the Canonical Literature in Prakrit and Sanskrit of All the Hīnayāna Schools of Buddhism*, vol. 7, History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden, West Germany: Harrassowitz, 1983); Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, vol. 2, Indian Philology and South Asian Studies (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1996).

25. Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, ii; Meadows and Āryaśūra, "Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections," 18f.

26. Āryaśūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, xvi.

27. Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, xxiii.

28. Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*, 34.

29. Robert L. Brown, "Narrative as Icon: The Jātaka Stories in Ancient Indian and Southeast Asian Architecture," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 83.

30. Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr. *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 123.

31. Nancy Lin, "Adapting the Buddha's Biographies: A Cultural History of the Wish-Fulfilling Vine in Tibet, Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries" (PhD Dissertation, University of California Berkeley, 2011), 10-12.

32. Wylie, "Reincarnation: A Political Innovation in Tibetan Buddhism," 580.

33. David Paul Jackson, "The Black Hats of the Karmapas," in *Patron and Painter* (Rubin Museum of Art, 2009), 39-69.

34. Kurtis Schaeffer, "The Enlightened Heart of Buddhahood: A Study and Translation of the Third Karma Pa Rang Byung Rdo Rje's Work on Tathagatagarbha (Wylie: De Bzhin Pa'i Snying Po Gtan La Dbab Pa)" (University of Washington, 1995), 14-17, <http://www.scribd.com/doc/22730687/The-Enlightened-Heart-of-Buddhahood>.

35. *Ibid.*, 1.

36. For the Tibetan version of the introduction to the thirty-four lives see Āryaśūra and Rangjung Dorje, *Thirty-Four Former Lives (skyes rabs so bzhi pa)*, TBRC W30541. 1: 117-514: 117. For other english translations of Āryaśūra's Sanskrit introduction see Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, 2-5; Āryaśūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, 3. (Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006), 109-110.

37. In the later printed version of the text this frontispiece text reads: "The Garland of Life Stories of the all-knowing excellent teacher. Thirty-four by Sura, later Rangjung Dorje with a further sixty-seven completed the one hundred" (*Ston pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i skyes rabs phreng/ bcu phrag gsum dang bzhi ni dpa' bo'i ste/ phyi nas rang byung rdo rjes bdun lhag pa'i/ drug cus brgya rtsa rdzogs par mdzad pa bzhugs/*). Rang byung rdo rje, *Gsung 'bum* 1, 108.

38. For two good translations of the same verse from the Sanskrit see Āryaśūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, 3; Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, 2-5.

39. The invocation of the specific Buddha of Wisdom, Mañjuśrī, instead of the more common invocation "In homage to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas" that appears in the Khoroché translation of Āryaśūra, was likely an authorial emendation made by Rangjung Dorje. His specific selection of the Buddha of wisdom is more fitting in his context of editing and authoring than to offer the text to all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Compare with Āryaśūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, 3.

40. *bcom ldan 'das ngag gi dbang phyug la phyag 'tshal lo; dpal ldan yon tan dam pas yongs bzung bkra shis pa/ /grags pa'i gzhir gyur ma rmad shin tu yid du 'ong/ /thub pa'i sku tshe snga ma'i spyod pa rmad byung rnams/ /bdag gi snyan ngag me tog snyim pas gus par mchod/ /grags pa'i mtshan mar gyur pa bzang po 'di rnams kyis/ /bde bar gshegs gyur lam rnams gang yin bstan par 'gyur/ /yid la dad pa med pa rnams kyang dad par 'gyur/ /chos dang ldan pa'i gtam gyis rab tu dga' bar 'gyur/ /'jig rten mchog gi spyod pa dam pa'i phyogs tsam gyis/ /bdag gi snyan dngags mnyan du rung bar bya ba'i phyir/ /lung dang gtsug lag rigs par mi 'gal lam dag gis/ /de ltar 'jig rten don 'gyur snyam nas 'di brtsams so/ /rang don brtson pas gzhan don brtson pa gang yin pa'i/ /yon tan sgyub pa bzang po'i rjes su mthun ma gyur/ thams cad mkhyen ces brjod pa ma nor gsal bar grags/ mnyam med de dang chos dang dge 'dun spyi bos 'dus/ bcom ldan 'das de sku tshe snga ma la'ang sems can thams cad la rgyu med par rab tu byams pa'i ngo bo nyid yin pas/ sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la sems rab tu dang bar bya'o/*

41. A comparison of scriptures to flowers was a common metaphor, and even one that Buton is known to have used, describing himself like a "bee overjoyed with flowers" when he is able to place himself among "these boundless teachings." Buton Rinchen drup, *Buton's History of Buddhism in India and Its Spread to Tibet: A Treasury of Priceless Scripture*, trans. Lisa Stein and Ngawang Zangpo, First Edition (Boston & London: Snow Lion, 2013), 5. Interestingly there are also important examples from elsewhere, like the Persian poet Saadi's famous collection of poems and short stories called the *Gulistan* (Rose Garden) composed in 1258 CE.

42. For a further discussion of Āryaśūra's aim at having an emotional and aesthetic effect, see Justin Meiland in Āryaśūra, *Garland of the Buddha's Past Lives*, xxv.

43. Inscription Line 1: *dpal ldan thub pa'i mdzad pa mkha' ltar rgya che la/ /phyogs phyogs bsam pas nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor lta bur snang / /de ni tha dad 'phrin las rkyen gyis so sor shar/ /lam mchog dpal ldan brtan cing sems can don gyur pa/ Line 2: rmad byung mtha' yas yon tan mthu mnga' cig pu'i/ /'jig rten 'jig rten 'das pa'i spyod pa brtan pa dag//.*

44. Kurtis Schaeffer, "The Enlightened Heart of Buddhahood: A Study and Translation of the Third Karma Pa Rang Byung Rdo Rje's Work on Tathagatagarbha (Wylie: De Bzhin Pa'i Snying Po Gtan La Dbab Pa)," 2.

45. Inscription Line 2: *dpa' bo zhes byas snyan ngag me tog phreng mdzes pas/ /brgyan par byas zhes phyogs phyogs kun du gsal bar grags/ sbyin dang tshul khirms bzod dang Line 3: brtson 'grus don ldan pa/ /bcu phrag gsum dang bzhir ni gnas khang der bzhag pa.*

46. Inscription Line 3: *rgya gar yul du lnga rig blo ldan du mas kyang / snyan ngag rgya mtsho so so'i blo gros rgya mtsho chu klung gis/ /gran bar ma nus zhum zhing dor ba bzhin du gyur/ gangs can khrod 'dir mkhas par rlom rnams Line 4: smos ci dgos/ /de ltar dpag dka' rgyal ba'i lung bstan snyan sdags mkhan/ mtshungs med dpa' bo yang 'dir byung ba ma yin kyang / /dus mthar rgyal dang de sras spyod la dad byed pa/ /rang byung rgyal ba mchog la rdo rje ltar brtan pa'i/ /mi phyed dad ldan bdag gi snyan ngag blo gros Line 5: ni/ /thugs rje ldan kyang 'jam dbyangs rgyal sras ma pham pas/ / nye bar bsgrubs pas bcu phrag drug dang drug pa'i/ /rmad byung mdzad pa gsal bar byas pa 'di yis ni/ /lam yangs dri med byang chub spyod tshul gsal byed cing / bstan bcos don gyi lus kyang yongs su rdzogs par 'gyur/ Line 6: de bas 'dir ni bdag gis 'bad pa don yod par/ /gyur bar mkhas mchog rnams kyis bsten par bya ba'i rigs/ /*

47. His numbering is interesting here and differs from a later claim in this same inscribed colophon that he added 67 stories. The first reference, the addition of 66 for a total of 100, refers only to the numbering of the jātakas, the former lives, and the later number, the

addition of 67 for a total of 101, also includes the final story of Śākyamuni which is not, strictly speaking, a former life story but the final life story. It does however, as included here, call itself story one hundred and one in the textual inscription.

48. The commentarial text about his collection of jātakas can be found as Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, *The Short Summary of the Buddha's Former Lives (Sangs Rgyas Kyi Skyes Rabs Kyi Bsdud Don Bzhugs So)*, vol. 1, 16 vols., Gsung 'Bum Rang Byung Rdo Rje (zi ling: mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006), <http://tbrc.org/link?RID=W30541>.

49. 1) Generosity (*Dāna pāramitā; sbyin-pa*); 2) Discipline (*Śīla pāramitā; tshul-khrims*); 3) Patience (*Kṣānti pāramitā; bzod-pa*); 4) Diligence (*Vīrya diligence; brtson-'grus*); 5) Contemplation/Concentration (*Dhyāna pāramitā; bsam-gtan*); 6) Wisdom/Insight (*Prajña pāramitā; shes-rab*).

50. (7) skill-in-means/method (*upāya-kausālya*), (8) resolution/prayer (*praṇidhāna*), (9) strength (*bala*), and (10) knowledge (*jñāna*).

51. *Pāramitā*. In Damien Keown, *A Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), [http://link.library.utoronto.ca/eir/EIRdetail.cfm?Resources\\_ID=100299&T=F](http://link.library.utoronto.ca/eir/EIRdetail.cfm?Resources_ID=100299&T=F).

52. Line 6: *ga' zhid 'jig rten don ldan min kyang ngag tshig bsdeb sbyor lhung len pa /gzhan dag rmad byung don gyi rjes 'jug 'di yang blo gros ldan la yod/ /gnysis ka'i tshul la rnam par rmongs* Line 7: *gyur rnam spyod mi ldan 'jig rten dag /'jig rten snang byed 'od zer gyis ni reg par myi nus stobs chung ba//*

53. Line 8: */skyes rabs 'di byas nga rgyal mthu yis myin/ /khe dang grags pa longs spyod 'dod phyr myin/ /snyigs dus rgya cher 'gyur snyam 'di ma byas/ /rgyal ba'i spyod 'di 'jig rten rmad byung la/ /tshul 'dis nam zhid 'gro phan byed 'gyur bar/ /bdag kyang 'gyur zhes smon pa'i mthu yis ni/* Line 9: *byang chub spyod mchog rab tu gsal bar bstan/ /*

54. Line 10: *de ltar skyes pa'i rabs kyis rgyud/ slob dpon dpa' bos mdzad pa'i sum cu rtsa bzhi pa la/ pha rol.da tu phyin.da. pa bcu dang / sa bcu mthar phyin pa'i sar sbyor ba'i don du phyi ma drug cu rtsa bdun pa/ mdo du ma las byung ba'i byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa/ zab mo'i mdo sde rnams* Line 11: *la chos kyis rjes su 'brang pa / rang byung rdo rjes mdzad pa rdzogs saho/ bkra shis dpal 'bar 'dzam gling brgyan du shog yi ge pa ni snar thang pa blo ldan bkra shis zhes grags so//*

55. This is the second name of a scribe that appears in the Korlam at Shalu. There is also a name of another scribe that appears twice in the passage, at the end of inscription to story 34 and again at the end of story 37. It reads “*Rin chen Sha kya bdag gis bris he*” (Rinchen Sakya himself wrote this).

56. Tāranātha in his *History of Buddhism in India* (1608) also states that Sura had planned to write one hundred jātakas but died before completing them after thirty-four, but his source for this assertion is most certainly Rangjung Dorje's writings. Āryasūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, xi.

57. It is possible that it can be considered unfinished because it lacks a colophon.

58. Āryasūra, *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, xii.

59. On the popularity of Rangjung Dorje's jātika collection, see Ruth Gamble's observation that before the recent (2000) compilation of his collected works it was one of his works found most frequently in many Tibetan monastic library collections. Gamble, “The View from Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang Byung Rdo Rje in Story and Songs,” 35. On the Avadana Kalpata collection quickly superceding Rangjung Dorje's as the more favoured and popular and most frequently depicted text of narratives and former lives, particularly in art, see Lin, “Adapting the Buddha's Biographies: A Cultural History of the Wish-Fulfilling Vine in Tibet, Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries.” It is not sure how exactly Rangjung Dorje's texts would have been distributed in his lifetime, though likely, as with the interest of Buton, this would have been through hand-copied manuscripts. While there is evidence that Tibetans knew of wood-block printing technology and used it as early as the twelfth century, it does not seem to have been yet widely practiced. Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, *The Archaeology of Tibetan Books* (Boston: Brill, 2014), 121.

60. Wylie, “Reincarnation: A Political Innovation in Tibetan Buddhism,” 580.

61. *Ibid.*, 582.

62. *Ibid.*, 586.

63. Gamble, “The View from Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang Byung Rdo Rje in Story and Songs,” 241.

64. *Ibid.*, 40–43.

65. Wylie, “Reincarnation: A Political Innovation in Tibetan Buddhism,” 579.

66. *Ibid.*, 582.

67. Gamble, Gamble, Ruth. *Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism: The Third Karmapa and the Invention of a Tradition*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 263.

68. Gamble, “The View from Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang Byung Rdo Rje in Story and Songs,” 113.

69. Wylie, “Reincarnation: A Political Innovation in Tibetan Buddhism,” 583.

70. Gamble, “The View from Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang Byung Rdo Rje in Story and Songs,” 108.

71. *Ibid.*, 236; Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols: The Yüan-Sa-Skya Period of Tibetan History* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), 93.

72. Gamble, “The View from Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang Byung Rdo Rje in Story and Songs,” 241.

73. We know from looking at Karmapa Rangjung Dorje's biography, that towards the end of his life in the 1330s he traveled several times back and forth between the same region of Southern Tibet and the Yuan courts at Dadu and Shangdu, an overland trip of approximately 3,778 kilometers, which at the rate of cart and caravan travel must have been quite slow.

74. In particular, Buton and Rangjung Dorje both received ordinations from the Tropu Kagyu (*khro phu bka' brgyud*) lineage, and shared in common at least one student, a man named Yakdé Panchen (gYag sde pan chen) who studied with both of them. Go Lotsawa Shonu Pal ('Gos Lotsāba Gzönu dpal, 1392-1481), *The Blue Annals*, ed. George N. Roerich, Asiatic Society Monograph Series v. 7 (Calcutta, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1949-53, 1949), 532.

75. Vitali uses 1306, as the assumed date for all of Shalu's paintings. Vitali, “Shalu Serkhang and the Newar Style of the Yuan Court,” 100. This has persisted in the work of David Paul Jackson, *The Nepalese Legacy in Tibetan Painting* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2010), 106; Kreijger, “Mural Styles at Shalu,” 170; Franco Ricca and Lionel Fournier, “The Paintings in the Zhwa Lu sGo Gsum Lha Khang and bSe Sgo Ma Lha Khang: Stylistic Differences,” *The Tibet Journal* XXVI, no. no. 3 & 4 (Autumn & Winter 2001): 106.

76. Ernst Steinkellner, “Notes on the Function of Two Eleventh-Century Inscriptional Sūtra Texts in Tabo,” in *Tabo Studies II: Manuscripts, Texts, Inscriptions, and the Arts* (Roma: Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 1999), 250.

77. Tibetan *pecha* (*dpe cha*) were and are horizontally aligned on unbound pages that are much wider than they are tall, a shape derived

from the horizontal shape of Indian palm leaf manuscripts, but which by the fourteenth century would have been habitually produced on hand-made paper pages.

78. Dehejia writes: "Except when using the narrative network which covered the wall from floor to ceiling, it appears to have been customary to divide the wall horizontally, roughly along the level of the cell doorway (approximately 6 feet from the ground), and narrate different legends in the two levels." Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*, 208.

79. This is an assumption made from my photographs but not on measurements: I was not able to measure each painting in 2009, and since a return trip to the site has not been possible. Yet we can see then from photographs and the floorplans that since the North and South walls must be approximately the same overall length, and the south wall has 24 jātakas while the North wall only had 22 when it was complete (including the 8 that have been entirely lost due to damage), it is clear that some alterations were made to painting sizes based on available space.

80. Jackson, *Nepalese Legacy*, lists "Thin yellow edges and dividing strips" among the features of the Beri style missing from Pāla style Tibetan paintings, 86. Jackson, *Nepalese Legacy*, 71 and 101. Rhie and Thurman *Wisdom and Compassion*, no. 122.

81. Jackson, *Nepalese Legacy*, 72, 89, And Gilles Beguin 1990, no. F.

82. See Richardson, Appendix page 43. Inscription reads: "tshong dpon gyi skyes pa'i rabs te bcu pa'o."

83. See Richardson, Appendix page 43. Inscription reads: "stag mo shi bi ko sal bdag tshong dpon gnyis dang ri bong dang / a ga sti dang sha byin dang / thams cad sgrol dang mchod dbyin byed/' bcu tshan dang po'o."

84. Rangjung Dorje's short commentarial text about the jātakas is Rangjung Dorje, *The Short Summary of the Buddha's Former Lives (Sangs Rgyas Kyi Skyes Rabs Kyi Bsdud Don Bzhugs So)*.

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