



## **The Narrative Murals of Tilokaguru Cave-Temple A Reassessment after Jane Terry Bailey**

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In 1965, Jane Terry Bailey was employed by Denison University in Granville, Ohio to teach Asian Art and to act as curator of the rapidly expanding Burmese collection.<sup>1</sup> Despite the focus of the Denison collection on Buddha images, lacquer, and textiles, Bailey's attention turned towards Burmese wall paintings. Her research on seventeenth to nineteenth century wall paintings began during an official visit to Burma in early 1973, when she spent two weeks exploring the Pagan, Mandalay, and Rangoon areas.<sup>2</sup> On this expedition, she was taken to Tilokaguru cave-temple in Sagaing, several eighteenth century temples at Pagan, and the Taungthaman Kyaukdawgyi in Amarapura. The wall paintings at these sites sparked her interest.

Bailey's study of mural paintings also stemmed from her decision to explore the painting styles of *parabaik* (illustrated, folded books on paper) after Denison University purchased an

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Terry Bailey was honorary curator of Asian Art at Denison University from the mid 1960s through the early 1980s.

<sup>2</sup> See the report Jane Terry Bailey wrote upon her return. Denison University Archives, Jane Terry Bailey records, Box 1, Folder 13.

example illustrating the Muga-Pakkha Jataka (no. 538) in 1971.<sup>3</sup> She held the theories that the painting styles of the *parabaik* derived from seventeenth and eighteenth century murals, and that manuscripts sometimes were used as pattern books for the murals.<sup>4</sup> She arrived at the latter idea because the mid-nineteenth century wall paintings of the Taungthaman Kyaukdawgyi at Amarapura also exist in *parabaik* format. Upon receiving information that the *parabaik* in question was a product of the early twentieth century, however, Bailey no longer considered her theory viable.<sup>5</sup> She also initiated explorations into the origin of the Western drawing style in Burma by enquiring about British artists and Western-trained Indian artists who worked there. Her research was hampered by the difficulties in identifying these artists, as well as by problems in dating *parabaik* manuscripts.<sup>6</sup> Unable to gather sufficient dated information, Bailey did not complete her research on the impact of Western painting techniques on Burmese art, nor produced the planned article on the stylistic progression of *parabaik*.

Inspired by the wall paintings viewed during her visit to Burma, however, Bailey wrote three articles on seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth century wall paintings in Burma. The first article, "Some Burmese Paintings of the Seventeenth Century and Later, part 1: a Seventeenth-century Painting Style near Sagaing", was published in *Artibus Asiae* in 1976, and the other two followed in 1978 and 1979. In the first piece, she acquainted readers with the painting style of the late seventeenth century through an examination of the murals of the Tilokaguru cave-temple. Initially linking the cave and its paintings to earlier productions in Burma and India, Bailey described the method of painting (not true fresco), the use of space, narrative techniques,

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Jane Terry Bailey to the Asia Society, New York, on 27 May 1971 (Jane Terry Bailey records, Box 2, Folder 7); letter to Anna Allott on 12 November 1973 (Box 2, Folder 4).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Bailey to William Sailer on 10 May 1972 (Box 1, Folder 12). Bailey initially held the theory that the painting styles of *parabaik* were 'fathered' by late seventeenth and eighteenth century murals. Letter to Frank Musgrave on 8 November 1973 (Box 4, Folder 7). Letter to Anna Allott on 12 November 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Bailey to Frank Musgrave on 23 January 1974 (Box 4, Folder 7).

<sup>6</sup> Letter to Mildred Archer on 27 January 1979 (Box 2, Folder 5). Letter from Mildred Archer to Jane Terry Bailey on 14 February 1979 (Box 2, Folder 5).

the clothing and general appearances of the *dramatis personae*, the details of the settings, and the painting style itself (conceptual realism) before stating that the murals had become fully Burmese in nature through the incorporation of contemporary life into the imagery. In producing this article, she made one of the first academic attempts to define late wall paintings in Burma.

The path to this article was not entirely smooth, though, as photographic problems dogged Bailey's research. In her report on her Burma trip, she wrote that in exploring the Tilokaguru cave, they had candles, kerosene lanterns, and a flashlight, and with these aides, they saw many Buddha figures and Jātaka tales while looking for subjects to photograph. She spent an hour taking pictures, as grappling with the camera, focusing and handling the flashlight proved problematic. Her photographs did not develop due to a faulty camera, and she had to send film to Burma for U Aung Thaw of the Archaeology Department to re-take pictures of several mural sites, including Tilokaguru.<sup>7</sup> The articles on paintings were written utilising the pictures sent by him to her in mid 1973.<sup>8</sup> For her study of Tilokaguru, she relied upon twenty images that had been identified by him.<sup>9</sup>

Other practical issues also affected the topic of Bailey's research. The article on the Tilokaguru wall paintings was originally intended to be a comparison between the Pagan period murals of the Theinmazi and Wetkyi-in Kubyaukgyi and the seventeenth century Tilokaguru ones. The basis for her study of the early murals was to be the holdings in the Hamburg Museum, which had been donated by Th. H. Thomann in the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, the photographer at the Hamburg museum was ill and unable to take the requisite photographs for Bailey when she needed them. Thus, the article was refocused to explore the Tilokaguru paintings alone.

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<sup>7</sup> Letter to Mary Frances Cowan on 27 March 1973 (Box 3, Folder 5). Bailey received the package of pictures in August 1973.

<sup>8</sup> Letters to Mary Frances Cowen on 27 March 1973 and 16 August 1973 (Box 3, Folder 5).

<sup>9</sup> Letter to A. Griswold on 5 March 1975 (Box 3, Folder 12).

<sup>10</sup> Although he was expelled from the country for the damage he did to the Theinmazi and Wetkyi-in Kubyaukgyi murals at Pagan, Thomann subsequently wrote a book on Burma. Th. H. Thomann, *Pagan: Ein Jahrtausend Buddhistischer Tempelkunst* (Stuttgart: Verlag Walter Seifert, 1923).

U Aung Thaw of the Archaeological Department in Burma has dated the Tilokaguru cave-temple to circa 1672, basing this opinion on an historical text that mentions the founding of Tilokaguru monastery on Sagaing Hill.<sup>11</sup> The *Royal Orders of Burma* also mention the construction of Tilokaguru monastery, but date it to 1701.<sup>12</sup> The dating of the murals is even more inexact, since neither work mentions their production. However, based on the rough dating of the founding of the monastery, the murals were probably painted during the last quarter of the seventeenth century or the first decade of the eighteenth. Stylistically, the Tilokaguru murals also relate to the early eighteenth century, dated paintings at the Taungbi Ok-kyaung at Pagan, further confirming the period of production.

The Tilokaguru temple is an artificially constructed cave that penetrates into the side of Sagaing Hill. Facing west, the facade of the building is constructed to look like a freestanding temple, with three arched entrances surmounted by *clecs*. Above the central doorway is a masonry *pyatthat*, a tiered roof traditionally constructed in wood demarcating sacred and royal space. Four small windows and two doors onto balconies reveal a second storey at the front of the building (the western face). The three entrances lead into a circumambulatory corridor, and the main shrine room is aligned with the central doorway. Extending off the circumambulatory corridor are six small areas, which may have been used for meditation. At each end of the western section of the circumambulatory corridor are two stairwells leading to the upper corridor, which progresses along the front of the temple (Fig. 1).

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<sup>11</sup> Aung Thaw, *Historical Sites in Burma* (Rangoon: Sarpay Beikman Press, 1972), 132; *Tha-tha-na Lin-ga-ya Sa-dan* (Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1956), 172.

<sup>12</sup> Than Tun (ed.), *Royal Orders of Burma, AD 1598-1885* (Kyoto: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, 1986-1990), vol. 3, 11.

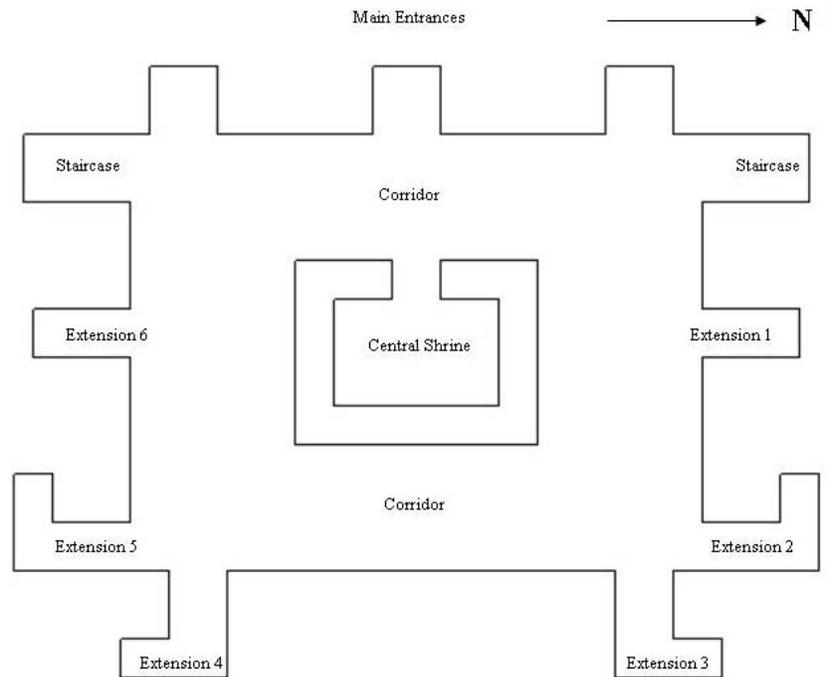


Figure 1. Floor plan of the Tilokaguru Cave-Temple

The internal areas of Tilokaguru cave-temple are painted or provide evidence of having once been painted, except for the upper storey, which has lost all of its plaster.<sup>13</sup> The mural paintings, executed in reds, greens, browns, whites, greys, yellows, and possibly a very small amount of blue, depict a wide variety of scenes and motifs in the entrances, corridors, and shrines. Many sections of the murals have been badly damaged by bats, whitewashing, and loss of the plaster ground. For example, the three entrance halls into the temple may once have depicted narrative scenes, as evidenced by an image of an elephant in the northern-most entry, and a few floral and geometric motifs remain on the entrance ceilings.

On the walls of the central shrine room are floral decorative motifs and a figurative row depicting Buddhas in *bhumisparsa mudra* with a kneeling monk to each side. The entrance to the central shrine room has a lotus pool and a Buddha's footprint on

<sup>13</sup> Most likely, it once contained murals as well.

the ceiling. Bailey wrote that when she visited Tilokaguru on her 1973 trip there was a painted Buddha on the rear wall of the central shrine.<sup>14</sup> This would connect Tilokaguru closely with the Taungbi Ok-kyaung at Pagan, which also has a painted Buddha, rather than a sculpted one, as its main image. The murals on the back wall at Tilokaguru were no longer discernible in 1998, due to the extensive use of whitewash, and a small, carved Buddha was placed on a makeshift table against the wall as a substitute for the no longer extant main image.

The circumambulatory corridor contains extensive murals. The ceilings depict floral-geometric designs with lotus pools arranged at the central and intersecting points of the corridor. Both the inner and the outer walls of the corridor present the viewer with five horizontal rows of narrative that wend their way around the temple walls, depicting a variety of topics. These include the twenty-eight previous Buddhas seated in *bhumisparsa mudra* underneath the tree of Enlightenment and their life events. The latter particularly emphasise their Renunciations and Enlightenments. Scenes from the life of the Buddha are additionally shown, as is the ordination of monks. *Brahmas*, *devas*, *nats*, and Sakka (Indra) are shown beholding the Buddha with awe and paying him homage. Jataka stories, drawn from the last fifty tales of the 547 have also been portrayed extensively. Some remnants of scenes of Hell are extant at the bottom of the wall.

The short extensions off the circumambulatory corridor do not contain narrative murals, but instead portray rows of mythical and actual animals, flowers, and birds individually placed in roundels or other geometric forms. The rooms, which are completely dark, have become dens for bats, and no murals remain in those sections.




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<sup>14</sup> Jane Terry Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings of the Seventeenth Century and Later: Part 1, a Seventeenth Century Painting Style near Sagaing." *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 38, 4 (1976), 267.

### The Narratives

Tilokaguru cave-temple is an extensive and important site in the study of narrative wall paintings in Burma. It contains many of the elements of the narratives that developed over the course of the eighteenth century. The overall organisation of the narratives is hierarchical in nature, with the most profane imagery at the bottom of the walls and the most sacred nearest the ceiling. The layout of time and space within each tale is generally linear, moving from left to right, but occasionally, from right to left. The stories are narrated in the static monoscenic, sequential, and continuous modes, with a few examples of the *in medias res* mode, where temporal order is disrupted in favour of spatial considerations.<sup>15</sup> Combinations of sequential and continuous modes are frequent, and wavy lines, decorated panels, architecture, and floral features variously act as scene separators. Most of the stories are demarcated by patterned dividing panels, which are also occasionally found within the tales. The narrative thread is conveyed by depicting only the most important events of a story, and thus the point of a tale is transmitted in a modicum of space. There is a preference for showing certain types of scenes, particularly palace scenes.

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<sup>15</sup> The definitions of these narrative modes are -

The static monoscenic is characterised by a single scene with no action or with reduced action. Usually objects of worship are portrayed in this manner. (See Vidya Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India* (New Delhi: Munshiran Manoharlal Publishers, 1997), ch. 1. See also, Meyer Schapiro, *Words and Pictures: On the Literal and the Symbolic in the Illustration of a Text* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973).

Sequential narration is represented by successive events or episodes in an enframed unit; the characters of the story are repeated in each scene; and spatial dividers are used. (See Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*, ch. 1).

The continuous mode of visual narration is characterised by successive events within enframed unit and the repetition of characters. No spatial or temporal dividers are used, however. (See Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*, ch. 1).

*In medias res* is an achronological mode of narration, and events are not portrayed in temporal order. (See Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art*, ch. 1). For a more extensive discussion of modes in Burmese murals, see Alexandra Green, *Buddhist Narrative in Burmese Murals* (Ph.D. dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2001), ch. 5.

### The twenty-eight previous Buddhas

Representations of the twenty-eight previous Buddhas are found in the two upper rows in the circumambulatory corridor. The uppermost row contains the Buddhas seated in *bhumisparsa mudra* under their respective trees of Enlightenment with a devotee kneeling to each side (Fig. 2). Each Buddha and his devotees are demarcated by white umbrellas flanking the scene. The writing underneath is largely effaced, but some Buddhas and their trees are identifiable. Each caption states that the Buddha is attaining Enlightenment under a specific tree. This scene is found on both the inner and outer walls of the corridor.

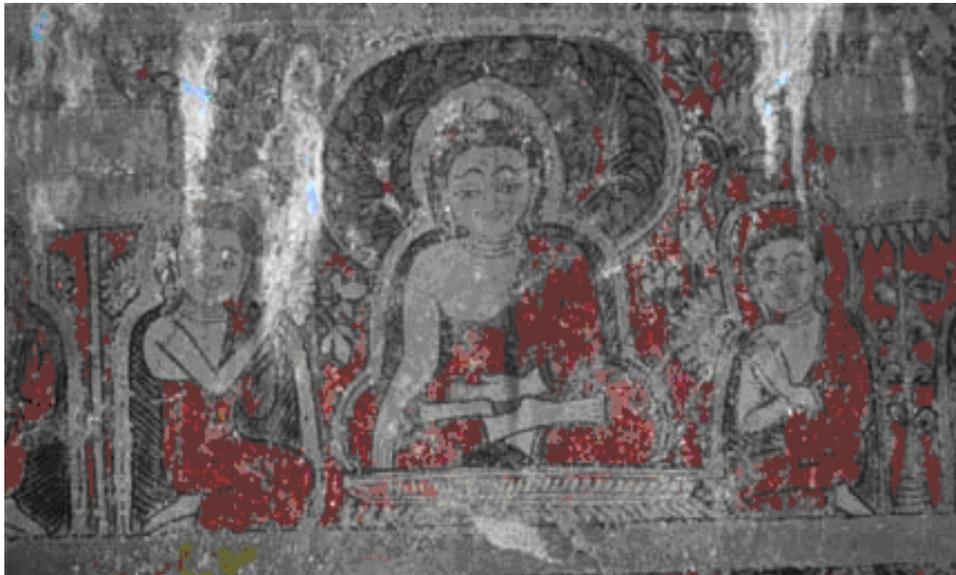


Figure 2. One of the twenty-eight previous Buddhas (top row, inner east wall)

The second row portrays a variety of subjects. On the outer walls of the corridor are multiple scenes of a Buddha surrounded by retinues of monks in monastic environments. The writing underneath these scenes is illegible, making identification of the events difficult because of the standardisation of the depictions. Some scenes of a Buddha's life are found on the outer south wall,

but these images are fragmentary. The writing mentions *brahmas* and Sakka, but does not provide further clues as to whose life it represents. The inner walls are in better condition. The imagery on these walls is slightly different from that on the outer walls of the circumambulatory corridor, with the Buddhas either seated alone or with a lay devotee. There are additionally scenes of a Buddha receiving offerings or homage from lay people, as well as an image of a Buddha seated under a naga with nine heads. This may be a representation of one of the Seven Stations that Gotama occupied after his Enlightenment, when he was shielded from the rain by Muchalinda Naga. Also portrayed on the west wall is a sequence of events that appears to be Dipankara Buddha's life story. The writing has been covered by whitewash, but a depiction of a monk lying with his hair spread before a Buddha's feet suggests that this represents Dipankara's prophecy to Sumedha. The inner north wall has been effaced, but the east and south walls contain truncated series of the lives of the previous Buddhas. Extremely repetitive in nature, these depictions show the life of each Buddha in five scenes: living in luxury in a palace, making the renunciation, cutting his hair, seated under the tree of Enlightenment, and seated in *bhumisparsa mudra* in a royal or monastic building (Fig. 3).<sup>16</sup> Only the dress of the princes and the method by which they make the Great Departure (on foot, horse, or elephant, or by carriage or palanquin) provide variations.

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<sup>16</sup> In Burma, there is a strong connection between the two types of wooden architecture.

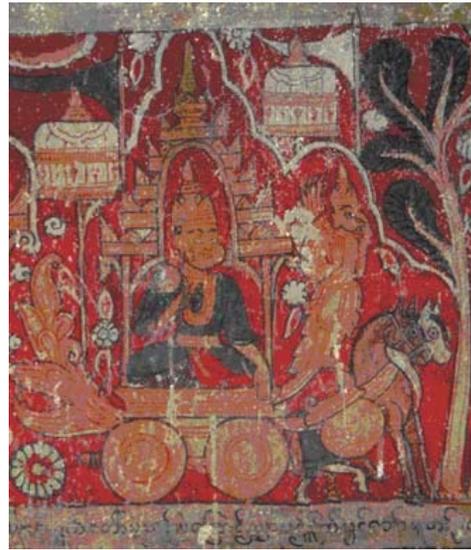
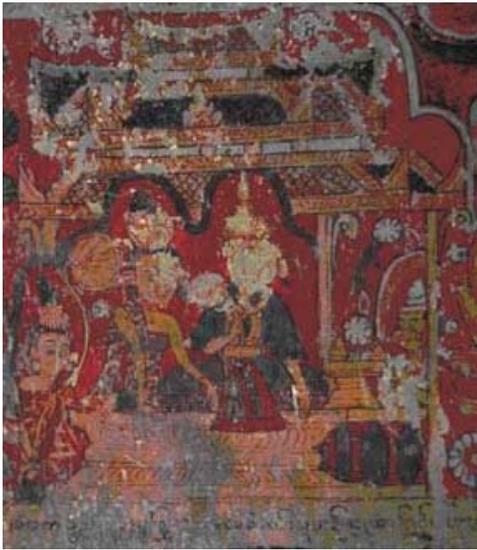


Figure 3. Life scenes of one of the previous Buddhas (second row, inner east wall)

### The Jataka tales

The selection of Jataka stories at Tilokaguru does not emphasize the *Mahanipata*, the last ten Jatakas, as is common at most other eighteenth century mural sites. Tilokaguru is one of two exceptions in this regard; the Ananda Ok-kyaung at Pagan is the only other building of a seventeenth or eighteenth century date with narrative murals of Jataka stories that does not depict the *Mahanipata*. The stories that are still legible at Tilokaguru appear to be drawn from the last fifty tales of the Pali recension, as translated by Cowell, et al (see Figs. 4-7).<sup>17</sup>

Row 1	Twenty-eight Previous Buddhas
Row 2	Life Scenes of the Previous Buddhas
Row 3	Effaced section, Cullahamsa (533), damaged section, Mahakapi (516), Pandara (518) Jatakas
Row 4	Damaged section, Kumbha (512), Jayaddisa (513), effaced area, Somanassa (505), Campeyya (506) Jatakas
Row 5	Layer of floral and geometric designs

Figure 4: Tilokaguru Cave-Temple. Outer East Wall.

<sup>17</sup> E. B. Cowell, ed. *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), vol 5.

Row 1	Twenty-eight Previous Buddhas
Row 2	Life Scenes of the Previous Buddhas
Row 3	Sambula (519), Gandatindu (520), Tesakuma (521) Jatakas, damaged section
Row 4	Campeyya (506), Maha-Palobhana (Anitthigandhakumara) (507), Panca-Pandita (Maha-Ummaga) (508) Jatakas
Row 5	Layer of floral and geometric designs

Figure 5. Tilokaguru Cave-Temple. Outer South Wall.

Row 1	Twenty-eight Previous Buddhas
Row 2	Life Scenes of the Previous Buddhas
Row 3	Sarabhanga (522), Alambusa (523), Samkhapala (524), Culla-Sutasoma (525) Nalinika (526) Jatakas
Row 4	Damaged section, Bhikka-Parampara (496), Matanga (497), Citta-Sambhuta (498) Jatakas, effaced area
Row 5	Layer of floral and geometric designs

Figure 6. Tilokaguru Cave-Temple. Inner South Wall.

Row 1	Twenty-eight Previous Buddhas
Row 2	Life Scenes of the Previous Buddhas
Row 3	Nalinika (526), Ummadanti (527), Mahabodhi (528), damaged section [Sonaka (529)], Samkicca (530) Jatakas
Row 4	Sivi (499), Sirimanda (500), Rohanta-miga (501), Hamsa (502), Sattigumba (503), Bhallatiya (504) Jatakas
Row 5	Layer of floral and geometric designs

Figure 7. Tilokaguru Cave-Temple. Inner East Wall.

Due to extensive whitewashing and loss of plaster, the murals are not in a sufficiently complete state to discern whether all of the last fifty Jataka stories were once depicted, or whether additional narratives were also represented. Since Tilokaguru cave-temple is one of the few extant painting sites from the fourteenth to seventeenth century period, however, it may be that the use of this set of stories represents a transitional position between the representation of the 550 Jatakas of the Pagan period and the depiction of the *Mahanipata* of the eighteenth century. In the late seventeenth century, a specific visual canon may not have been developed, and hence a variegated use of stories occurred.<sup>18</sup> This idea is corroborated by the fact that the life story of Gotama Buddha is not shown in extensive detail sandwiched between the representations of the twenty-eight previous Buddhas and the Jatakas, as is typical at later eighteenth century sites. In addition,

<sup>18</sup> An eclectic use of stories can also be found at the Taungbi Ok-kyaung, where the emphasis is upon the life scenes of Gotama Buddha (including ones not found in later eighteenth century paintings) and the previous Buddhas. The last ten Jatakas are also shown at the Taungbi Ok-kyaung, along with other Jataka stories.

the roughly contemporaneous Taungbi Ok-kyaung at Pagan also contains non-standardised narrative wall paintings.

The murals at Tilokaguru are organised both horizontally and vertically. On the outer walls, the stories are generally organised from left to right, and largely follow a numerical order. No Jatakas remain on the outer west and north walls, and the east and south walls contain many effaced sections. Remaining on the outer east wall in the third row are the Cullahamsa Jataka (no. 533), the Mahakapi Jataka (no. 516), and the Pandara Jataka (no. 518). The third row of the south wall continues the story order with the Sambula Jataka (no. 519), the Gandatindu Jataka (no. 520), and the Tesakuna Jataka (no. 521). The remainder of this row is effaced. The fourth row of the outer east wall depicts the Kumbha Jataka (no. 512), the Jayaddisa Jataka (no. 513), the Somanassa Jataka (no. 505), and the beginning of the Campeyya Jataka (no. 506). The latter story continues onto the south wall, also in the fourth row, and the Maha-Palobhana (no. 507) and the Panca-Pandita Jatakas (no. 508) follow the end of the Campeyya narrative. As mentioned, scenes within each tale mostly utilise a left-to-right organisation, with several exceptions. The narration of events in the Cullahamsa, Mahakapi, Sambula, and Tesakuna Jatakas, four of the six tales still visible in the third row of both walls, progresses right to left. Although most of the scenes in Jataka 520 follow a left to right organisation, this story uses an *in medias res* mode of narration, with two scenes out of temporal order.

As with the outer walls, the inner walls of the circumambulatory corridor are considerably damaged. The third and fourth rows of the west wall have been whitewashed, as have those of the north wall. A single remnant of the paintings in these areas is found in the fourth row of the north wall, where scenes from the Kusa Jataka (no. 531) are visible. A fragment of painting in the fifth, and lowest, row shows scenes from Hell, suggesting that further portrayals of the horrors of the netherworld were once visible. The depiction of torture is graphic with people being speared by demons, eaten by animals, and wrapped in flames. A thick band of floral and geometric motifs separates the Jataka tales from the Hell scenes, creating distance between good behaviour that leads to enlightenment and punishments for sins.

The inner east and south walls are the least damaged. On the south wall in the third row are (from left to right) the Sarabhanga Jataka (no. 522), the Alambusa Jataka (no. 523), the Samkhapala Jataka (no. 524), and the Culla-Sutasoma Jataka (no. 525). These are followed in the third row of the east wall (from left to right) by the Nalinika Jataka (no. 526), the Ummadanti Jataka (no. 527), and the Mahabodhi Jataka (no. 528). An effaced section follows this last story, which probably once portrayed the Sonaka Jataka (no. 529), and the row concludes with the Samkicca Jataka (no. 530). The fourth row of the south wall portrays the Bhikkha-Parampara Jataka (no. 496), the Matanga Jataka (no. 497), and the Citta-Sambhuta Jataka (no. 498). The end of the wall is effaced. The east wall begins with the Sivi Jataka (no. 499), and also depicts the Sirimanda (no. 500), the Rohanta-Miga (no. 501), the Hamsa (no. 502), the Sattigumba (no. 503), and the Bhallatiya (no. 504) Jataka.

The order of the stories on the inner wall runs counterclockwise, from the south wall to the east wall. Of the tales shown, five of them (523, 524, 498, 500, and 501) are narrated *in medias res*. Five also have scenes organised from right to left, which would enable the circumambulating viewer to see the events of each story in chronological order (even if the order of the entire set of stories would be reversed). The events of the remaining seven Jatakas are depicted in a left to right order, resulting in stories that would be seen in reverse by the circumambulating viewer.

The Jataka stories are thus painted in a specific horizontal order. In terms of progression upwards, the earlier lives (i.e. lower numbers in the recension) are generally found closer to the bottom of the wall than the later ones, and the Jatakas have been placed underneath the twenty-eight previous Buddhas and their life scenes.



### **Narrative identification**

Many of the stories at Tilokaguru cave-temple can be identified by the writing underneath the images, which gives the name of the Jataka, the previous Buddha, or the life scenes depicted. Sometimes the writing is fragmentary or effaced, and the viewer must rely upon the pictorial narratives for identification. Without the writing, however, identification is difficult. Jane Terry Bailey, due to her lack of visual material and hampered by her lack of facility in Burmese, narrated only seventeen of the (now) thirty extant tales. Of the seventeen tales that she identifies from U Aung Thaw's information, five are incorrectly named or are misread.

#### Suruci Jataka/Dipankara Buddha

Bailey identified a story found in the second row of the inner west wall murals as being the Suruci Jataka (no. 489), and she described it as moving from left to right, but then suggested that the latter part of the story is portrayed from right to left and concludes in the middle with an Enlightenment scene.<sup>19</sup> The writing is totally effaced, so it is not possible to be definite about re-assigning a name to the story, but the emphasis upon depictions of monks and Buddha figures does not fit the Suruci story, which tells of princes, the production of a son, and celebrations (Fig. 8). The story appears to progress from right to left beginning with an elephant (a). Next is a hair-cutting scene (b), followed by a Buddha image in *bhumisparsa mudra* under a tree (c). A Buddha first standing (d) and then seated under a *tazaung* with a retinue comprise the next two scenes (e). In the following episode, a standing Buddha with a begging bowl is followed by monks with begging bowls and is confronted by an image lying on the ground (f). Finally, the Buddha and the monks are being fed by secular figures in an architectural setting (g).

Given that Dipankara Buddha made his renunciation on elephant-back, and that a figure spreading its hair on the ground at a Buddha's feet is generally recognised as Sumedha lying before Dipankara, it seems evident that this painting is a portrayal of Dipankara's life.

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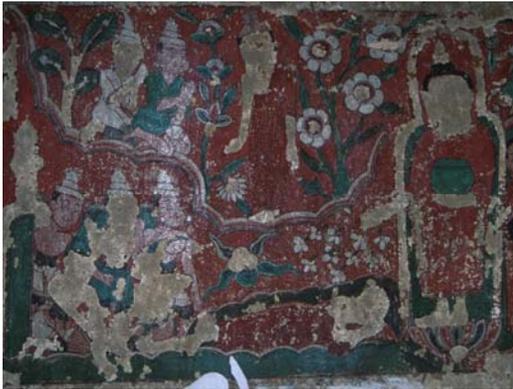
<sup>19</sup> Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings," 269-270.

A second reason for attributing this story to the lives of the previous Buddhas from the *Buddhavamsa*, rather than to the Jataka stories, concerns its placement with the organisational whole of the murals. It is depicted in the second row of the paintings, every other story of which portrays scenes from the lives of the twenty-eight previous Buddhas. No Jataka stories are placed this high on the walls; they are found in the third and fourth registers. Given the strict hierarchical organisation of the Tilokaguru murals, and other seventeenth and eighteenth century paintings in general, it seems unlikely that one Jataka story would be placed among scenes from the lives of the Buddhas. Thus, location of this tale in the second register supports its identification as events from Dipankara Buddha's life.

Figure 8 (below) G-A. The life of Dipankara Buddha (second row, inner west wall)



G



F



E

D



C

B



A

Jataka stories 263 and 546 or Jataka stories 507 and 508?

Based on Cowell's edition of the Jataka stories and Bailey's article, two stories in the fourth row of the outer south wall were identified as Jataka numbers 263 and 546, the Culla-Palobhana and the Maha-Ummagga. Their presence at Tilokaguru is unusual because neither stories from the last ten Jatakas nor Jatakas numbered in the 200s by Cowell appear in the temple. The writing underneath Jataka 263, however, identifies it as the Anitthigandhakumara Jataka. In the *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, the

*SBBR 3.2 (AUTUMN 2005): 246-283*

Anitthigandhakumara Jataka is listed as being narrated in both the Culla-Palobhana Jataka (no. 263) and the Maha-Palobhana Jataka (no. 507).<sup>20</sup> This particular depiction is located after the Campeyya Jataka (no. 506), and thus, it is possible to assume that this version is connected with the Maha-Palobhana Jataka. The story which follows the Anitthigandhakumara tale on the south wall has had its name effaced, but is identified as the Maha-Ummagga Jataka by Bailey. The fragments of writing that remain mention Videha, the king in the Maha-Ummagga Jataka, and the word *panca* is also visible. The Panca-pandita Jataka (no. 508) is the name given to a portion of the Maha-Ummagga Jataka that relates a plot to overthrow Mahosadha by the four evil ministers of King Videha. Given the fact that many of the stories are organised numerically, and this one is placed after numbers 506 and 507, it thus seems plausible to connect the scenes depicted here with the Panca-pandita Jataka.

#### Kapi Jataka/Mahakapi Jataka

Bailey identifies a story in the third row of the outer east wall as the Kapi Jataka (no. 404), and describes the action as moving from left to right (Fig. 9). She identifies the following scenes and, commenting on the narrative, states that,

... The King of Benares sits feasting with his Queen in a royal pavilion, surrounded by courtiers and ladies. (Gate divider.) The King drives out in his chariot, and sees his Brahmin chaplain taking a nap in the garden. ... A monkey throws down excrement on the Brahmin's head. The Bodhisatta, who in this existence is the chief of one of the bands of monkeys living in the garden, removes his band to the forest; according to the story, he too was a monkey, but he is here shown in human form. (Tree divider.) A wounded survivor of the

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<sup>20</sup> G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1997 [reprint]), vol. 1, 76, and vol. 2, 531 & 887. See also, E. B. Cowell, ed. *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1897), vol. 2, 227-229.

other band of monkeys (which remained in the garden against the Bodhisatta's advice and were shot at the Brahmin's request) lies in the arms of the Bodhisatta, who exhorts all the monkeys not to be disobedient again but to be wise and stay away from enemies. (Rock divider with trees on top.) A monkey carries the Bodhisatta.<sup>21</sup>

The visual story does not follow this version of events very well. The story is identified in the writing underneath the left side of the painting as being the Kapi Jataka, but the written narration actually begins on the right side of the painting and the events of the story have also been organised from right to left. In exploring variations of this monkey Jataka, it was determined that the literary Mahakapi Jataka (no. 516) co-ordinated with the events depicted more closely than did the Kapi Jataka (no. 404).<sup>22</sup> Moving from right to left it is possible to identify the depicted narrative scenes as: (a) the Bodhisattva existing as a monkey rescues a Brahmin from a ravine; (b) the Brahmin hits the monkey; (c) the monkey escapes into a tree; (d) the monkey shows the Brahmin how to escape from the forest; (e) the Brahmin lies down in a park overwhelmed with pain because of his evil behaviour towards the Bodhisattva (the head underneath the reclining Brahmin may refer to him being swallowed by the earth and his rebirth in Hell); (f) the king of Benares in his carriage comes upon the Brahmin and asks for an explanation as to why he is lying in the park; (g) the king of Benares lives in luxury. These scenes are corroborated by the fragmentary writing underneath. The mention of a ravine and the incident where the Brahmin strikes the Bodhisattva on the head confirm this visual narrative as the Mahakapi Jataka, despite the fact that the name given in the writing is the Kapi Jataka.

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<sup>21</sup> Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings," 269

<sup>22</sup> Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings," 269.

Figure 9 (below) G-A. The Mahakapi Jataka (third row, outer east wall)



G



F



E

D



C

B

A

Alambusa Jataka /Nalinika Jataka

On the inner east wall in the third row is a tale cited in Bailey's article as the Alambusa Jataka (no. 523), but it is actually a similar story called the Nalinika Jataka (no. 526) (Fig. 10).<sup>23</sup> The actual Alambusa Jataka, portrayed in the third row of the inner south wall, is identified by the writing underneath it. The writing under the Nalinika Jataka has been effaced, but other evidence confirms the story's identification. In this Jataka, the king's daughter disguises herself as an ascetic in order to seduce the hermit Isisinga, whose virtue is destroying the kingdom. In this depiction of the story she is shown confronting a hermit wearing a hermit's outfit (Fig. 10 c & d), whereas, in the Alambusa Jataka, the woman approaches the hermit Isisinga undisguised (Fig. 11 a & b).<sup>24</sup>

Figure 10 (below) D-A. The Nalinika Jataka (third row, inner east wall)



D

C

<sup>23</sup> Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings," 280.

<sup>24</sup> Cowell, *The Jataka*, vol. 5, 100-106.



B



A

As mentioned, the narratives at Tilokaguru are often pictorially arrayed in numerical order, and this story, the Nalinika Jataka (no. 526), comes immediately before representation of the Ummadanta Jataka (no. 527). Thus, it seems clear that this

depiction is of the Nalinika Jataka, rather than the Alambusa Jataka, despite the similarity of the original narratives.

Figure 11 (below) C-A. The Alambusa Jataka (third row, inner south wall).



C



B

A

Mahanaradakassapa Jataka/Somanassa Jataka

A fourth story which appears to have been misidentified is the Somanassa Jataka (no. 505), located in the fourth row of the outer east wall (Fig. 12). It is described by Bailey as the Mahanaradakassapa Jataka (no. 544), although this is achieved with some difficulty. She writes,

... Princess Ruja asks her father the King of Videha for money to present to mendicants; but he refuses, being unwilling to squander his wealth for good deeds which his counsellors tell him bring no reward in future lives. She says they are fools; she knows that evil deeds will sooner or later bring their retribution, and good deeds their reward, in future lives. Her father is not convinced. (Architectural divider.) The Bodhisatta, who is the great Brahma god Narada, surveys the world from heaven, and decides to help Ruja convert her father. (Tree and hill dividers.) Narada appears on earth in the guise of an ascetic, carrying an almsbowl and water pot. (Architectural divider.) ... Narada, having been invited by the King to enter the palace, converts him by describing the hells in which he will be reborn unless he mends his ways. In the picture, Narada is seen sleeping while the King and his counsellors do obeisance to him; but the story says nothing about Narada sleeping. (Hill and foliage dividers.) Narada is seen being knocked down by the counsellors, though there is nothing of this sort in the story. Is he enacting the tortures of hell? (Rock divider.) After converting the King and revealing his own identity, Narada is worshipped by the Princess and her ladies.<sup>25</sup>

Bailey's uncertainty regarding the differing events of the Mahanaradakassapa Jataka and the depiction is palpable. The confusion over identification may have been caused by the fact

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<sup>25</sup> Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings," 281.

that the writing under the painting mentions the name Mahanarada, and this led to the story being attributed as it was. However, the name may refer to Maharakkhita, the ascetic who visits Renu, king of Uttarapancala in the Somanassa Jataka. In addition, the writing mentions a Prince Somanassa, a figure who does not appear in the Mahanaradakassapa Jataka, but who is unsurprisingly the main character in the Somanassa Jataka. The visible events also fit the story of the Somanassa Jataka much more easily than they do the Mahanaradakassapa Jataka. The scenes selected for depiction were:<sup>26</sup> (a) the king with his wife and retinue; (b) the visit of the five hundred ascetics and Maharakkhita; (c) the 'ascetic' is seen doing gardening work instead of behaving like an 'ascetic'; (d) the 'ascetic' pretending to be insulted and lying on his bed when the king returns (here the king is shown chaffing the false ascetic's feet); (e) the stoning of the 'ascetic'. Beyond this is a thick patterned divider panel, which is usually used between stories, but the Somanassa Jataka, or at least the writing, appears to go on to the following section. The scene, which possibly represents Somanassa seated in the Himalayas (f), the conclusion of the tale, is in poor condition. Either the writing extends beyond the space allocated to the story and the scene of Somanassa in the Himalayas is not shown, or the divider strongly separates Somanassa as a hermit from the crowd beating the false ascetic to death.<sup>27</sup> This depiction is followed by the Campeyya Jataka (no. 506), suggesting that this is more likely to be a representation of Jataka number 505, the Somanassa, than number 544, the Mahanaradakassapa.

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<sup>26</sup> There is an effaced section at the beginning and at the end, so this list is not comprehensive.

<sup>27</sup> This type of separation is also found between the Jataka stories and the Hell scenes.

Figure 12 (below) A-F. The Somanassa Jataka (fourth row, outer east wall)



A



B

C



D



E



F

### Sambula Jataka

Lastly, Bailey describes the action of the Sambula Jataka (no. 519), placed in the third row of the outer south wall, as moving from left to right (Fig. 13).<sup>28</sup> Her version of events would have Prince Sotthisena portrayed as an ascetic after he begins his residency in the forest and then as a prince when he is being cured of leprosy. Clothing was often used as a method of defining a character visually and morally at Tilokaguru. Characters retain the same clothing throughout a story until a moral change occurs. Thus, for example, an individual wears attire associated with his rank (e.g. prince, hunter, etc.) until he becomes an ascetic, when he is shown in ascetic's dress.<sup>29</sup> In this case, when Sotthisena left the palace, he had not yet been cured of his disease, did not yet display a correct attitude towards his wife, nor did he leave the palace in order to renounce luxury but because his disease had rendered him loathsome to look at. Given these conditions, it would be unlikely that Sotthisena would be depicted as an ascetic immediately upon vacating the palace. According to the depiction and the writing, the events of the story are (from the right): (a)

<sup>28</sup> Bailey, "Some Burmese Paintings," 280.

<sup>29</sup> This change of clothing with renunciation can be seen in the Somanassa, the Maha-palobhana, Rohanta-miga, Sarabhanga, and Culla-sutasoma Jatakas.

Sotthisena's virtuous wife, Sambula, being attacked by the goblin and her rescue by the god Sakka; (b) Sambula curing Sotthisena with an asseveration of truth; (c) King Brahmadatta assuming residence in the palace park as an ascetic; (d) Sotthisena in a carriage returning from his exile; and finally, what appears to be Brahmadatta the ascetic with a courtly retinue preaching the law (e). The latter scene is unclear due to the damage from cementing and whitewashing, but may represent the ascetic admonishing his son, Sotthisena, who is now king, for poor behaviour towards his wife Sambula. The progression of the tale is apparently from right to left with the exception of the scene of Brahmadatta living as an ascetic. Narratively, it normally occurs after Brahmadatta has abdicated and passed the throne on to his son, but here is shown between the prince's cure and his return. Many stories at Tilokaguru have minor variations in story order, and in this instance, it may represent the fact that King Brahmadatta abdicated upon his son's return. The constraints in narrating simultaneous events in the murals is thus revealed.

Figure 13 (below) E-A. The Sambula Jataka (third row, outer south wall)

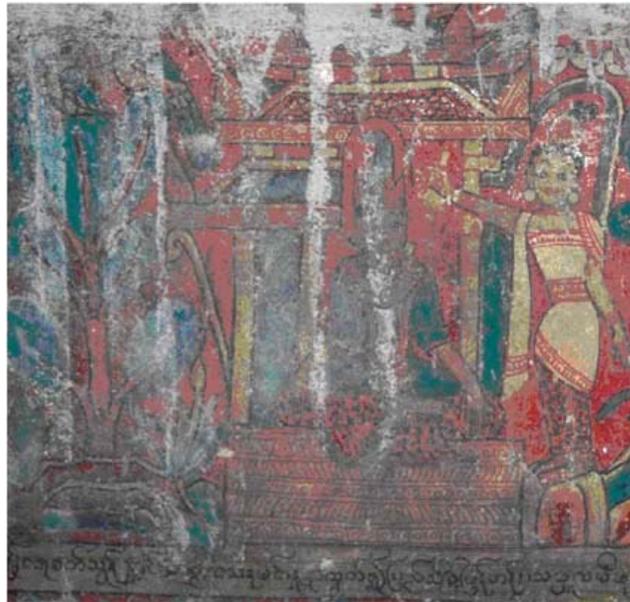


E

D



C



B



A

### Summary

The difficulty of identifying the stories at Tilokaguru cave-temple, where so often the written captions below the paintings have been effaced, indicates that the writing is a crucial element of the identification process for those not thoroughly acquainted with the narratives. This is especially so where scenes and stories are not standardised for easy recognition or are so standardised as to be virtually identical. The need for captions to assist with identification was reduced at eighteenth century wall painting sites, where standardized depictions of the *Mahanipata*, the last ten Jatakas, became the norm. This issue raises the question of how the Tilokaguru murals were viewed and understood. The darkness of the temple and the lack of damage to the paintings from the torch-light smoke of past viewers suggests that the murals were produced to enhance the sanctity of the building, rather than as an educational tool to be studied as a whole by devotees.

### The Order of Stories

Initially, the narrative wall paintings at Tilokaguru give the impression of wending their way around the temple walls in an imitation of the circumambulatory path that the worshipper follows during his or her rituals. Upon closer examination, however, it is apparent that while the narratives generally succeed each other numerically within specific rows, the story order follows a left to right organisation, disproving the idea that the stories physically reflect the circumambulatory path. In the third and fourth rows of the inner walls of the temple, the Jataka stories numerically begin at the left end of the south wall and end at the right side of the east wall. While the outer walls' tales are less well organised according to the Jataka recension translated in Cowell's volumes, the stories appear to progress from left to right, beginning at the left of the east wall through the right edge of the south wall (see Figs. 4-7). The lives of the previous Buddhas also seem to be presented in this fashion, though the evidence is fragmentary. On the inner south wall, three of the previous Buddhas are identifiable because the writing is legible. At the left end of the south wall is found the truncated life story of Mangala Buddha (the sixth of the twenty-eight Buddhas). The following section has been cemented over, but this is followed by life scenes of Revata Buddha and Sobhita Buddha (eighth and ninth in the order of previous Buddhas). These lives of the previous Buddhas have been painted in a left to right order. Thus, the viewer, when circumambulating, would see the stories on the inner wall in counterclockwise order, and those of the outer wall in clockwise order.

Vertically, the narratives are organised around ideas of hierarchy.<sup>30</sup> The scenes of the twenty-eight previous Buddhas are found at the top of the walls, with events detailing the process by which they reached Enlightenment directly underneath in the second row. The Jatakas where the bodhisattva is closest to his Enlightenment (i.e. the higher numbers) are found in the third row and the earlier lives have been placed in the fourth row. Scenes of

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<sup>30</sup> See Michael Aung-Thwin's discussion of hierarchy and order within the Burmese system. Michael Aung-Thwin, "Jambudipa: Classical Burma's Camelot." *Contributions to Asian Studies* 16 (1981): 51. See also, Juliane Schober, *Paths to Enlightenment: Theravada Buddhism in upper Burma* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1989), 126.

Hell are placed at the bottom of the walls, and are separated from the other narratives by a wide band of floral and geometric motifs (see Figs. 4-7). This organisation suggests the bodhisattvas' progress from sentient beings to enlightened ones, thereby providing the viewer with a blueprint of the path to follow towards nirvana.<sup>31</sup> The placement of the scenes of Enlightenment and the lives of the previous Buddhas in the top two rows of narrative emphasises the escape from *samsara* as the primary goal of religious endeavour.<sup>32</sup> The Jatakas underneath these images demonstrate the virtues and behaviours necessary to attain this goal, while the Hell scenes near the floor graphically warn of the results of poor karma.<sup>33</sup> The strict adherence to the vertical organisation of the murals suggests that portraying a hierarchical progression from profane to sacred, and thereby delineating how to escape the samsaric cycle, was of greater concern to the donors, painters, and viewers than a rigid, clockwise, horizontal continuum of narrative stories.

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### The Murals and the Architecture

The murals are arranged in a specific manner throughout the cave-temple, and the narratives at Tilokaguru are primarily found in the circumambulatory corridor. The walls of other areas that lead off the circumambulatory corridor are painted with images of Buddhas or floral and decorative motifs. For example, the remnants of painting in the central shrine reveal Buddhas seated in *bhumisparsa mudra* flanked by monks, as well as floral motifs.

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<sup>31</sup> That this route to enlightenment is virtually identical for each individual is corroborated by the repetitiveness of the lives of the previous Buddhas as depicted.

<sup>32</sup> John Palmer Ferguson, *Symbolic Dimensions of the Burmese Sangha* (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1975), 24. Ferguson notes that the Buddhas in *bhumisparsa mudra* are a focal point for Burmese Buddhists because it represents the Enlightenment and connects the Jātaka stories to the defeat of Mara.

<sup>33</sup> For further discussions of the role of the Jātaka stories, see John Garrett Jones, *Tales and Teachings of the Buddha* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979).

In the several cells that extend off the circumambulatory corridor, rows of animals, flowers, and birds individually placed in roundels or other geometric forms have been painted. The murals in some of these latter spaces have been completely effaced by bat excrement, and thus it is not possible to state whether they once depicted narrative material. Given the remaining evidence, however, it seems possible to state that imagery depicting a cause-and-effect theme or soteriological purpose, such as the Jataka tales and the lives of the Buddhas, is primarily found in the areas of the temple where the worshipper would be moving, in other words, the circumambulatory corridor. Areas of Tilokaguru where offerings are made to the Buddha or where motion is not possible (i.e. in the cells, which may have been spaces for meditation) contain imagery, such as painted Buddha images, devotees, or floral-geometric designs that does not depict a progression of events. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that certain types of painted imagery are located in precise areas of this religious edifice.<sup>34</sup> In the corridor, the narrative shows progression, mirroring the movement of the worshipper. In the central shrine, the worshipper is surrounded by Buddhas in the Enlightenment posture, a reminder of the escape from *samsara*, the process of which is demonstrated by the Jatakas outside in the corridor.



### Conclusion

In 1973, Jane Terry Bailey set out on her journey to Burma. Despite various technical problems with her camera, she managed to produce three articles, in 1976, 1978, and 1979 respectively, on Burmese wall paintings from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. While these bear evidence of some of her difficulties, they amply illustrate the variety of styles of painting found in post-Pagan Burma. In re-working and adding to some of Bailey's story identifications, it is possible to view the murals at Tilokaguru cave-

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<sup>34</sup> For a more extensive discussion of this topic and its general application to all Burmese wall paintings, see Alexandra Green, *Buddhist Narrative in Burmese Murals* (Ph.D. dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2001), ch. 4.

temple more closely within a religious context. Religion, more than the style of the paintings, was clearly of paramount importance to the Burmese who contributed to the construction and decoration of the cave. The connection between the organisation of the murals and the architecture is evident, as is a hierarchical vertical progression from Hell near the floor of the cave to Enlightenment near the ceiling. Clearly, Jane Terry Bailey's work just began to uncover the richness of wall paintings in Burma, and there is much yet to explore.

