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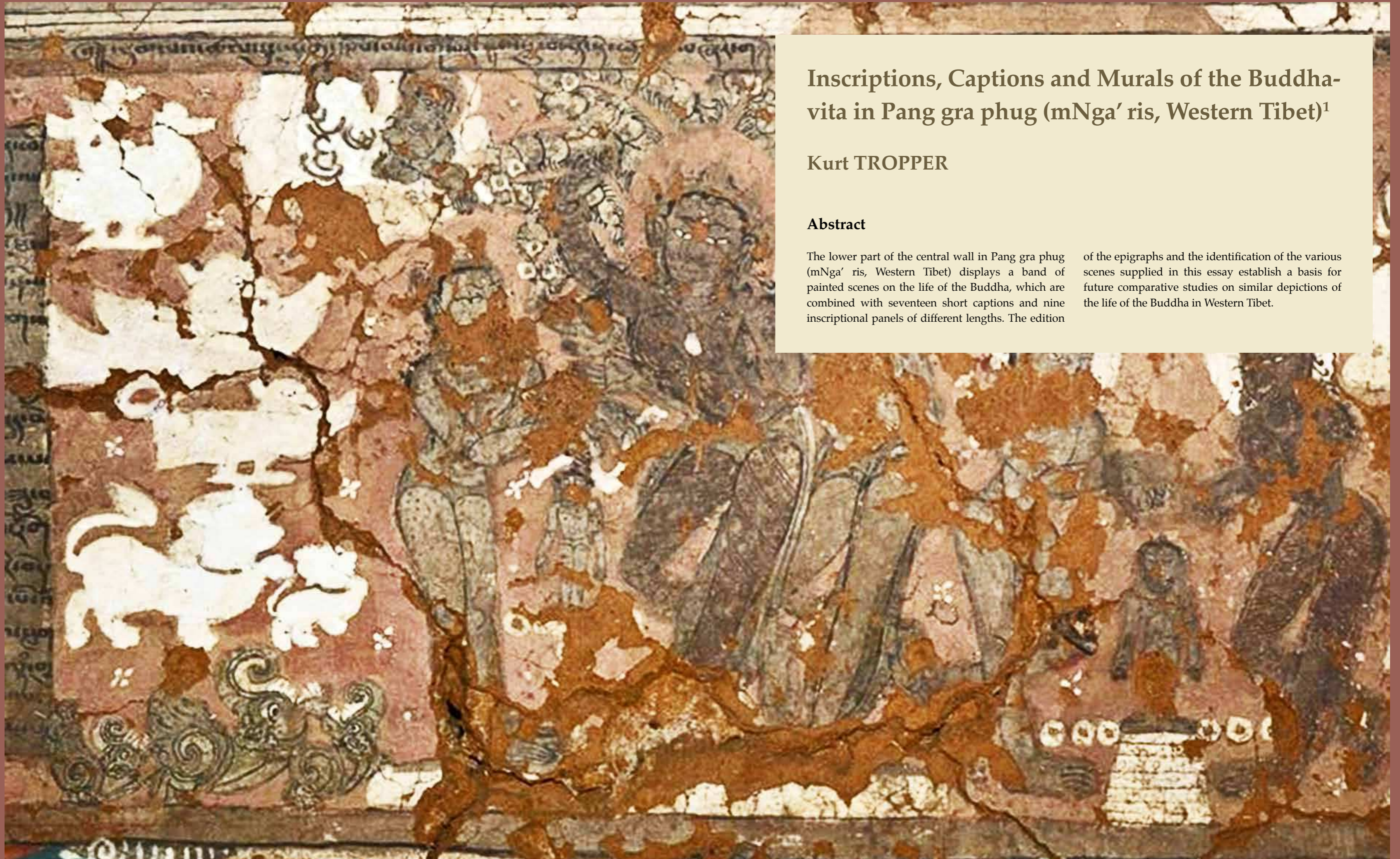


Mural Art

Edited by Cristophe
Munier-Gaillard

STUDIES ON PAINTINGS IN ASIA





Inscriptions, Captions and Murals of the Buddha- vita in Pang gra phug (mNga' ris, Western Tibet)¹

Kurt TROPPER

Abstract

The lower part of the central wall in Pang gra phug (mNga' ris, Western Tibet) displays a band of painted scenes on the life of the Buddha, which are combined with seventeen short captions and nine inscriptional panels of different lengths. The edition

of the epigraphs and the identification of the various scenes supplied in this essay establish a basis for future comparative studies on similar depictions of the life of the Buddha in Western Tibet.

The present essay provides mainly the edition and translation of the epigraphs that are combined with the murals on the Buddha-vita in Pang gra phug (1).² In addition, it contains brief identifications of the various painted scenes and thus complements the essay of Heidi and Helmut Neumann who discuss some art-historical aspects of the cave's murals.³

The edition of the epigraphs is solely based on the photos which the Neumanns took in 2007. As I have not been to Pang gra phug myself, I could not check the damaged passages *in situ*, which in some places may have allowed for a somewhat better reading. This disadvantage is not very significant, however, especially because the edition and translation mainly serve as an aid for the identification of the painted scenes, and minor text-critical uncertainties are of little relevance here.

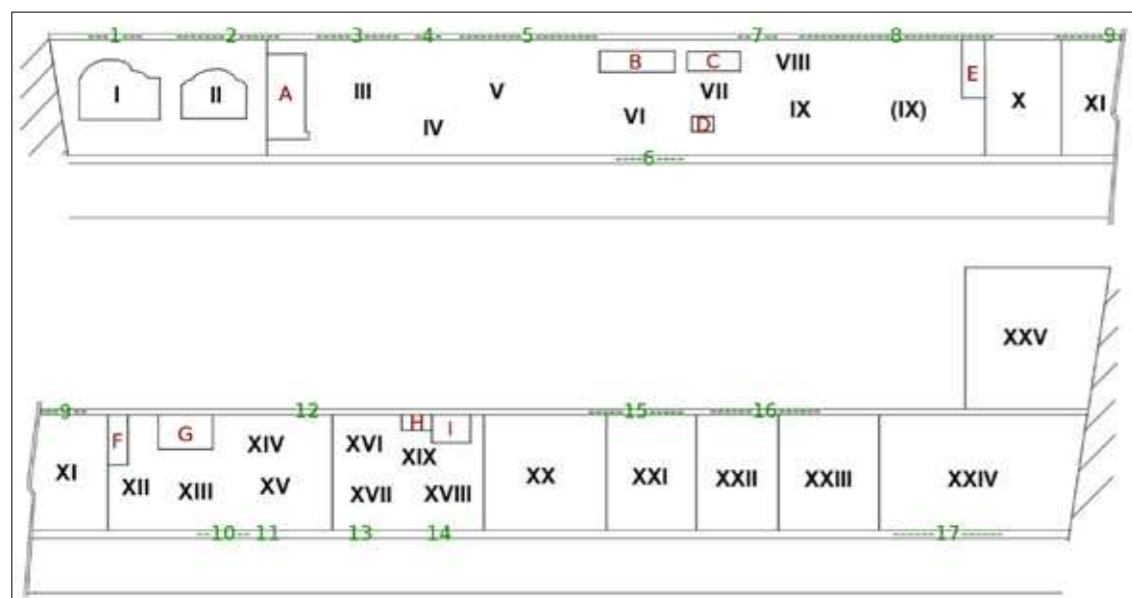
My differentiation between captions and inscriptions (2) is based on their different formats. The captions are one-liners that have been placed above or below the band of painted scenes, whereas the inscriptions comprise several lines and are found on

panels integrated within the murals. The differences regarding style and function are not as clear-cut, however. Generally, the captions are written in prose, are comparatively short and seem to have been intended primarily as identifiers for the scenes which are located below or above them. By contrast, most inscriptions are somewhat longer and have a more poetic flavour. Inscriptions A-C and G are in fact clearly of a metrical structure. D may or may not have been intended as a verse-line of nine syllables, while E, F, H and I are written in prose. Moreover, A-C and G repeatedly express the wish that, due to the Buddha's excellent qualities and deeds, "bliss and happiness may come to this place" (or some variant thereof). This wish is missing in the other five inscriptions.

The lower parts of some captions, as well as the lower and right edges of some inscription panels were clearly painted over at some point in time. This is particularly obvious in inscriptions A, B, E and H, some of which probably comprised more lines than those that are fully or partly preserved.



1. Central wall of the cave temple with the Buddha-vita framed in yellow. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



2. Sketch plan of the Buddha-vita showing the location of scenes I-XXV, captions 1-17, and inscriptions A-I (the left side of the band is shown above, the right side below). © J. Schörlinger

Both the captions and inscriptions are written in *dbu med* (*tshugs ma* type),⁴ and while they exhibit the usual variations of handwritten sources, they were probably all written by the same hand. For the paintings, H.F. and H.A. Neumann proposed a date to the end of the 13th century⁵ and this could, perhaps, also be justified for the epigraphs on the basis of their palaeography and orthography. Yet - going by the limited amount of comparison material that is available - the middle of the 14th century seems somewhat more likely.⁶ What especially needs to be pointed out in the Pang gra phug epigraphs is the complete absence of the *da drag*, of the *ya btags* with *m* before *e* and *i*, and of the *gi gu log*. On the other hand, the redundant 'a *rjes 'jug* occurs frequently,⁷ and there are two cases of 'a *sngon 'jug* instead of *ma sngon 'jug*.⁸ In addition, we find several instances where the genitive particle 'i and the diminutive particle 'u are separated by a *tsheg* from the syllable they modify.⁹

Remarks on the Edition and Translation

The inscriptions and captions are rendered in the form of a diplomatic edition. All conjectures, emendations (including adjustments of irregular spellings to classical norms)¹⁰ and resolutions of abbreviations (*bskungs yig*) have been relegated to the endnotes.

As usual, the syntactical structure of the metrical passages can often be understood in more than one way, but I have generally refrained from offering alternative translations and provided the interpretation that seemed most natural to me. Moreover, some familiarity with the main events in the life of Buddha Śākyamuni on the part of the reader is taken for granted, and thus the annotations to my translations have been limited to those aspects that I considered not necessarily obvious. I am aware, of course, that such an assessment is bound to be subjective.

Editorial Signs

{1}, {2}, {3}, etc.	beginning of a line
*	<i>dbu</i>
/	(standard) <i>shad</i>
!	non-standard <i>shad</i> (<i>tsheg shad</i> , etc.)
<i>m</i>	<i>bindu</i> (as in many other handwritten sources frequently used instead of <i>m</i>)
<u>k</u>	uncertain reading (underlined letter)
=	illegible "letter" ¹¹
-	illegible letter(s) that formed part of a partly legible "letter", with one hyphen representing up to three letters ¹²
xxx _{ba} xxx	insertions below the line
xxx{	text at the right side of the panel was painted over
ʎ	intentional deletions in the inscription, with text still legible
+	intentional deletions in the inscription, with text no longer legible; each + representing one deleted "letter"

The Buddha-vita at Pang gra phug

In the following paragraphs, the various scenes are presented together with their respective captions and inscriptions, maintaining the original sequence on the wall from left to right. It should be noted that the boundaries between the individual scenes are not always entirely clear, and in a few cases the scenes break down into two or more sub-scenes. My division of the scenes is thus bound to contain a certain element of arbitrariness.

Scenes I and II: Tuṣita and Conception (3)

Scene I shows the Buddha *in spe* transferring his crown to Maitreya in the Tuṣita palace. In scene II, Māyādevī, surrounded by three servants, is lying in her palace, while her future son approaches her in the form of a small white elephant (above left of the palace) and is about to enter her womb.



3. Scenes I (left) and II (right), with captions 1 and 2 above and inscription A to the far right. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 1 (3-4)



4. Caption 1 (above scene I). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

'-on¹³ po byams pa rgyal tshab du dbang skur ba //

Conferring the power to the regent Lord Maitreya.

Caption 2 (3, 5-7)



5. Left side of caption 2 (above scene II). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



6. Continuation of caption 2 (above scene II). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

* // glang po thal kar kyi phrug gur sku sprul te byang chub
sems dpa' yum kyi lhumso¹⁴ zhugso¹⁵ //

Transforming his body into an ash-white elephant child,
the Bodhisattva entered the womb of the mother.

Inscription A (8-9)



8. Inscription A, lines 1-18. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



9. Inscription A, lines 16/17-19. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



7. Right side of caption 2 (above scene II). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

- {1} ** // dam pa tog kar¹⁶ dga' ldan pho
{2} brang dam pa ru // mi 'pham¹⁷ 'gon¹⁸ la
{3} rgyal tshab dam par dbang skur te //
{4} 'dzam gling nyid du glang chen thal
{5} kar ltar gshegs gang // kra¹⁹ shis
{6} des kyang gnas 'dir bde' legs
{7} shog //
{8} ** // rgyal po'i khab kyi -rong-ye=²⁰
{9} dam =r²¹ zas rtsang²² skras²³ // bud me[²⁴
{10} skyon bral g.yo' sgyu spangs pa
{11} ==dzes²⁵ yum // lhumso su zla b[²⁶
{12} blo-ro=²⁷ ldan pa shag²⁸ kya'i rig[²⁹
{13} kra³⁰ shis d-s³¹ kyang gnas 'dir bde[³²
{14} legs shog // * // lum pi 'i³³
{15} tshal ni d-en³⁴ zhing nyams dga' blag
{16} sha'i // ya=ga³⁵ nas bzung ltam gyu[³⁶
{17} tshangs dang rgya byin 'dud // mkha' la
{18} gshegs te phy--sbcu³⁷-ad³⁷ ma byung³⁸
{19} ==i====-i=-i====-e=====³⁹

The excellent one, Śvetaketu,⁴⁰ conferred the power to the invincible protector,⁴¹ to the excellent regent, in the excellent Tuṣita palace and came to (this) very Jambudvīpa as an ash-white elephant; and on account of that auspicious one: may bliss and happiness come to this place!

And on account of the son of Śuddhodana (who lived) in the excellent city of Rājagṛha, (on account of) the one who was (already) provided with intellect for ten (lunar) months⁴² in the womb of the faultless women who had given up (all) craft and deceit, (that is) the most (?) beautiful mother, (on account of) that auspicious Śākya-progeny: may bliss and happiness come to this place!

(In) the grove of Lumbi(nī), a secluded charming place, (with his mother) holding on to the branch of a *plakṣa*-tree,⁴³ (Buddha Śākyamuni's) birth came about, Brahma and Indra paid homage. Going (up) to the sky, lotuses appeared in the ten directions (.)⁴⁴...⁴⁵

Scenes III and IV: Birth and Ritual Bathing (10)

Scene III shows the birth of the future Buddha from the side of his mother, who holds on to the branch of a tree and is assisted by two servants. The upper part of the scene is framed by two pairs of gods, who are surrounded by white clouds. On the left, various animals are depicted with their young, which were born at the same time as the Buddha (cf. scene V). Scene IV shows the ritual bathing of the newly born child by Brahma and Indra.



10. Scenes III (left, centre and above right) and IV (below right), with captions 3 and 4 above and the rightmost part of inscription A to the far left. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 3 (11-13)



11. Left side of caption 3 (above scene III). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

* // lum pa'i³⁶ tshal du yum gyi rtsib ma'i go bar nas sku bltam
ste³⁷ phyo==bzhir⁴⁸ gshegs te pad ma bdun bdun byung

In the grove of Lumbi(nī) he was born from the space between the ribs of his mother, walked (seven steps)⁴⁹ into the four directions,⁵⁰ and each time seven lotuses appeared (at the places that he stepped on)(.)⁵¹



12. Continuation of caption 3 (above scene III). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



13. Right side of caption 3 (above scene III). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 4 (14)



14. Caption 4 (above scene III and IV). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

tshang pa dang rgya⁵² byin kyi⁵³ sku khru⁵⁴ gsol /

Brahma and Indra performed the ritual bathing (of the newly born Bodhisattva).

Scene V: Human Figure and Animals with their Offspring (15)

Scene V forms a close unit with scene III, and together they form an arching frame for scene IV; because it has its own caption, it is presented as a separate scene here. Like the left side of scene III, it shows various animals with their young as well as a human figure. The latter probably represents one of the “five hundred wives of ministers” who “gave birth to five hundred children respectively”. The figure might hold a baby in her arms, but the picture is not clear enough to allow for a definite identification.

Caption 5 (16-18)



16. Left side of caption 5 (above scene V). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



17. Continuation of caption 5 (above scene V). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



18. Right side of caption 5 (above scene V). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

==dus⁵⁴ su blon mo lnga brgya' dgod⁵⁵ ma lnga brgya' lo=pa⁵⁶ thamd⁵⁷ la yang phrug gu lnga rgya⁵⁸ lnga brgya' ya=btsa⁵⁹ so //

At that(?) time, five hundred children respectively were also(?) born to five hundred wives of ministers,⁶⁰ to five hundred mares,⁶¹ and also(?) to all the others.⁶²

Scenes VI and VII: Prediction of the Brahmin and Schooling (19)

In scene VI, the young Bodhisattva is presented to the Brahmin, who makes his predictions about the newborn's future and then sinks down and faints. Scene VII shows the Bodhisattva with (a) fellow student(s) and/or (a) teacher(s).

ston pa byon tsa na bram ze ltas⁶³ zer⁶⁴ te bram ze brgyal te 'gyelo //

When the teacher (i.e., the Buddha *in spe*) arrives, the Brahmin points out the signs(?),⁶⁵ and then the Brahmin sinks down and faints.



15. Scene V, with caption 5 above and the leftmost part of inscription B in the top right corner. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



19. Scenes VI (left and centre bottom) and VII (centre and right), with caption 6 (below scene VI) and inscriptions B, C (top left and right) and D (bottom right). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 6 (20-21)



20. Left side of caption 6 (below scene VI). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



21a-b. Rightmost side of caption 6 (below scene VI, with text retraced on the right). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Inscription B (22)

{1} ** // gzhal med khang mdzes dam par drang srong mdun
bzha⁶⁶g ste /
{2} mtshan lta=⁶⁶shis pa brjod de ston pa 'byung 'gyur gang //
shag rig,
{3} bud med 'khor ldan kun '-u=⁶⁷rgyan btag⁶⁸ gang // kra⁶⁹shi=
des⁷⁰ kya⁷¹ /
{4} ding 'dir bde' legs shog / bram ze la mtshan bstan pas rab du
{5} byung na ni =ngs⁷² rgyas 'byung⁷³====i=====i=====

In the beautiful and excellent divine palace, he had been placed before the *r̥si*, and the auspicious prophecy was made: “a teacher (i.e., a Buddha) will appear”; women of the Śākya clan attended to him, he was adorned with an array(?) of ornaments; and on account of that auspicious one: may bliss and happiness come here today! Having displayed the characteristic marks (of a Buddha) to the Brahmin, ... if he will have become(?) a *pravrajaka* ... will be/become(?) a Buddha ...⁷⁴



22. Inscription B (above scene VI). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Inscription C (23)

{1} ** // gzhon nu stobs dang sgyu rtsal y-g⁷⁵ rtsis
{2} 'phong rnams la====u====u====y-n⁷⁶ lha dang
{3} min⁷⁷ kun has m=====g⁷⁸ kyi rigs=-rungs⁷⁹
{4} log rt-g⁸⁰ bsal pliyi==btsum⁸¹ mo 'i⁸² 'khor // kra⁸³ shis
{5} des kyang gnas 'dir b<5>de' -egs⁸⁴ shog L

The youth ...⁸⁵ to(?)⁸⁶ all the gods and men ...⁸⁷ strength, arts, writing, calculation and archery ...⁸⁸ to dispel wrong ideas of the Śākya(?) progeny, he was surrounded by(?) noble women; and on account of that auspicious one: may bliss and happiness come to this place!



23. Inscription C (above scene VII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Inscription D (24)

- {1} * // *byang chub semd*⁸⁹
- {2} *yig rtsis zlob*⁹⁰
- {3} *par gda*⁹¹ //

The Bodhisattva is training in writing and calculation.



24. Inscription D (below scene VII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Scenes VIII and IX: Wrestling and Arrow-shooting (25)

In scene VIII, the Bodhisattva is shown in the act of wrestling; the figure lying supine below the wrestling pair appears to be a conquered opponent. The photo is not clear enough to allow for an identification as to whether the depiction in the top left corner shows the Bodhisattva resting (after conquering his opponent?) or if it is rather to be attributed to scene VII and shows him writing or calculating (note, however, that his face is turned towards the wrestling pair). Scene IX illustrates the contest in archery, in which the Bodhisattva pierced seven trees, seven iron drums (shown between the trees) and a(n) image of a boar (the right side of this scene can be seen in **fig. 32**).



25. Scenes VIII (centre above and below) and IX (bottom left, and right), with captions 7 and 8 above and the rightmost part of inscription C in the top left corner. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 7 (26-27)



26. Left side of caption 7 (left above scene VIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

byang chub sems dpa' gyad 'dran pa

The Bodhisattva competing in wrestling(.)



27. Rightmost side of caption 7 (left above scene VIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 8 (28-31)



28. Left side of caption 8 (above scene IX). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



29. Continuation (1) of caption 8 (above scene IX). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



30. Continuation (2) of caption 8 (above scene IX). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



31. Right side of caption 8 (above scene IX). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

*byang chub sems dpa'is*⁹² *shing ta la bdun lcag= ky-rnga*⁹³ *bdun =g=====g-e mda' -e=====o====i==*⁹⁴ *nas mda' chu khron pa skyes ces bya ba byungo*⁹⁵ //

The Bodhisattva ...⁹⁶ seven *tala* trees, seven iron drums ...⁹⁷ arrow ...⁹⁸ the so-called "gift of the arrow water spring"(?)⁹⁹ appeared.



32. Scene X (right) and right side of scene IX (left), with right side of caption 8 above and inscription E (centre above). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Scene X: Killing and Disposing of the Elephant (32)

In scene X, the Bodhisattva is shown throwing the corpse of an elephant with his big toe (top left and centre) after it had been killed by his rival Devadatta (bottom right). The figure in the bottom left corner may be the mahout who had led the elephant along or Sundarānanda, who had dragged the elephant outside the gate of the city after it had been killed (for the right side of scene IX, shown in the left part of **fig. 32**, see above).

- {1} *lhas byin kyis glang*
- {2} *po che bsad pa'i*
- {3} *ro rul nas drong*¹⁰⁰ *khye*¹⁰¹
- {4} *dri mas gang ba la*
- {5} *byang chub sems dpas*
- {6} *zhabs kyi the pos*¹⁰²
- {7} *ro de pha rol du*
- {8} *bskyur bas rgya gar*
- {9} *glang po shongs*¹⁰³ *ces bya*
- {10} *ba b-i=====*

The corpse of the elephant that was killed by Devadatta decayed, and subsequently the town was filled with a stench; at that time, the Bodhisattva threw the corpse outside with his big toe, and thus ... called "the Indian elephant hole"(?)¹⁰⁴.

Inscription E (33)



33. Inscription E (left of scene X). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



Scene XI: Exhortation of the Bodhisattva (34)

Scene XI shows the Bodhisattva surrounded by various beings in his palace; he is exhorted to leave his home in order to seek perfect and complete enlightenment. The four great kings mentioned in caption 9 can be seen to the left and right of the palace.

34. Scene XI, with caption 9 above and the leftmost side of inscription F in the top right corner. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 9 (35-37)



35. Left side of caption 9 (above scene XI). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



36. Continuation of caption 9 (above scene XI). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



37. Right side of caption 9 (above scene XI). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

*byang chub sems dpa' rab du byung bar chas pa la rgyal
 +-+chen¹⁰⁵ bzhi' 'i dmagis¹⁰⁶ ==l¹⁰⁷ ba ll¹⁰⁸*

The army (or armies) of the four great kings exhorting(?) the Bodhisattva to set out to become a *pravrajaka*.

Scenes XII and XIII: Departure from the Palace and Return of the Horse (38)

In scene XII, the Bodhisattva departs from his palace with the four *devaputras* lifting his horse into the air. Scene XIII shows the horse returning without its master, and the women hold on to it and weep (the two figures seen to the right of inscription G in the top right corner probably belong to scene XIV described below).



38. Scenes XII (left) and XIII (centre, below right), with inscriptions F and G (above left and centre) and caption 10 (below right). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

- {1} *lha' i bu bzhis*
- {2} *byang chub sems*
- {3} *dpa' chibs dang*
- {4} *bcas pa bar snang*
- {5} *la bteg ste ya*
- {6} *yab kyi pho brang*
- {7} *la skor ba mdzad*
- {8} *te rab tu 'byung*
- {9} *du byon no /*

The four *devaputras* lifted the Bodhisattva together with his horse into the air, and after the circumambulation of his father's palace he went to renounce the world.

Caption 10 (40)



btsun mo rnam's kyi's chibs la=jus¹⁰⁹ ste bshumso¹¹⁰ //

The ladies held on to the horse and wept.¹¹¹

Scenes XIV and XV: Haircutting and Excursions (41)

Scene XIV shows the Bodhisattva cutting off his hair with a sword as an outward sign for becoming a wandering monk; the figures to his right and left (38) probably represent the Trayastriṃśa gods who subsequently gathered his hair and paid honour to it. The structure in the top right corner seems to depict the Cūḍāpratigrahaṇacaitya.¹¹² In scene XV, the Bodhisattva rides on a horse-cart and meets an old man, a sick man, a dead man and a monk (arranged clockwise around the Bodhisattva, with the old man in the bottom left corner). The upright figure facing the Bodhisattva most likely represents his charioteer, who answered the Bodhisattva's various questions regarding the four encountered men.¹¹³

Inscription G (42)



42. Inscription G (left of scene XIV). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Inscription F (39)



39. Inscription F (left above scene XII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

40. Caption 10 (below scene XIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



41. Scenes XIV (above) and XV (below), with captions 11 (bottom left corner) and 12 (top right corner). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

- {1} * // *pho brang nas byung rga nad 'chi' ba las*
- {2} *byung gzigs // -i¹¹⁴ rnaṃs rmugs mdzad lha'is¹¹⁵*
- {3} *mdun bdar mkha' la ni ! srid 3 dag las*
- {4} *rgal phyir mthon mthing dbu' skra bregs!*
- {5} *kra¹¹⁶ shis des kyang ding 'dir bde legs shog /*

After he had emerged from the palace and had seen the results of old age, sickness and death, his mind had been completely stunned, and (thus) in the presence of the gods, up in the sky, he cut off his dark blue hair in order to move beyond the three worlds. And on account of that auspicious one: may bliss and happiness come here today!

Scenes XVI, XVII, XVIII and XIX: Malicious Villagers, Sujātā, Nairāñjanā and Gift of Trapuṣa and Bhadrāpāla (45)

In scene XVI, the Bodhisattva, while practising austerities, is molested by villagers, who put things into his ears.¹¹⁷ Scene XVII shows Sujātā milking a cow (right) and subsequently giving the milk to the Bodhisattva (left). In scene XVIII, the Bodhisattva arrives at, and crosses, the river Nairāñjanā; the figure on the right is probably a *devaputra* who gives new clothes to the Bodhisattva.¹¹⁸ In scene XIX, the Bodhisattva receives the food offering of the merchants Trapuṣa and Bhadrāpāla; the painting, however, shows only one of the two donors.

Caption 11 (43)



rgas pa !

Old man.

43. Caption 11 (left below scene XV).
© H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 12 (44)



mchod rten

caitya

44. Caption 12 (right above scene XIV).
© H.F. & H.A. Neumann



45. Scenes XVI (top left), XVII (bottom left and centre), XVIII (bottom right) and XIX (top centre), with captions 13 (below scene XVII), 14 (left below scene XVIII), and inscriptions H (above scene XIX) and I (right above scene XIX).
© H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 13 (46)



46. Caption 13 (below scene XVII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

ba rtsi¹¹⁹ mos 'o ma dra==_=¹²⁰

The cow-girl having offered(?) milk.

Caption 14 (47)



47. Caption 14 (left below scene XVIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

chu 'o¹²¹ na ra ==_=¹²² !

He arrived(?) at the river Nairāñjanā.¹²³



48. Inscriptions H (above scene XIX) and I (right above scene XIX). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Inscriptions H and I (48)

- {1} *tshong dpon ga go na¹²⁴ dang bzang*
- {2} *skyong gis mchod yon phul*
- {3} *te chos zhus par gda' 'o*

After the merchant(s) Trapuṣa and Bhadrāpāla¹²⁵ had presented offerings (to the Buddha), they were asking for the *dharma*(.)

- {1} *sargyang rgyas¹²⁶ la bdud kyi bar chad*
- {2} *byas pas / bar chad ma nus ste*
- {3} *slar srod la bdud bye ba dung byur¹²⁷*
- {4} *btul ba //*

After Māra, trying to create obstacles for the Buddha, did not bring the obstacles about: later, in the evening, the subduing of a quadrillion of *māras*.

Scenes XX and XXI: Victory over the Forces of Māra and First Sermon (49)

Scene XX is linked to inscription I (located immediately to its left) and shows the Bodhisattva surrounded by various male and female members of Māra's army, who try to prevent him from attaining enlightenment and eventually are defeated by the Bodhisattva.¹²⁸ In scene XXI he is seen delivering his first sermon in the Deer Park near Vārāṇasī, with Brahma and Indra, who had exhorted him to teach the *dharma*, watching from above; note that in the mural painting only four disciples are shown, while caption 15 mentions (the usual) five:

kun shes l-d¹²⁹ pa lnga sde h=ng¹³⁰ po la bden bzhi bstan te chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ro //

(The Buddha) taught the four (noble) truths to Ājñāta, etc., (that is) the five excellent disciples, and turned the wheel of the *dharma*.



49. Scenes XX (left) and XXI (right), with caption 15 (above scene XXI).
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Caption 15 (50-52)



50. Left side of caption 15 (above scene XXI).
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51. Continuation of caption 15 (above scene XXI).
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52. Right side of caption 15 (above scene XXI).
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53. Scenes XXII (left) and XXIII (right), with caption 16 (extending above both scenes). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Scenes XXII and XXIII: Taming of the Elephant and Round of Alms (53)

Scene XXII shows the Buddha taming an elephant that was incited and released by his rival Devadatta. In scene XXIII, he is seen with two disciples going for alms; all three carry an alms bowl and a mendicant staff (no corresponding caption or inscription is discernible).

=lha=byin¹³¹ kyis glang =n¹³² rbad te btang bas phya=gi¹³³ sor mo las seng ge spru=te¹³⁴ btang bas btulo¹³⁵ //

Because Devadatta had incited an elephant and released it, (the Buddha) magically created (a) lion(s) from the finger(s) of his hand, released it (or them) and thus tamed (it [or them]).¹³⁶



57. Continuation (3) of caption 16 (above scene XXIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 16 (54-58)



54a-b. Left side of caption 16 (above scene XXII, with retraced text on the right). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



55. Continuation (1) of caption 16 (above scene XXII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



56. Continuation (2) of caption 16 (above scenes XXII and XXIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



58. Right side of caption 16 (above scene XXIII). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Scene XXIV: Gift of the Monkey (59)

In scene XXIV, a monkey gathers some fruit (or honey?)¹³⁷ (right), gives it to the Buddha (left), performs a dance (top centre), and falls into a well (bottom centre).



59. Scene XXIV (above caption 17). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

Caption 17 (60-62)



60. General view of caption 17 (below scene XXIV). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



61. Left side of caption 17 (below scene XXIV), with leftmost part missing. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann



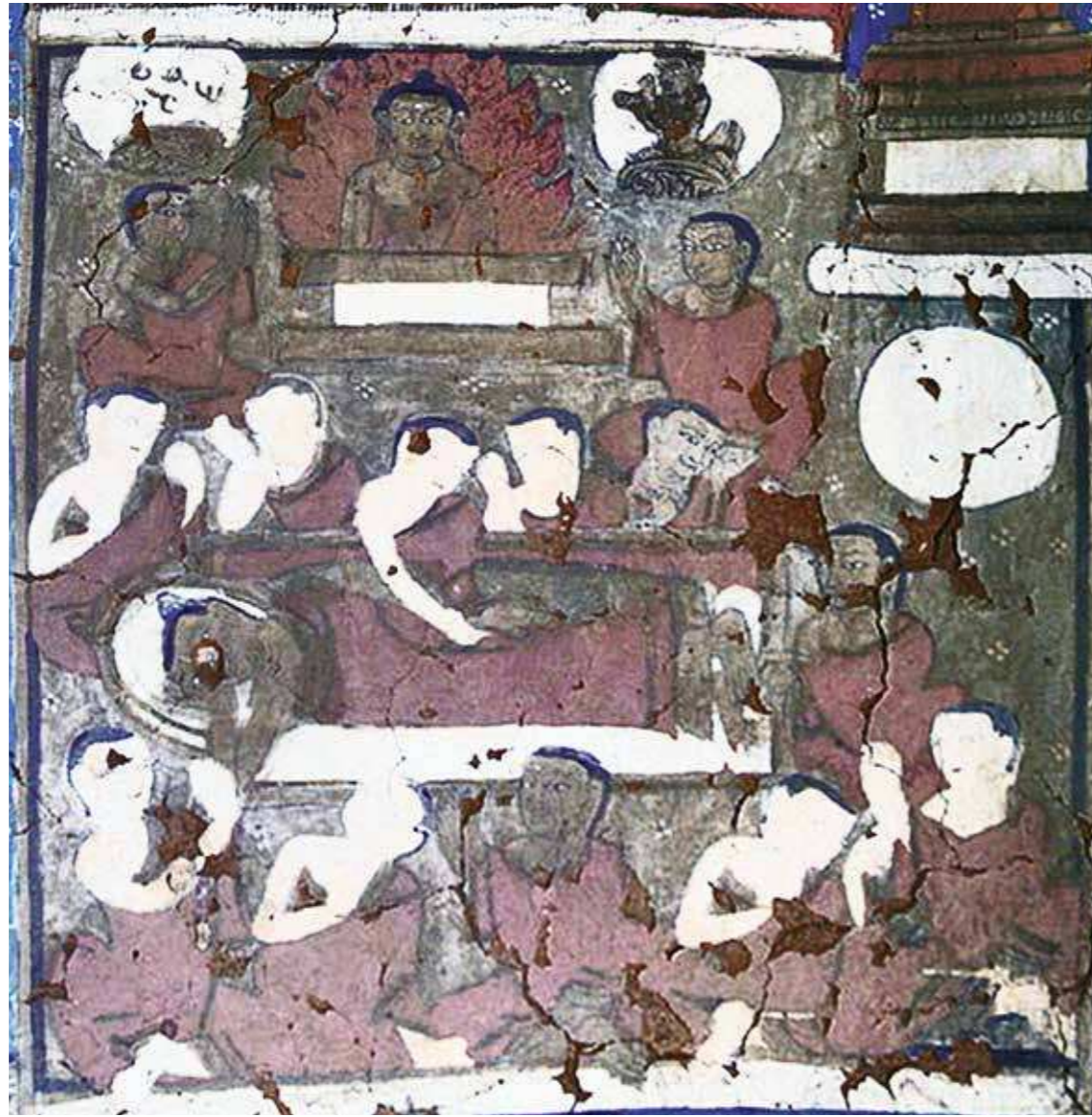
62. Right side of caption 17 (below scene XXIV), with rightmost part missing. © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

== 'us¹³⁸ shing thog phul te dga_nas g==yas pa=e 'u¹³⁹ khron par 'gri==¹⁴⁰

A monkey gave fruit (to the Buddha); cheerfully performing a dance,(?) the monkey fell(?) into a well(,)

Scene XXV: Parinirvāṇa (63)

Scene XXV shows the Buddha, lying on his right side and surrounded by disciples, about to enter *parinirvāṇa* (below); subsequently his bodily remains are cremated (above).



63. Scene XXV (no caption or inscription discernible). © H.F. & H.A. Neumann

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Endnotes

- 1 This essay is a revised and expanded version of an earlier online publication which does not contain any images of the painted scenes (Tropper 2012). I am grateful to Heidi and Helmut Neumann for providing me with their digital photos of the inscriptions, captions and painted scenes, as well as for their permission to reproduce them here. The research for this study was financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, project nos. S 9811-G21 and P 25479). My thanks are also due to Sarah Teetor for correcting my English and to Jürgen Schörflinger who prepared fig. 2.
- 2 The spelling of the name of the cave (Tib. *phug*) is based on oral information provided to the Neumanns by local informants in 2007.
- 3 See this volume.
- 4 On the various types of the "headless" (*dbu med*) script, see *inter alia* Das 1888, plate III, between p. 46 and 47.
- 5 2011, p. 38.
- 6 See the *Caityapradakṣiṇagāthā* inscription in Alchi (Ladakh) (Tropper 2010), the historical inscription in the gSum brtsegs temple of Wanla (Ladakh) (Tropper 2007), and the sKyes rabs brgya pa cycle in the *skor lam chen mo* of Zha lu monastery (Central Tibet) (Tropper 2005), all of which have been dated to the 13th or early 14th century. See also Scherrer-Schaub 1999, Scherrer-Schaub & Bonani 2002.
- 7 *bde'* (inscr. A, l. 6; inscr. B, l. 4; inscr. C, l. 5); '*chi'*' (inscr. H, l. 1); *dbu'*' (inscr. H, l. 4); *brgya'*' (caption 5 [3 times]); *bzhi'*' *i* (sic) (caption 9).
- 8 '*gon*' in inscr. A, l. 2, and '<*g>on*' in caption 1.
- 9 *lum pi 'i*' (inscr. A, l. 14); *btsun mo 'i*' (inscr. C, l. 4); *lha 'i*' (inscr. F, l. 1); *bzhi' 'i* (sic) (caption 9), <*spre*> '*us*' (caption 17); <*spre*> '*u*' (caption 17). On this orthographic peculiarity, see *inter alia* Taube 1980, p. 12 and Tauscher 1999, p. 32.
- 10 No emendations are provided for irregular

- ____ 2012, "Inscriptions and Captions of the Buddha-vita in Pang gra phug", in Amy Heller (ed.), *The Arts of Tibetan Painting: Recent Research on Manuscripts, Murals and Thangkas of Tibet, the Himalayas and Mongolia (11th to 19th century)*. *Proceedings of the Twelfth Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, Vancouver 2010 (<http://www.asianart.com/articles/tropper/index.html>).

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Twelfth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Vancouver 2010. Leiden, p. 43-106.

- Vv: *Vinayavastu*: D: '*dul ba, ka* 1v1 - *nga* 302r5 (The Tibetan Tripitaka, Taipei Edition, Taiwan 1991, vol. 1); Q: '*dul ba, khe* 1v1 - *ce* 277r5 (The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, Tokyo-Kyoto 1955-1961, vols. 41-42).

"*sandhi*"-forms (*ba, pa, du, tu*, etc.). Cases of redundant '*a rjes 'jug*' and of the particles '*i*' and '*u*' appearing as distinct syllables (see above) have also been left untouched.

- 11 See Steinkellner & Luczanits 1999, p. 15 (n. 12), where "letter" is defined as "any combination of letters in the Tibetan alphabet that occupy in vertical arrangement of the letter sequence the space of a single grapheme", while *letter* "refers to the single signs for consonants or vowel modification only". Thus a "letter" can be composed of up to four letters. E.g., =*ng chub sems dpa'* (partly damaged *byang chub sems dpa'*) or *bsod na=s* (partly damaged *bsod nams*).
- 12 E.g., -*gyal po* (partly damaged *rgyal po*), -*rub* (partly damaged *sgrub*), -*od* (partly damaged *spyod*) or *s-rin* (partly damaged *sprin*).
- 13 The inscription obviously read '*gon*' (i.e. "irregular" spelling of *mgon*).
- 14 *lhumsu: lhums su*.
- 15 *zhugso: zhugs so*.
- 16 *kar: dkar*.
- 17 '*phan: pham*'.
- 18 '*gon: mgon*'.
- 19 *kra: bkra*.
- 20 -*rong-ye=*: *grong khyer*.
- 21 =*r: par*.
- 22 *rtsang: gtsang*.
- 23 *skras: sras*.
- 24 *mel: med*.
- 25 ===*dzes: rnam mdzes* or *rab mdzes*?
- 26 *bl: bcu*.
- 27 -*ro=*: *gros*.
- 28 *sha: sha*.
- 29 *rigl: rigs*.
- 30 *kra: bkra*.
- 31 *d-s: des*.

- 32 The inscription probably read *bde'* (i.e., for *bde*; cf. line 6).

33 *pi 'i: bi 'i*.

34 *d-en: dben*.

35 *ya=ga: yal ga*.

36 *gyul: gyur*.

37 *phy=s bcur-ad: phyogs bcur pad*.

38 *byung: byung / / (?)*

39 The remaining traces allow for the conjecture (*b*)*kra shis des kyang ding 'dir bde(')* legs shog (/ /). Cf. inscriptions B and G.

40 Buddha Śākyamuni *in spe*. Cf. Lv (Hokazono 1994, p. 286; D: 7v6, Q: 9r6).

41 Maitreya.

42 Cf. Lv (Hokazono 1994, p. 428; D: 42r5, Q: 49v1).

43 Cf. Lv (Hokazono 1994, p. 438 and 440; D: 45r3,5,6, Q: 52v5,7,8).

44 It is not entirely clear to what this clause refers. In Lv (Hokazono 1994, p. 442; D: 45v2-3, Q: 53r4-5) Brahma and his attendants carry the "palace" (*kuṭāgāra/khang pa brtsegs pa*) in which the Bodhisattva resided while in the womb of Māyādevī to Brahma's realm, but no lotuses are mentioned in this episode. Thus it seems more likely that *mkha' la gshegs* should be understood as an abbreviation of the newly born Bodhisattva's taking seven steps towards the various directions, with lotuses appearing under his feet wherever he placed his steps. However, Lv (Hokazono 1994, p. 444; D: 46r4-7, Q: 53v7-54r4) just contains a description of his walking towards the east, south, west, north, nadir and zenith, which is somewhat at variance with the inscription's *phy<og>g bcur*. Note that a similar discrepancy is found in caption 3.

45 Possibly read: "and on account of that auspicious one: may bliss and happiness come here today!"

46 *lum pa'i*: *lum bi'i* or *lum bi ni'i*.

47 *bltaṃ ste*: *bltams te*.

48 *phyo==bzhir*: *phyogs bzhir*.

49 Cf. *Lv* (ed. Hokazono 1994, p. 444): *bodhisattvaḥ pūrvaṃ dīśam abhimukhaḥ saptapadāni prakrāmati sma ... dakṣiṇāṃ dīśam abhimukhaḥ saptapadāni prakrāmati sma ... paścimāṃ dīśam abhimukhaḥ saptapadāni prakrāntaḥ ... uttarāṃ dīśam abhimukhaḥ saptapadāni prakrāntaḥ*.

50 In *Lv* (ed. Hokazono 1994, p. 444) the Bodhisattva is also said to have walked (seven steps) towards the nadir and the zenith: *adhastād dīśam abhimukhaḥ saptapadāni prakrāntaḥ ... upariśtād dīśam abhimukhaḥ saptapadāni prakrānta[h]*.

51 Cf. *Lv* (ed. Hokazono 1994, p. 444): *yatra yatra ca bodhisattvaḥ padam utkṣipati sma, tatra tatra padmāni prādurbhavanti sma*.

52 *rgya*: *brgya*.

53 *kyi*: *kyis* (or, morphologically more correct, *gyis*).

54 ==*dus*: *de'i dus*(?)

55 *dgod*: *rgod*.

56 The inscription probably read *lod pa* (i.e., *bskungs yig of la sogs pa*; cf. Shes rab 2003, p. 597).

57 *thamḍ*: *thams cad*.

58 *rgya*: *brgya*.

59 *ya=btsas*: *yang btsas*(?)

60 Probably corresponding to *kulikā/ya rabs* “noble women” in *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 464; D: 51v2; Q: 60r2).

61 *Lv* relates the birth of ten thousand female and ten thousand male foals: *daśa vaḍavāśahasrāṇi, daśa kiśorasahasrāṇi* (Hokazono 1994, p. 464); *rte'u mo khri dang / ... rte'u pho khri* (D: 51v3, Q: 60r2-3).

62 According to *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 464; D: 51v3, Q: 60r2-3) there were also born ten thousand girls (*daśa kanyāśahasrāṇi/bu mo khri*), eight hundred female servants (*aṣṭau dāśātāni/bran mo brgyad brgya*), eight (Tib.: five) hundred male servants (*aṣṭau dāśātāni/bran lnga brgya*), five hundred female elephants (Tib.: elephant children) (*pañca karenṣātāni/ba lang gi phrug gu mo lnga brgya*) and five hundred male elephants (Tib.: elephant children) (*pañca piṅgaśātāni/ba lang gi phrug gu pho lnga brgya po dag*). See also the verses preceding this prose passage (Hokazono 1994, p. 460-462; D: 51r4-v1, Q: 59v3-7).

63 The syllable also could be read as *rtas, skas* (“irregular” spelling of *skad*?) or *ruyas*; the latter alternative makes little sense, however.

64 *zer*: *gzer* or *gzir*?

65 Or: “expressed his delight” (*rtas zer*), “spoke out” (*ska[d] zer*), “was delighted and distressed” (*rtas gzer/gzir*)? At any rate, there can be little doubt that the caption refers to Asita’s visit to king Śuddhodana,

who brings his son to the *rṣi* and prompts him to make his predictions about the child’s future. Note that in *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 480; D: 56r2, Q: 65r3), the *rṣi* is just said to have cried, shed tears and sighed (*prārodid, aśrūṇi ca pravartayan, gambhīraṃ ca niḥśvasati sma/mchi ma blags te [te: te / Q] ngus nas shugs ring du phyung*), but not to have sunken down and fainted.

66 [ta=: *ltas*.

67 '-u=: ‘*dus*(?)

68 *btag*: *btags*.

69 *kra*: *bkra*.

70 *shi*=*des*: *shis des*.

71 *kyā*[: *kyang*.

72 =*ngs*: *sangs*.

73 The syllable may also have read ‘*gyur*.

74 Because the end of the clause is missing, the syntactical structure of the extant fragments remains somewhat unclear. Probably *rab du byung na ni* is the beginning of the prediction of the Brahmin, e.g.: “Having displayed the characteristic marks (of a Buddha) to the Brahmin, he (the Brahmin) predicted: ‘if he (the newly born child) will have become a *pravrajaka*, he will be/ become a Buddha’...”.

75 *y-g*: *yig*. Cf. inscription D.

76 The remaining traces allow for the (rather speculative) conjecture *las / / mthu thabs mchod sbyin*. For the enumeration of the sixty-four crafts in which the Bodhisattva excelled, see *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 590-92; D: 80r7-v7, Q: 93v1-94r2).

77 *min*: *mi*(?). Cf. *Lv*’s description of the Bodhisattva’s pre-eminence in the sixty-four crafts, which ends in *karmakalāsu lokikāsu dīvyamānuṣyakātīkrāntāsu sarvatra bodhisattva eva viśiṣyate sma/sgyu rtsal 'jig rten pa dang lha'i dang mi'i las 'das pa thams cad la'ang byang chub sems dpa' ba' zhiḡ* (*zhiḡ*: *shig Q*) *khyad par du 'phags par gyur to* (Hokazono 1994, p. 592; D: 80v7, Q: 94r2-3).

78 *m*=====*g*: *mchog gang / / shag*?

79 *rigs*=*rungs*: *rigs 'khrungs*.

80 *rt-g*: *rtog*.

81 *phyi*==*btsun*: *phyir btsun*.

82 *mo* 'i: *mos*(?)

83 *kra*: *bkra*.

84 -*egs*: *legs*.

85 Read: “was superior”?

86 *bas*.

87 Read: “in the acts of”?

88 Read: “(archery) in power, means and sacrificial service”?

89 *semḍ*: *sems dpa'*.

90 *zlob*: *slob*.

91 *gda*=: *gda'*.

92 *dpa'is*: *dpas* (an obvious makeshift correction by the scribe).

93 *lcag*=*ky-rnga*: *lcags kyi rnga*.

94 A rather speculative conjecture that can be more or less justified by the remaining traces is: *phag rgod btsugs te mda' de 'phangso / 'phog ste sa phyogs phigs nas*.

95 *byungo*: *byung ngo*.

96 Read: “set up”?

97 Read: “(and a(n image of a) boar, and then he shot that”)? *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 590; D: 80r2-3, Q: 93r3-4) has seven *tāla* trees (*sapta tāl[ah]*); *shing ta* [*rta Q*] *la bdun*), one iron drum (*ayasmayī bherī; lcags kyi rnga*) and an image of a boar (*varāhapratīma; phag rgod kyi gzugs*). The text of the inscription tallies with the painting below it, which shows seven trees, seven drums and a(n image of a?) boar.

98 Read: “After it hit (the targets) and pierced the place (where it landed)”?

99 In *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 590; D: 80r3, Q: 93r5) the spring is simply called “arrow spring” (*śarakūpa [iti]*; *mda'i khron pa* [*zhes bya ba*]). The expression of the inscription is strange, especially the concluding *skyes*. Perhaps the scribe originally wanted to conclude the caption with “*mda'i chu khron pa skyes / /*” (i.e., “the ‘arrow water spring’ came into existence”) and then came up with a makeshift correction.

100 *drong*: *grong*.

101 *khye*=: *khyer*.

102 *pos*: *bos*.

103 *shongs*: *shong*(?)

104 Cf. *Lv* (Hokazono 1994, p. 566; D: 75r1-2, Q: 87r3): *yatra ca pradeśe sa hastī patitaḥ, tasmin pradeśe mahad bilam samvṛttaṃ yat sāmpratam hastigartety abhidhiyate* (at the place where that elephant fell down, a big pit appeared, which is now called “elephant hole”)/ *glang po de phyogs gang du lhung ba'i phyogs de shong chen po zhiḡ tu gyur nas / da (da: de Q) ltar glang po'i shong zhes bya ba yin no* (after the place at which that elephant fell down turned into a big hole, it is now the “elephant hole”).

105 ++*chen*: *chen*; judging from the remaining traces, it seems that the scribe erroneously repeated *rgyal* and that he (or some other person) later corrected this mistake by effacing the syllable.

106 *dmagis*: *dmag gis*.

107 ==: *skul* or *bskul*(?). Cf. the title of *Lv*’s 13th chapter: *saṃcodanāparivart[a]/bskul ba'i le'u* (Hokazono 1994, p. 668; D: 94v3, Q: 110r3); There, in addition to the four great kings (called *lokapālas / 'jig rten skyong bas* in *Lv*) many other beings are reported to be involved in the exhortation of the Bodhisattva. Chapter 15 describes at some length how each of the four great kings pays homage to the Bodhisattva before he leaves home (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 217-218; D: 108r4-v6, Q: 125r7-126r1). Each of these four passages ends in (*bodhisattvaṃ namasyamānaḥ / (byang chub sems dpa' la) phyag 'tshal zhiḡ 'dug go*, i.e. “was paying

homage (to the Bodhisattva)”. Yet, the conjecture *phyag 'tshal* is too long for the available space.

108 There follow some indistinct traces. I take these to be blots or smearings rather than the remains of earlier text.

109 *la=jus*: *la 'jus*.

110 *bshumso*: *bshums so*.

111 Cf. *Lv*’s description of the events in the palace after the Bodhisattva is found missing (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 227-239; D: 112v4-117r1; Q: 130v6-135r8). While there the women are also said to have cried (*passim*), only Gopā is pictured as holding on to (the neck of) the horse: (*gopā...*) *kaṃthe 'avalambhīyā hayavara aśvarāje* (for the *saṃdhi*, see BHSG, p. 34) / (*sa 'tshos ...*) *rta yi rgyal po rta mchog de yi ṃgul nas 'jus* (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 234; D: 115r5; Q: 133v1).

112 Tib.: *gTsug phud blangs pa'i mchod rten*, cf. *Lv* (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 225; D: 112r2-3, Q: 130r3).

113 In this section, the general order of both the paintings and the epigraphs from left to right is clearly interrupted. Obviously, the Bodhisattva’s meeting of the old man, the sick man, the dead man and the monk preceded his departure from home, the weeping of the women and the haircutting.

114 -i: *yi(d)*.

115 *lha'is* : *lha'i*(?)

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116 *kra*: *bkra*.

117 Cf. *Lv* (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 257.3-12; D: 127r6-v1, Q: 146r5-8).

118 Cf. *Lv* (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 271.9-18; D: 133v3-5; Q: 152v6-153r2).

119 *rtsi*: *rdzi*.

120 *dra*===: *drangs pa*(?)

121 *chu* 'o: *chu bo*.

122 The remaining traces allow for the conjecture *la byor* (*byor* being a fairly frequent “irregular” perfect stem of ‘*byor*’).

123 Obviously, *na ra* is one of the frequent garbled renderings of Sanskrit names, toponyms, etc. in Tibetan.

124 *ga-go na*: *ga gon*.

125 In *Lv* his name is given as Bhallika/bZang po (Lefmann 1977, vol. 1, p. 381 and *passim*; D: 182r6 and *passim*, Q: 206r2 and *passim*).

126 *sargyang rgyas*: *sangs rgyas*.

127 *byur*: *phyur*.

128 Here again (see n. 113), the general order of the paintings and the epigraphs from left to right is interrupted. The Bodhisattva’s victory over the forces of Māra actually preceded the offerings of Trapuṣa and Bhadrapāla/Bhallika.

129 *l-d*: *lad*(?) or *lod*; at any rate almost certainly a *bskungs yig of la sogs* (cf. Shes rab 2003, p. 597).

130 *ḥ=ng*: *bzang*.

131 *lha*=: *byin*: *lhas byin*.

132 =*n*: *chen*.

133 *phya*=*gi*: *phyag gi*.

134 *spru*=: *te*: *sprul te*.

135 *btulo*: *btul lo*.

136 Cf. *Vv* (D: *nga* 239v1, Q: *ce* 221v4): *de nas bcom ldan 'das kyis (kyis: kyi Q) phyag g.yas pa' i mthil nas seng ge ral pa can lnga sprul to / / des de rnams kyi dri tshor na (na: nas Q) gcin dang rtug pa shor te 'bros par brtsams; i.e., “Then, the Bhagavat magically created five long-haired lions from the palm of his right hand. After he (i.e., the elephant) had scented them, he discharged urine and excrement and started to run away”.*

137 See n. 139.

138 == 'us: *spre 'us*.

139 *g*==*yas pa*=*e 'u*: *gar rtse byas pas spre 'u*(?); a similar phrase occurs in the Buddha-vita of the White Temple in Tsaparang: *dga' nas gar rtse bas (khron par lhung ...)* (cf. Tropper 2013, p. 99). In any case, the caption refers to the story found in *Vv* (D: *nga* 143r2-v5, Q: *ce* 137v4-138v1). There, however, the monkey is said to have given bee’s honey (*sbrang bu'i sbrang rtsi*) to the Buddha.

140 'gri==: 'gril (/ /)(?)

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