
The Identification of Kizil Paintings V

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The present paper is the fifth in a series explaining the previously unidentified, or insufficiently identified, narrative paintings in the Buddhist monasteries of Kizil and its vicinity. The first part of this series was dedicated to depictions illustrating (1) the story of the young Buddha devotee **Yaśa**, and (2) that of the brahmin **Mākandika** (published in issue 9 of the *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift*). Subsequent papers dealt with the identification of the story of (3) the boy **Sudāya** and (4) the potter **Brhaddyuti** (*IAZ* 11), an (5) episode from the life of the Bodhisatva in his youth called “cutting through (a bundle of) reeds” (*kalamacchedya*) and (6) the story of the conversion of the brahmin **Sundarika-Bhāradvāja** (*IAZ* 12). In the 14th issue of the *Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift* the paintings were identified as narratives on (7) the sinful monk **Kapila** and (8) the promises of the **Four Kings** to protect the monks and lay-followers against malevolent demons.

9. The painted dome from Simsim and its narrative programme

The study collection of the Museum of Asian Art in Berlin contains a dome of 165 cm diameter (**Fig. 1**)¹⁾ (cf. ‘List of paintings under discussion’ at the end of the paper). The dome was brought from Simsim, about 40 km to the north-west of Kucha. LE COQ²⁾ writes that it was taken to Berlin from an approximately square cave with walls about 290 x 290 cm high, on the eastern side of the hills that shut off the valley from the north. According to Chinese numbering, the cave has probably been given the number 46.

The painting inside the dome is not well preserved and apparently because of this, it is not a part of the Museum’s exposition and has not been reproduced, except for two photographs taken *in situ*. The dome displays seven standing figures of the Buddha (or perhaps of different Buddhas) shown with double nimbus around their heads and bodies. Originally the painting must have been of singular beauty, made in reds and browns, with

touches of blue, green and turquoise. However, the special charm of its aesthetic appeal lies not in its colours but in the mixture of two different styles. This can be better observed on the picture taken *in situ* (**Fig. 2**): The ornament on the ceiling below is elaborated in Chinese style, as is the lotus rosette – or rather the umbrella – at the apex of the dome; the ornaments hanging from it are very reminiscent of the décor in Turfan paintings. As opposed to this is the ornament shown below the feet of the Buddhas, painted in the tradition of the early Kizil style showing sections of imbricated leaves; the ornament is reminiscent of the laurel garland in Roman art.

The depictions of the narrative scenes, noticed way back by GRÜNWEDEL³⁾, shown in the dome as diminutive pictures in the lower part of the Buddha figures, are also very much in the tradition of the early Kizil paintings; they repeat the representations in the rhombi of the earlier vaults. GRÜNWEDEL was not able to identify any of the scenes in the dome; today some of them can be explained by comparing them with the already identified depictions.

1) Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Inv.No. III 734. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Lilla Russel-Smith for providing me with the excellent pictures of the dome. My thanks also to the photographer, Mr. Jürgen Liepe.

2) LE COQ/WALDSCHMIDT 1928: 64.

3) GRÜNWEDEL 1912: 190: „Es ist klar, daß einzelne Motive der kleinen Szenen in den Gewölbehälften äl[er]en Stils hier erhalten sind. Die Erklärung im einzelnen ist schwierig.“ (“It is clear that individual motifs from small narrative scenes executed in an older style on the two halves of the domes have been preserved here. It is however difficult to provide a detailed explanation.”)

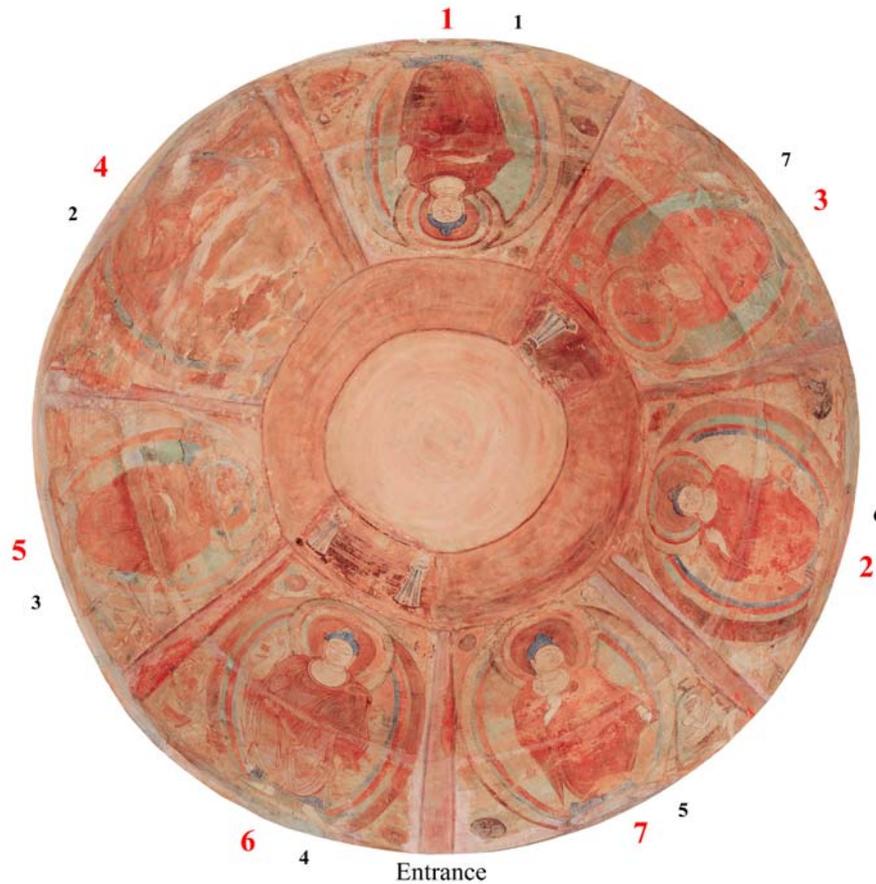


Fig. 1 *Simsim*, Painting in the dome of Cave 46 (?), diameter 165 cm. Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Inv.No. III 734. The **red numbers** indicate the original positions according to Grünwedel's description, the **black numbers** show the present position in the museum. © National Museums Berlin, Prussian Cultural Foundation, Asian Art Museum, Art Collection South-, Southeast- and Central Asian Art. Photo: Jürgen Liepe



Fig. 2 *Simsim*, Cave 46 (?). After LE COQ / WALDSCHMIDT 1928: Tafel D

The descriptions of the scenes we owe to GRÜNWEDEL.⁴⁾ The description starts with the Buddha opposite the entrance (see **Fig. 1**, at the top) and continues in a counter-clockwise direction.⁵⁾ The comparison of the description with the object in the Museum shows that the individual pieces of the paintings were positioned wrongly in Berlin (which is confirmed by the older pictures).⁶⁾ The red numbers in **Fig. 1** correspond with the numbers in GRÜNWEDEL's report, and the description in this article follows his numbering.

To the viewer's right of the standing Buddha in section No. 1, a monk kneels holding burning lamps in both hands, the third lamp stands on his head (**Fig. 3**). The motif is well known in the Kizil paintings; the monk is mostly shown with five lamps, two more stand on his shoulders.⁷⁾ A Tocharian inscription in Cave 110 in Kizil („Treppenhöhle“) explains the scene as the prediction of future buddhahood (*vyākaraṇa*) to the monk Priyadarśana⁸⁾ – a narrative which does not seem to be known in literature. As KONCZAK has shown,⁹⁾ the monk with the lamps also illustrates the *vyākaraṇa* given to a monk, who venerated the Buddha of the past Ratnaśikhin by presenting him a lamp; this interpretation is also secured



Fig. 3 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 1

- 4) GRÜNWEDEL 1912: 182, 189-90; GRÜNWEDEL calls the cave „Höhle mit dem Preta“ and described it as lying in the 2nd ravine of the hills.
- 5) GRÜNWEDEL 1912: 190: „Auf den sieben Streifen der inn.[eren] Kuppel ist je ein Buddha, stehend, in großer Figur gemalt, in Konturen gezeichnet und mit Farben angefüllt und daneben kleinere Figuren. Es sind, wenn wir mit dem d.[er] Tür gegenüberlieg.[enden] Feld beginnen, die folgenden: 1. Buddha, R[echts]. v.[on] ihm Lotusblumen, L[inks]. ein Mönch mit drei Lampen, eine auf dem Kopf, zwei in den Händen; 2. Buddha, R. ein Eber, L. ein schwarzer Schwan; 3. Buddha, R. ein Lotos, L. ein Brāhmana mit langer, krückenartiger Stange; 4. Buddha, R. ein Lotus, L. ein Drache, welcher aus einem kleinen Teiche auftaucht; 5. Buddha, R (?), L. ein fischartiges Wesen mit Flügeln und menschlichem Kopf, welches aus einem Teiche auftaucht; 6. Buddha, R. ein junger Brāhmana kniend, welcher mit der L. nach oben deutet; 7. Buddha, R. Lotusblume, L. kniender Brāhmana vor einer Laubhütte.“
- 6) Two Buddhas in **Fig. 1**, placed to the viewer's right of Buddha No. 1, should be placed to his left. That this is correct is visible on **Fig. 2**, showing Grünwedel's Buddha No. 1 and No. 7 side by side, which in the Museum are No. 1 and No. 5.
- 7) For references to the depictions, cf. YALDIZ 1992 (who labels this the conversion of the Kāśyapas); ZIN 2006: 154, fn. 68.
- 8) Cf. SCHMIDT 2010: 859.
- 9) KONCZAK (forthcoming), Kapitel: „Das Bildmotiv eines Mönches, der dem Buddha Ratnaśikhin Lampen darbringet“.

by a Tocharian inscription, this time in Cave 34 in Kumtura. Ratnaśikhin predicted to the monk that in future he was going to be the Buddha Dīpaṅkara. Whether the painting in the dome from Simsim shows Priyadarśana by the Buddha Śākyamuni or the monk by the Buddha Ratnaśikhin cannot be ascertained, but it can be taken for granted that the picture illustrates a story about the prediction of future Buddhahood made to the monk.

Buddha No. 2 (**Fig. 4**) is accompanied by two objects on his side; unfortunately both are very much destroyed so we have to rely on GRÜNWEDEL's description (cf. fn. 5). Of the “black swan” on the viewer's right, nothing but a black blotch of paint is visible today. On the left side is a boar, as per GRÜNWEDEL's description. While the head of the seated animal does remind us of a wild, bristly pig, the legs are much too long; the hind legs looking like those of a seated dog. The animal should perhaps be understood as a composite creature.

To the viewer's right, beside Buddha No. 3 (**Fig. 5**), kneels a Brahmin identifiable by a tiger skin on his person. GRÜNWEDEL writes that he holds a “crutch-like stick”, which is hardly visible today.



Fig. 4 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 2



Fig. 6 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 4



Fig. 5 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 3

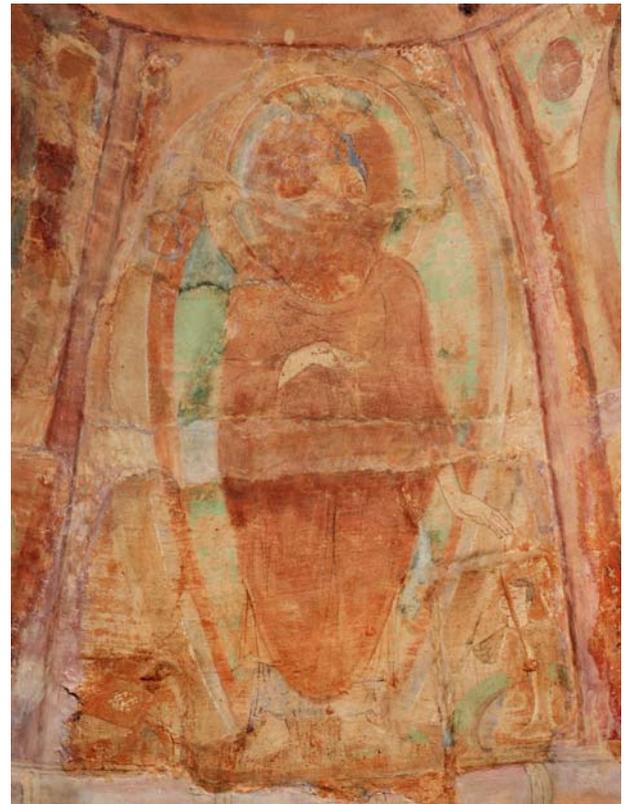


Fig. 7 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 5



Fig. 8 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 6



Fig. 9 Detail of Fig. 1: Buddha No. 7

The scene on the viewer's right by the next Buddha (No. 4, **Fig. 6**) is described by GRÜNWEDEL as "a dragon coming out of a little pond" (cf. below and **Fig. 10**).

Buddha No. 5 is accompanied by scenes on both sides (**Fig. 7**). To the viewer's right appears a fish with the head of a monk who emerges from a round pond. Even if he has no additional zoomorphic heads he can probably be identified as the monk Kapila (cf. ZIN 2010: 22-25) who for his evil deeds was reborn as a monster-fish. On the other side of the Buddha appears the depiction of the parable of the turtle and the hole in the yoke – known from several examples on Kizil's vaults¹⁰ – which goes very well with the story of the monk who was reborn as a fish. The parable illustrates the possibility of being reborn as a human being: It is so rare a possibility that the one-eyed tortoise goes with its head through a hole in the yoke drifting on the surface of the ocean, emerging only once in 100 years to come up for air.¹¹ Even here, the white head upon the square yoke does not look like that of a tortoise (probably, the artist had never seen such an

animal) but the body of the tortoise is quite perceptible; it is coming out from the blue water of the "ocean".

To the viewer's left of Buddha No. 6 (**Fig. 8**) kneels a brahmin with his left arm raised high. The pose is so unusual that the scene seems to illustrate a narrative.

The same can be said about the last Buddha of the dome painting (No. 7, **Fig. 9**), beside whom another brahmin, with a short, pointed beard, appears. The man is kneeling inside a hut; he is oriented to the right edge of the picture and also holds his hands pointing in this direction, only looking back towards the Buddha.

10. Elapatra

Beside Buddha No. 4 in the dome from Simsim, a Nāga can be seen emerging from the round pond (**Figs. 6, 10**). Snakes, or rather Nāgas in their zoomorphic form, appear very often in the painted decoration of the caves on the Northern Silk Road. Snakes are shown in the top section of the caves,¹² beside the deities or symbols of the wind

10) Cf. LESBRE 2001: 340, with further references.

11) For the versions of the parable cf. ALLON 2007.

12) E.g. in Cave 80, illustrated in XU *et al.* 1983-85, 2: fig. 53; Cave 118, illustrated in *ibid.*, 2: fig. 151.



Fig. 10 Detail of Fig. 6

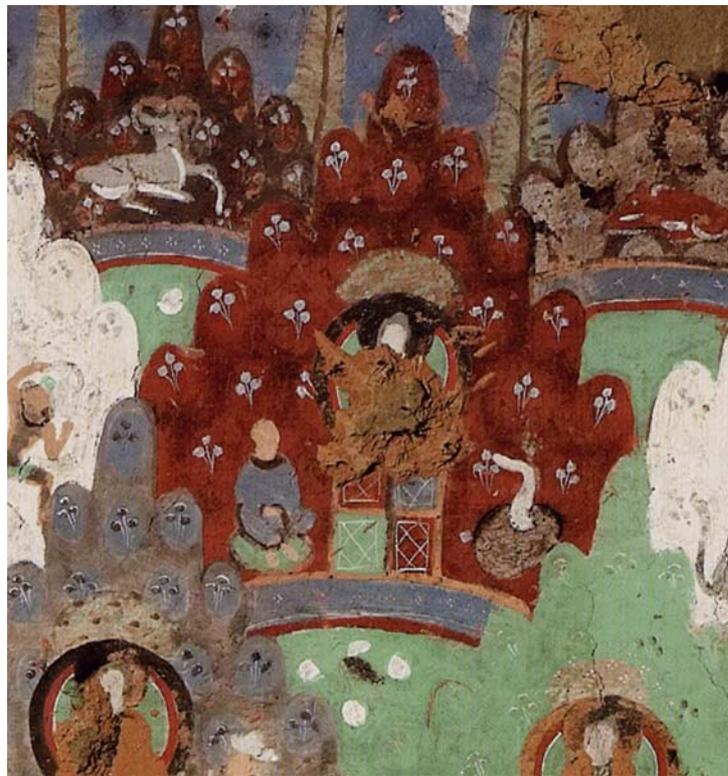


Fig. 11 Simsim, Cave 44. After XINJIANG QIUCI SHIKU YANJIUSUO (ed.) 2008: fig. on p. 306

or the planets; they are posed here apparently to symbolize the rainfall. Similar snakes, with one or several hoods, occupy the half-rhomboidal FIELDS on the edges of the vaults; there are sometimes clouds behind their heads, here too. The snakes emerge from conventionally depicted, round water reservoirs.¹³⁾ A single-hooded snake emerging from one such water tank is depicted several times in front of the Buddha,¹⁴⁾ no doubt illustrating an episode from the Buddha's life-story. The depictions, however, provide no pointers for an exact identification of the narrative, that is, where the scene does not contain any further attributes. But the situation changes instantly once an element of the depiction is included linking the pictures with a specific narrative. This attribute is a plant which the snake wears on its head. At times, the plant looks like a diminutive tree portrayed on the head of the snake, as in the painting on the dome from Simsim (Fig. 10), at times like leaves (Fig. 11), drawn so

delicately that one is tempted to assume that perhaps all snakes portrayed in front of the Buddha, referred to above (fn. 14), were once depicted with such an attribute but the fine lines did not survive the ravages of time. The plant on the head of a snake makes the depiction clearly identifiable: This is the story of the Nāgarāja Elapatra.

The story is preserved in several versions,¹⁵⁾ of which only one is in Pali, this being in the commentary of the *Dhammapada*.¹⁶⁾ Even if missing in Pali canonical literature, the story must have been known since early times as it is depicted in Bharhut¹⁷⁾ and even clearly stated in two inscriptions, *Erapato (nā)garajā* and *Erapato nāgarājā bhagavato vadate*.¹⁸⁾

The Bharhut relief illustrates the story which must have been similar to the one preserved in the *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*. The story revolves around the Nāga king

13) E.g. in Cave 8, illustrated in *ibid.*, 1: fig. 33.

14) Cave 8, vault, left side, above, illustrated in *ibid.* 1: fig. 27; very clearly visible in MA 2007: 234; Cave 8, vault, illustrated in XU *et al.* 1983-85, 1: fig. 33; Kizil Karga, Cave 23, illustrated in XINJIANG QIUCI SHIKU YANJIUSUO 2008: 310, fig.

15) For literary references cf. ZIN 2000: 1179-1182.

16) *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, XIV.3, ed. Vol. 3: 230-235, transl. Vol. 3: 56-60.

17) Bharhut, Kolkata, Indian Museum, No. P. 29, illustrated e.g. in CUNNINGHAM 1879: pl. 14.54; COOMARASWAMY 1956: pl. 10.29; LÜDERS 1963: pl. 39; ZIN 2000: fig. 8 (drawing).

18) LÜDERS 1963: B 36-37, pp. 110-113.



Fig. 12 Ajanta, Cave IX, right side wall (drawing by the author)

Erakapatta who remembered his life during the time of the Buddha Kassapa along with his teachings. The Nāga taught his daughter enigmatic verses which could be completed only by someone who had heard the teachings of the Buddha. The girl sang the verses standing on her father's head, while he swam in the Ganges. Since the Nāga promised a big reward, including his daughter, to the person who answered the *gāthā* correctly, a young brahmin Uttara tried to guess the answer. He was taught the answer by the Buddha who knew this would bring salvation to Uttara and the entire group of people gathered on the bank of the Ganges. When Uttara gave the answer to the verses, the Nāga king rejoiced and asked Uttara to bring him to the Buddha. The relief in Bharhut shows the Nāga king three times: once in his theriomorphic form while swimming in the Ganges with his daughter on his head and twice in the anthropomorphic form with snakehoods above the turban. The plant on his head is not represented even though the name of the Nāga, Erakapatta, is derived from the leaf (*patta*) of the *eraka* (-plant)¹⁹. To this a short introduction is added: During the life-time of

the previous Buddha, Kassapa, the Nāga was a monk who destroyed an *eraka* leaf and forgot to confess it.²⁰

Apart from Bharhut, the narrative is also depicted elsewhere in ancient Indian art,²¹ namely in the old mural in Ajanta IX (Fig. 12);²² this representation does not,

20) *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, XIV.3, ed. Vol. 3: 231; transl. Vol. 3: 56-57: "We are told that in the dispensation of the Buddha Kassapa, Erakapatta was a young monk. One day he embarked in a boat on the Ganges and set out on a voyage. Passing a jungle of Eraka-trees, he grasped a leaf. Although the boat was moving rapidly, he did not let go, and the result was that the leaf was entirely broken off. "A mere trifle!" thought he. Although for twenty thousand years he performed meditations in the forest without confessing his fault, yet, when he came to die, he felt as though an Eraka leaf had seized him by the neck."

21) The identification of a Gandharan relief in the Lahore Museum (No. 1155, illustrated in FOUCHER 1905-51, 1: fig. 251; ING-HOLT 1957: fig. 163; KURITA 2003, 1: fig. 341) given by FOUCHER (1905-51, 1: 501-502) was rejected by VOGEL (1926: 107). The explanation of the relief which VOGEL gives as illustration to the Elapatra story (Peshawar Museum, No. 1716, illustrated *ibid.*: pl. 8a; KURITA, 1: fig. 342) is, however, also not convincing; the relief shows a zoomorphic Nāga with five hoods in front of the Buddha's throne, without any iconographic element depicted as part of the story, namely the plant (cf. below) which must have been known in the 'northern' tradition.

22) Ajanta, Cave IX, right wall, illustrated in ZIN 2000: figs. 1-6 (photos and drawings); SCHLINGLOFF 2000, 1: 73. For the discovery and identification, cf. ZIN 2000.

19) The explanation only derives from popular etymology, the name of the Nāga goes back to the ancient deity Airāvata / Erāvana / Eravana / Dhṛtarāṣṭra Airāvata; cf. VOGEL 1926: 207-214; LÜDERS 1963: 111-112.

however, correlate with the Pali version. In this depiction the River Ganges is missing and the girl dances (perhaps also sings) inside a fortified palace. This corresponds with the account in the ‘northern’ versions in which the Nāga is always (also independently of our narrative) connected with the Gandhāran city of Takṣaśilā which is apparently depicted here by means of the fortified palace.

The story is rendered in several versions of ‘northern Buddhism’ literature, i.e. in the *vinaya* of the *Mūlasarvāstivādins* (preserved in the Tibetan translation).²³⁾ The story goes:

The Nāgarāja Elapatra was in possession of verses spoken by the Buddha in Tuṣita heaven. Eager to learn if the Buddha had already appeared on earth, Elapatra went on a pilgrimage disguised as a young brahmin reciting his verses, which could only be responded to by the person who heard the teachings of the Buddha. In Vārāṇasī he finally met Nalada who, eager to get the reward from the Nāga, learned the answer from the Buddha and was converted by listening to His teachings (Nalada would later become the famous monk Mahākātyāyana). When he appears before the Buddha, the Nāga is advised to take his real form: He appears as a huge snake, so large that when his head was by the Buddha in Vārāṇasī, the end of his tail was in his palace in Takṣaśilā.

The Buddha had good reason to command the Nāga to reveal his real form. His terrifying body was the result of a sin he had committed during the life-time of the Buddha Kāśyapa. The sin described here is graver than in the Pali version – it was not an act of omission in failing to confess to a minor misdeed but, rather, an outburst of fury²⁴⁾ that forced the monk to incarnate as a Nāga. His monstrous body had to suffer: On each of his seven

hoods sprang an *elā* tree causing sore wounds.²⁵⁾

The *elā* plant is cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*),²⁶⁾ which belongs to the family of Zingiberales (like the banana plant), so it is not a tree in the actual sense, whereas the narrative talks of big trees. This might perhaps explain why there are two different looking plants in our depictions (Figs. 10, 11), but the identification of the paintings showing the snake with the plant on his head as the story of Nāgarāja Elapatra is secure.

As for the Ajanta painting (Fig. 12), even when its linkage with the ‘northern’ versions of the story is certain, the attempt to determine the school to which the depictions are affiliated seems impossible.²⁷⁾ The painting shows the dancing Nāga maiden in the Takṣaśilā palace which is not mentioned in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*. The girl appeared in the *vinayas* of the *Mahīśāsakas*²⁸⁾ and the *Dharmaguptakas*,²⁹⁾ and in the Chinese translation of the *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*.³⁰⁾ The ‘northern’ versions narrate the episode of the six false teachers, whom Nalada, the future monk Mahākātyāyana, first approaches for the answer to the Nāga’s verses.³¹⁾ Perhaps the search

25) *Ibid.*: „Da nimmt Elāpatra seine eigene Gestalt an, und zwar so, dass sein Schweif in Takṣaśilā, seine sieben Köpfe in Vārāṇasī sind; an jedem Kopfe war in Folge früheren Vergehens ein Elābaum erwachsen, angefüllt mit vielen Hunderten von Wurmarten, umschwirrt von vielen Bienenschwärmen, Eiter und Blutschmutz tropften stinkend herab.“

26) Cf. *PW*, Vol. 1: col. 1099.

27) For further literary references cf. WALDSCHMIDT 1951: 106, fn. 1 (the story is incorporated into the *Catuṣpariṣatsūtra*); ZIN 2000: 1181-1183.

28) Preserved in Chinese transl., *T 1421*, ed. Vol. 22: 106a-107a.

29) Preserved in Chinese transl., *T 1428*, ed. Vol. 22: 791a-792c.

30) *T 190*, Ch. 37-38, 825c23-829c11, transl. BEAL 1875: 275-280; in this version, the Nāga girl sings on the bank of the Ganges.

31) *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*, transl. p. 278: “And so it came that the six heretical teachers who resided at Benares endeavoured to find the hidden meaning of these lines, in vain; till at least Nalada, hearing that Buddha was residing in the Deer park near the city went to him ...”. Without mentioning the search for the verses, the *Mahāvastu* lists six heretics, usually mentioned and also sometimes depicted in art (cf. SCHLINGLOFF 1994): ed. p. 383: *Vārāṇasyāṃ ṣaṭ śāstārapratijñā prativasensuḥ Kāśyapo Pūrṇo Maskarī Gosālikāputro Ajito Keśakambalī Kakuda Kātyāyano Saṃjayī Veraṭṭikāputro Nirgrantho ca Jñātiputro/teṣāṃ Nālako ṣaṇṇāṃ śāstārapratijñānām upasaṃkrānto na cāsya cittam ārādhyati/*; transl. p. 380: “In Benares there lived six self-styled teachers, Kāśyapa Pūrṇa, Maskarin Gośālikāputra, Ajita Keśakambalin, Kakuda Kātyāyana, Sañjayin Veraṭṭikāputra and Nirgrantha Jñātiputra. Nālaka went to these six self-styled teachers, but they did not satisfy his mind.”

23) Tibetan Tripiṭaka, *Vinayakṣudrakavastu*, ed., Vol. 44: 107.2-108.3, 262b-265b; translated into German by SCHIEFNER 1875: 11-14; and English by ROCKHILL 1884: 46-47, analysed by PANGLUNG 1981: 183.

24) SCHIEFNER 1875: 13: „Auf die Frage, was er verschuldet, antwortet Bhagavant: «Zu der Zeit als das Lebensalter der Menschen 20000 Jahr betrug, lebte der Buddha Kācṣjapa. Als der Mann an einem einsamen Orte lustwanderte, stiess er mit der Stirn an einen Elā-Baum und ertrug es; als er aber einmal, in Betrachtung versunken, sich an dem Blatt des Baumes gestossen hatte, gerieth er in Zorn, zerbrach das Blatt und lief zorn erfüllt davon mit den Worten: «Wenn der Buddha Kācṣjapa ein solches Unrecht an dem Seel- und Leblosen duldet, was sollen denn seine Vorschriften?» Zornig zerriss er die Vorschriften, kam um und wurde wegen der Zornes als Nāga wiedergeboren.»“



Fig. 13 Kizil, Cave 163, vault, left side. After XU et al. 1983-85, 2: fig. 173

for the answer by the future Mahākātyāyana was an essential part of the original story. At any rate, in the narratives of the ‘northern’ versions the monk played an important role and can therefore be expected to be represented in the depictions.

Just as it is not possible to link up the paintings of Ajanta with the specific version of ‘northern’ Buddhism, so too depictions in Central Asia likewise defy any attempts at a link-up. It is surprising that the snake with the plant on its head appears in scenes in which other distinctive features vary. In one of the depictions presented above (Fig. 11), a monk is seated on the other side of the Buddha. Even if the figure is added to the composition for the sake of symmetry, the said figure represents none else than a monk. The monk might perhaps suggest the person of Mahākātyāyana on the basis of the narrative.

A well-preserved picture from Kizil, on the vault of Cave 163 (Fig. 13) is different, even if the Nāga with the little tree on its head looks similar to the one in

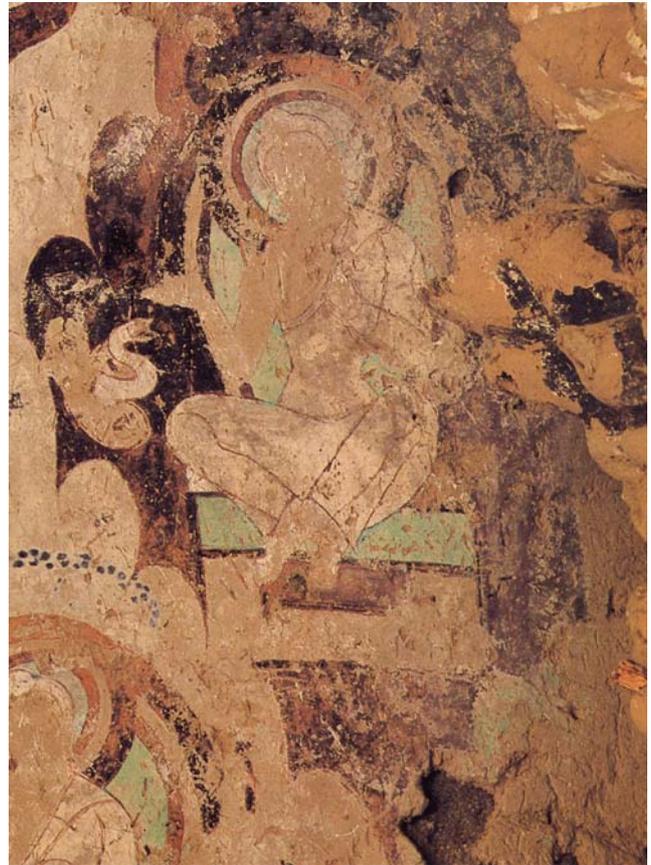


Fig. 14 Kizil, Cave 196, vault, left side. After XU et al. 1983-85, 3: fig. 101

Fig. 10.³²⁾ The nimbate male on the Buddha’s side is not a Nāga and certainly not a monk. The man is clad like a lay-person; he wears jewellery and a turban. He stands with legs crossed and holds his arms crossed in a peculiar way. The snake emerges from behind the man’s legs and raises its head towards the Buddha. Should we take the man to be the young brahmin Nalada / Uttara who led the Nāgarāja to the Buddha, or would he be the Nāga before he was asked to assume his real form?

Also, in the poorly preserved painting on the vault of Cave 196 (Fig. 14) (the tree on the snake’s head is visible on the enlarged picture), traces of probably a lay-person are visible on the other side of the Buddha.

32) In the book by MA (2007: 175) a different explanation is given, which does not take note of the tree on the head of the snake which is so clearly visible here: “Xianmian’s Karma to Change into a Viper. There was an old rich man called Xianmian who was very chee-separing, either scolded or hit the beggars. After death, Xianmian changed into a viper. Watching over his wealth all day long, he bit everyone close to the wealth to death ...”.



Fig. 15 Kizil, Cave 206 (Fußwaschungshöhle). Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Inv.No. III / IB 8649/2. After GRÜNWEDEL 1920: Tafel XXVIII-XXIX, Fig. 1

The story of the Nāgarāja Elapatra is also presented in more elaborate scenes on the side walls of the caves. The most beautiful painting in Cave 206 (Fußwaschungshöhle) (Fig. 15) was brought to Berlin.³³⁾ The Buddha, surrounded by nimbi around his head and body, sits on a conventional throne in front of which stands a footstool covered with white flowers; a necklace with green ribbons lies above the stool. Above the Buddha appears the god Indra with his third eye, and on the other side, deities may be seen playing music and holding a tray. The Buddha talks to two Nāgas sitting in the lower left corner with hands held respectfully together. The male Nāga with the naked white torso sits in the front, the dark-complexioned female behind. Above the heads of both Nāgas appear snake-hoods, three above each, shown in front of white and blue clouds. The couple is represented above a round

water-reservoir, out of which is seen creeping towards the Buddha, a snake on whose head grows a small tree. On the opposite side of the Buddha sits bearded Vajrapāṇi, above whom two monks are shown conversing with each other without paying much attention to the main scene. Above them is another monk who is standing with his right hand raised high, pointing towards a blooming tree in the right-hand corner. The monk must be Elapatra in his previous life, plucking the leaf of the tree. The Nāgarāja in the anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms are apparently one and the same person, perhaps illustrating the Buddha's command to Nāgarāja to appear in his real form. Whether the two monks only play a conventional role, or whether it is Mahākātyāyana who is depicted cannot be ascertained.

The left wall of Cave 17 shows a very similar order of depicted persons (Fig. 16), even if the depiction here is very clumsy and, added to

that, badly preserved. The monk in the upper right corner is clearly visible. Damaged but still visible are the Nāga couple and the snake below, with a tree growing from its head. The conventional gods above and Vajrapāṇi are accompanied by only one monk.

The painting on the left wall of Cave 38 (Fig. 17) differs; the presence of a blue snake in exactly the same spot as in Figs. 15-16 seems to give credence to the explanation that it is indeed Elapatra who is depicted. The spot where the tree should appear, above the head of the snake, is unfortunately destroyed. As elsewhere there is a couple depicted above the snake, but the persons do not have snake-hoods, and the monk plucking the leaf of the tree is not depicted (his depiction there cannot be ruled out as we see that a hole had deliberately been made in this spot). The Buddha is shown surrounded by monks, there are four monks on the viewer's right-hand side and two others on the left.

The iconography of the Elapatra story varies more than representations of other stories where the same

³³⁾ The painting was brought to Berlin during the 3rd Turfan Expedition and was partially destroyed during World War II. It is the lower left quarter, with Nāgas, which is missing; cf. the so-called *Verlust-Katalog* 2002: 161, No. IB 8649/2.



Fig. 16 Kizil, Cave 17 (Bodhisattvagewölbehöhle), left wall. After XU et al. 1983-85, 1: fig. 59 and drawing by the author

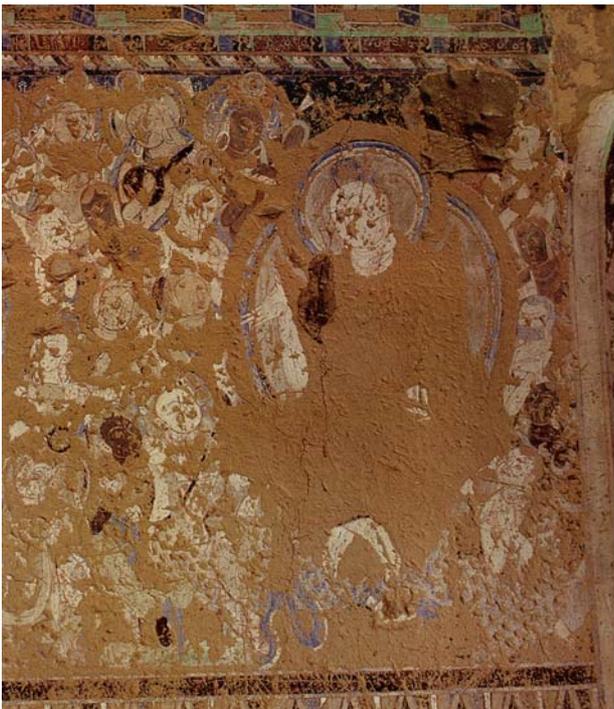


Fig. 17 Kizil, Cave 38 (Musikerchorhöhle), left wall. After XU et al. 1983-85, 1: fig. 99 and drawing by the author

pictorial features were applied without changes to make the story recognizable. One gets the impression that the iconography was not fixed or that the painters knew different versions or different iconographic elements.

What remains to be mentioned is the peculiarity of the

depiction of the “sermon scene” (Predigtszene), represented in **Figs. 15-16**, in which the deed of the monk in the past – aeons earlier – is shown in the same pictorial item together with his incarnation as Nāgarāja during the life-time of Buddha Śākyamuni.

List of paintings under discussion

9. The painted dome from Simsim and its narrative program

- Simsim, Cave 46 (?), Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Inv.No. III 734 (*supra*, **Figs. 1-10**)

10. Elapatra

- Kizil, Cave 17 (Bodhisattvagewölbehöhle), left wall; illus.: XU *et al.* 1983-85, 1: fig. 59 (*supra*, **Fig. 16**)
- Kizil, Cave 38 (Musikerchorhöhle), left wall; illus.: TAN *et al.* 1981, 1: pl. 90; XU *et al.* 1983-85, 1: fig. 99 (*supra*, **Fig. 17**)
- Kizil, Cave 163, vault, left side; illus.: XU *et al.* 1983-85, 2: fig. 173 (down, middle) (*supra*, **Fig. 13**); MA 2007: 174
- Kizil, Cave 196, vault, left side; illus.: XU *et al.* 1983-85, 3: fig. 101 (*supra*, **Fig. 14**)
- Kizil, Cave 206 (Fußwaschungshöhle); Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Inv.No. III / IB 8649/2; illus.: GRÜNWEDEL 1920: Tafel XXVIII-XXIX, Fig. 1 (*supra*, **Fig. 15**); *Verlust-Katalog* 2002: 161
- Simsim, Cave 44; illus.: XINJIANG QIUCI SHIKU YANJIUSUO (ed.) 2008: fig. on p. 306 (*supra*, **Fig. 11**)
- Simsim, Cave 46 (?); Museum für Asiatische Kunst, Berlin, Inv.No. III 734 (*supra*, **Figs. 6, 10**)

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Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Dies ist der fünfte Artikel aus der Reihe, in der bislang nicht bzw. nicht überzeugend identifizierte narrative Malereien in Kizil und Umgebung gedeutet werden. Der erste Artikel beschäftigte sich mit den Geschichten von (1) dem Jüngling **Yaśa** und (2) dem Brahmanen **Mākandika** (*Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift* 9.2005), der zweite mit den Geschichten von (3) dem Jungen **Sudāya** und (4) dem Töpfer **Brhaddyuti** (*IAZ* 11.2007), der dritte mit (5) einer Episode aus der Jugend des Buddha, genannt das „Rohr(-bündel)-Durchschlagen“ (**kalamacchedya**) und (6) der Bekehrungsgeschichte des Brahmanen **Sundarika-Bhāradvāja** (*IAZ* 12.2008) und der vierte mit (7) der Geschichte des sündigen Mönchs **Kapila** und (8) der Visualisierung des in den *sūtras* genannten Versprechens der **Könige der Himmelsrichtungen**, die Mönche und Laien vor Dämonen zu schützen (*IAZ* 14.2010).

Der vorliegende Artikel stellt (9) eine bemalte **Kuppel aus Simsim** in der Studiensammlung des Museums für Asiatische Kunst vor (Inv.Nr. III 734), in welcher den dort dargestellten sieben Buddha-Figuren kleine Gestalten zu deren Füßen beigegeben wurden, die Erzählungen andeuten (**Figs. 1-10**). Die Nummerierung von Grünwedel (rote Ziffern in **Fig. 1**) wurde in vorliegendem Aufsatz übernommen. Die Richtigkeit dieser Anordnung der Bilder in der Kuppel bezeugt **Fig. 2**, in welcher der Buddha Nr. 1 direkt neben dem Buddha Nr. 7 abgebildet ist. In der derzeitigen Aufstellung der Kuppel wurden zwischen diese beiden die Buddhas Nr. 2 und 3 montiert. Im zweiten Teil behandelt der Aufsatz eines der in der Kuppel dargestellten Themen, nämlich (10) die Geschichte vom Nāga-König **Elapatra**, die in den Kizil-Malereien häufig wiedergegeben ist (**Figs. 10-17**).

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