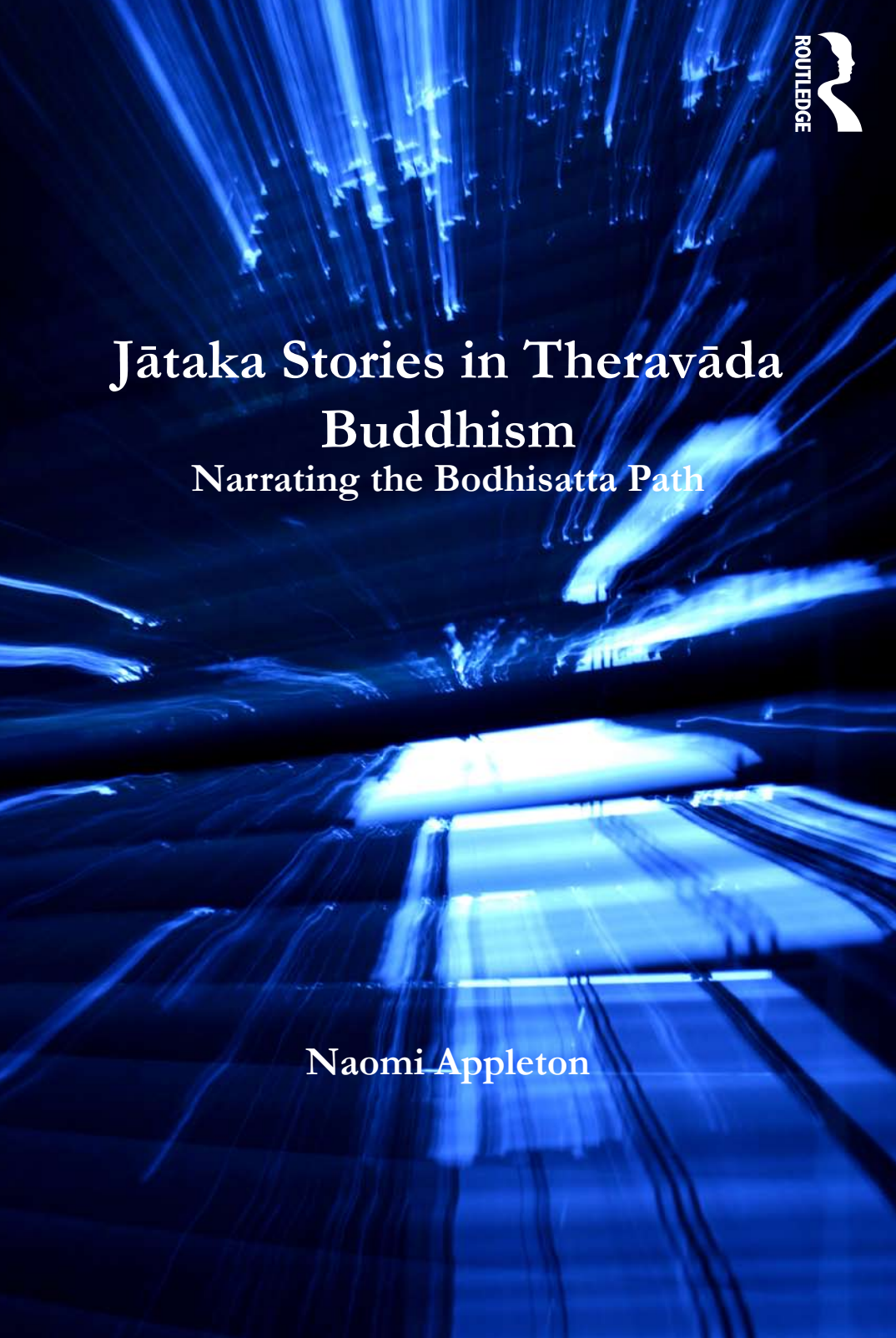

ROUTLEDGE

Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism

Narrating the Bodhisatta Path

Naomi Appleton

JĀTAKA STORIES IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

Jātaka stories (stories about the previous births of the Buddha) are very popular in Theravāda Buddhist countries, where they are found in both canonical texts and later compositions and collections, and are commonly used in sermons, children's books, plays, poetry, temple illustrations, rituals and festivals. Whilst at first glance many of the stories look like common fables or folktales, Buddhist tradition tells us that the stories illustrate the gradual path to perfection exemplified by the Buddha in his previous births, when he was a bodhisatta (buddha-to-be).

Jātaka stories have had a long and colourful history, closely intertwined with the development of doctrines about the Buddha, the path to buddhahood, and how Buddhists should behave now the Buddha is no more. This book explores the shifting role of the stories in Buddhist doctrine, practice, and creative expression, finally placing this integral Buddhist genre back in the centre of scholarly understandings of the religion.

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Jātaka Stories in Theravāda Buddhism

Narrating the Bodhisatta Path

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Preface

This is a book about Theravāda Buddhism, but also about a fundamental question shared by all Buddhist traditions: how should Buddhists relate to the Buddha's teaching, example and person? This question has been answered quite differently by Mahāyāna traditions and the school that became known as Theravāda. The *bodhisattva* path has been the subject of much scholarship, yet the Pāli equivalent – the *bodhisatta* path – may be a new concept to many. In Theravāda Buddhism this path is inextricably entangled with *jātaka* stories – stories about episodes in the past births of Gotama Buddha – and related texts.

The idea that *jātaka* stories illustrate the path to buddhahood is not new to the scholarly community. Caroline Rhys-Davids remarked in the introduction to her 1929 translation of some of the stories:

> Taking then the Jatakas with their introduction, it is scarcely an overstatement to say that, for all the much foolishness we find in them, the oddities, the inconsistencies, the many distortions in ideals and in the quest of them, they are collectively the greatest epic, in literature, of the Ascent of Man

and asks:

> Will the next writer on the subject see beneath the 'motley' of the Jataka ... the theme which constitutes its real significance – its real significance not for one elect man alone, but for every human being?[1]

Eighty-one years later I hope that I have done justice to the expectations of this pioneer of Pāli scholarship.

Because I am focusing upon the Theravāda tradition I primarily use Pāli terms, unless the subject under discussion requires terminology in a different language. I refer to the Buddha-to-be as the Bodhisatta and the path he demonstrates as the *bodhisatta* path; likewise the Buddha (Gotama) and *buddha*s (multiple). References to *jātaka*s from the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (also known as the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*) are made according to the numbers and titles used in Fausbøll's edition and the translation by Cowell et al. References to other texts use standard titles and divisions to enable reference to both Pali Text Society (PTS) and other editions and translations; references to PTS editions are provided in footnotes where appropriate. All translations are my own unless stated.

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[1] C.A.F. Rhys-Davids (trans.), *Stories of the Buddha* (London, 1929), pp. xviii–xix, xxvii.

The research upon which this book is based was mostly carried out during my time as a doctoral student at Oxford University under the expert supervision of Professors Christopher Minkowski and David Gellner. I am very grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding my D.Phil. studies, and the British Academy for allowing me to continue my research and prepare it for publication. I also owe a huge debt to Sarah Shaw, and latterly Arthid Sheravanichkul, for the wonderful *jātaka*-lunches that stimulated so many of my more intelligent thoughts. In addition, many thought-provoking conversations with Lance Cousins and Peter Skilling have greatly enhanced my work, and the librarians at the Bodleian and elsewhere have provided invaluable assistance.

I was very lucky to have been inspired by Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton to study Sanskrit and Pāli as an undergraduate. I am grateful to Lance Cousins for helping me take my Pāli skills to the next level during my time in Oxford, and both Amal Gunasena at SOAS and Prof. Meegaskumbura at the University of Peradeniya for providing Sinhala tuition.

I am very grateful to everyone who made my time in Kandy so enjoyable and profitable, especially Maya Shobrook and the Department of Pāli and Buddhist Studies at the University of Peradeniya, who provided tea, cake and excellent conversation. I am indebted to Ven. Wimalagnana for showing me temple illustrations in and around Kandy and for many interesting conversations on the subject, as well as to Ven. Dhammarakkhita who helped me gain access to manuscripts. The AHRC and the Max Müller fund subsidised my trips.

Various scholars from around the world have generously shared their thoughts, skills and resources, including Anne Blackburn, Lance Cousins, Kate Crosby, Max Deeg, Ian Harris, Peter Harvey, Will Johnson, Justin McDaniel, Jeffrey Samuels, Sarah Shaw, Peter Skilling, Andrew Skilton, John Strong and Jan Westerhoff. Support less scholarly but no less valuable has been provided by my wonderful friends and family. In particular I must thank my mother for her endless encouragement, Sarah Easterby-Smith for sharing her valuable friendship and botanical expertise, Alice Eardley for her companionship in the House of Eternity, Anas Jarjour for everything he does for me without even knowing it, and my nephew Charlie for constantly reminding me not to take it all too seriously.

It is my fascination with Religious Studies that has propelled me through the highs and lows of this work. The wonderful people in the School of Religious and Theological Studies at Cardiff University have long nurtured my interest, and Peggy Morgan kept it alive during my detour into Oriental Studies. However, its origins go further back, to my superb school RS teacher Penny Clay, who likely has no idea of the effect she has had upon my life's trajectory. I would like to dedicate this book to her, and to all the other teachers who have inspired and challenged me over the years.

Naomi Appleton
Oxford, June 2010

List of Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
DN	*Dīgha Nikāya*
JA	*Jātakatthavaṇṇanā, or Jātakaṭṭhakathā*
MN	*Majjhima Nikāya*
P	Pāli
PTS	Pali Text Society
SHB	Simon Hewavitarne Bequest
Sin	Sinhala
Skt	Sanskrit
SN	*Saṃyutta Nikāya*
Tib	Tibetan
VRI	Vipassana Research Institute

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Chapter 1
What is a Jātaka?

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta was ruling in Varanasi, a festival was proclaimed in the city. The king's gardener wanted to go and join the festivities, so he asked a troop of monkeys who lived in the garden to look after the plants while he was away. Aware of the benefits they had from living in the palace garden, the monkey-king happily agreed that they would do so. The monkeys set about watering the young trees. 'But be careful not to waste the water!' warned the monkey-king. So they first pulled up the plants and measured the roots, in order to ascertain how much water each plant needed. A wise man was passing and commented (in verse):

> Assistance from a fool does not lead to happiness:
> A fool fails, just like the monkey gardener.[1]

Taken as a simple story, we might learn from this that we shouldn't associate with fools, and that we certainly shouldn't allow monkeys to do our gardening. However, this story is not just a story, it is the forty-sixth *jātaka* of the *Jātakatthavaṇṇanā* (henceforth *JA*), the semi-canonical *jātaka* collection of the Theravāda school of Buddhism. So, we might ask, what difference does it make to the story to identify it as a *jātaka*? What exactly *is* a *jātaka*?

The story of the monkey gardeners is illustrated at one of the earliest Buddhist sites, the *stūpa* of Bhārhut in Central India. The stone relief from around the first century BCE shows a wise man observing two monkeys, one of whom is inspecting the roots of a tree whilst the other carries water pots. Similar illustrations are found in South and Southeast Asian temples, cartoons and children's books.[2] In some of these depictions a halo or golden skin indicates the special status of the wise observer, for he is identified as the Buddha in a previous life. The presence of the Buddha – or, as he is called before his awakening, the Bodhisatta – is the

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[1] My translation of the verse from *JA* 46. All references to the *JA* are to the standard numbering in V. Fausbøll (ed.), *The Jātaka together with its commentary being tales of the anterior births of Gotama Buddha* (6 vols, London, 1877–1896) which is also used in E.B. Cowell (ed. – several translators), *The Jātaka, or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (6 vols, Cambridge, 1895–1907). All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

[2] Illustrations of this story from Bhārhut, a selection of Thai temples and some modern media are found in Peter Skilling (ed.), *Past Lives of the Buddha: Wat Si Chum – Art, Architecture and Inscriptions* (Bangkok, 2008), pp. 202–3.

key criterion for identifying a story as a *jātaka*. Simply defined, a *jātaka* is a story relating an episode in a past birth of the Buddha.

*Jātaka*s defined in this manner are found scattered throughout the texts of the early Buddhist schools as well as in commentaries and later compositions and compilations. The term is often used to refer specifically to the *JA* as this is the largest and most prominent collection, yet several other *jātaka* collections exist both within and outside the Pāli scriptures, as do more general collections of narrative, which often contain some *jātaka*s. *Jātaka* texts and stories remain especially popular in Theravāda Buddhist countries, as demonstrated by their frequent illustration in temples, as well as their presence in sermons, children's story books, plays, television programmes, theatre, dance and poetry. The stories are also used in rituals at key moments in life, and form a lively part of many Buddhist festivals. Huge roadside illustrations during the Sri Lankan celebration of Vesak, as well as long public recitations and dramatisations in Southeast Asia, are testament to the enduring popularity of the stories.

The presence of *jātaka*s in all aspects of Theravāda life might seem somewhat curious, given the widely-held view that Theravāda Buddhists glorify *buddha*s and the *bodhisattva* path less than their Mahāyāna neighbours. Several questions present themselves about the place of *jātaka*s in Theravāda society: if *jātaka*s illustrate the actions of the Bodhisatta, should we view them as exemplary narratives or devotional ones? How do we explain the stories in which the Bodhisatta plays a minor or morally ambiguous part? Is it important whether or not the stories are narrated by the Buddha? What is the significance of the stories in the long biography of the Buddha? Does their illustration of the ideal path of a *bodhisatta* conflict with the mainstream Theravāda goal of arahatship? What role do the stories play when they are used in sermons, illustrated in temples or recited at festivals? This book is an attempt to answer such questions.

Once we consider these issues it becomes clear that formulating a definition of *jātaka* stories may be more complicated than it seemed at first sight, for many of the questions above can be reformulated as questions about definition: does a *jātaka* story have to be narrated by the Buddha? Does the Bodhisatta's behaviour in the story affect its identification as a *jātaka*? Do *jātaka* stories illustrate the actions of the Bodhisatta or the *bodhisatta* path as an ideal to be pursued? Do *jātaka* stories have a different role in society to other forms of Buddhist narrative? Such questioning becomes circular, for in order to form a clear definition of *jātaka* stories one must first look at their role in Buddhist texts and societies, and yet the latter requires at least a working definition of *jātaka*s before it can be commenced. I shall therefore begin this book with an attempt to clarify and qualify the simple definition of *jātaka*s as stories of past births of the Buddha, by looking at the possibility of defining the form, subject matter, audience and purpose of *jātaka*s. However, whilst we may end this chapter with a better understanding of the complexity of *jātaka*s, the question 'what is a *jātaka*?' will pursue us throughout the chapters that follow.

JĀTAKA AND AVADĀNA

One problem with any definition of *jātaka*s is the difficulty of disentangling *jātaka*s from *avadāna*s.[3] The distinction perhaps most often made is that *jātaka*s are about the past births of the Buddha whereas *avadāna*s are about the past births of other people. However, a study of Buddhist narrative soon reveals that the situation is not so simple as this: *jātaka*s often contain the Bodhisatta in a minor role (thus actually seeming to be *about* another character altogether), whilst texts that call themselves *avadāna*s (or *apadāna*s in Pāli) are sometimes about past lives of the Buddha. Other terms are also found: in the early portions of the Theravāda scriptures stories of rebirth appear un-named, as simple *bhūtapubbam* ('formerly') stories, and the recent Gandhāran finds include what we might call *jātaka*s and *avadāna*s under the title of *pūrvayoga* ('former-connection'), a term also used in the *Mahāvastu*. To further complicate matters, the Gandhāran manuscripts also contain stories that self-identify as *avadāna*s, but which contain no rebirth of any of the characters.[4]

Another common definition of *avadāna*, this time compatible with the Gandhāran materials, is 'glorious deed', or simply 'legend' or 'tale', taking the Sanskrit root as ava√dai, meaning to cleanse or purify. Under this definition the term is assumed to denote a story of the valiant efforts of a person (often one of the Buddha's disciples), usually demonstrating its results in a present or future birth. This is not the only etymology to have been proposed for *avadāna*, however, and the lack of agreement between scholars reveals the complexity of the term's origins and uses.[5] Another possibility is that the term could be a back-formation from the Pāli *apadāna*. Whilst this Pāli term is used as the title of a collection of birth stories (of *arahat*s, *paccekabuddha*s and *buddha*s) in the Theravāda tradition, it also has the simple meaning 'reaping' (related to the Sanskrit root ava√do, to cut) and is found in descriptions of rice-harvesting in the *Agañña Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. Thus Mellick has suggested that an *apadāna* is part of the agricultural metaphor of reaping the rewards of one's actions.[6] Since such actions could be by the Bodhisatta or another person, there is no reason why an *avadāna* could not also be a *jātaka*; indeed some stories in the Theravāda

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[3] In this discussion I will use primarily the Sanskrit term since the scholarly debate about *avadāna*s has centred on Sanskrit texts and definitions.

[4] Timothy Lenz, *A New Version of the Gāndhārī Dharmapada and a Collection of Previous-Birth Stories: British Library Fragments 16 + 25* (Seattle, 2003) and *Gandhāran Avadānas: British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments 1-3 and 21 and Supplementary Fragments A-C* (Seattle and London, 2010).

[5] A succinct outline of the different etymologies proposed over the years is presented by Reiko Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (New York, 2007), p. 291 fn. 31.

[6] Sally Mellick, *A Critical Edition, with Translation, of Selected Portions of the Pāli Apadāna* (Oxford University D.Phil. Thesis, 1993), p. 9ff.

Apadāna relate the karmicly significant deeds of the Buddha in previous births, and the terms *bodhisattvāvadāna* (Skt) and *buddhāpadāna* (P) are found describing *jātaka*s in the Northern and Southern traditions respectively.[7]

If we accept this definition of *avadāna*, is it possible to suggest – as some scholars have done – that *jātaka*s are merely a sub-set of the *avadāna* genre, illustrating karmicly significant actions performed by the Bodhisatta? A quick reading of the *JA* reveals this to be untrue, for many of the Bodhisatta's actions in this text are karmicly insignificant, as we will see in the next chapter. The idea that *jātaka*s illustrate karmicly significant acts would therefore demand that we exclude much of the semi-canonical *jātaka* book, the very text that is considered definitional for the genre, at least within the Theravāda tradition. To go even further and suggest that *jātaka* and *avadāna* are merely interchangeable terms is also not a tenable position, since historical evidence tells us that the two genres had separate specialist reciters, and are classified separately in early lists of Buddhist textual types.[8]

If etymologies cannot help us, we might look for a distinction between *jātaka* and *avadāna* based upon their apparent ideologies. In Ohnuma's study of gift-of-the-body *jātaka*s, she distinguishes between *jātaka* and *avadāna* on the basis of the absence or presence of Buddhism, contrasting what she calls the 'ethos of the *jātaka*' (perfection) and 'ethos of the *avadāna*' (devotion):

> By means of the *jātakas*, the bodhisattva is lauded and exalted for the magnificent lengths he went to during his previous lives – but by means of the *avadānas*, ordinary Buddhists receive the message that such magnificent lengths are now *unnecessary* thanks to the presence of Buddhism in the world as a powerful field of merit.[9]

She then goes on to situate gift-of-the-body stories within these genres, as 'some of the most "*jātaka*-like" *jātakas* of all'.[10] Since gift-of-the-body stories

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[7] For example the *Cariyāpiṭaka* is also entitled *Buddhāpadāna*, and Āryaśūra's *Jātakamālā* has the alternative title *Bodhisattvāvadānamālā*.

[8] Strong provides three pieces of evidence that demonstrate that the Buddhist tradition has treated *jātaka* and *avadāna* as different genres: '(1) the distinction between avadāna and jātaka in Buddhist classifications of canonical literature; (2) the existence of "avadānists" – a class of Buddhist story tellers who made avadāna literature their specialty; and (3) the curious discrimination between avadānas and jātakas that was consistently made over a period of centuries by the compilers of a group of texts known as the avadānamālās'. John S. Strong, 'Buddhist Avadānas and Jātakas: The Question of Genre' (paper presented at the American Academy of Religion meeting, Dallas, 1983), p. 3. Strong also notes, however, that *avadāna*s appear to be a relatively late development in the literature, thus they may not always have formed a distinctive genre.

[9] Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood*, p. 43.

[10] Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood*, p. 44.

are considerably less popular in Theravāda *jātaka* collections than in the Indian sources that form the focus of Ohnuma's work, her ideological division between *jātaka* and *avadāna* cannot be transplanted into our context. However, her discussion highlights the possible insights to be gained from an investigation of the 'religious' or 'ideological'[11] aspects of Buddhist narrative genres.

Where does this leave my attempt to define *jātaka*? Whilst the situation is clearly more complicated than at first sight, nothing examined thus far need prevent me from standing by my original definition of this genre. Defining *jātaka*s simply as birth stories of the Buddha allows for large ideological variations within the category of *jātaka*, which could reveal changes in conceptions of the genre across different times and communities. Defining *jātaka*s in this way does not require that *avadāna*s are defined in similar terms, as birth stories about people other than the Buddha; indeed *avadāna*s can be defined in a totally different manner, for example as stories about karmicly significant acts. I do not wish to suggest that this is the *only* defining feature of *avadāna*s, and indeed it is important to acknowledge that the exact definitions of both genres changed amongst different communities at different times. However, the important point to note here is that the definitions of *jātaka* and *avadāna* can be on completely different bases – thus the genres overlap, rather than being in opposition. It is possible for a story to be both a *jātaka* and an *avadāna*, but also for a story to fit only in one of the two genres.

Another argument in defence of the simple definition of *jātaka*s as birth stories of the Buddha is that it is in accord with Theravāda narrative texts, which will form the focus of this study. These texts all contain a character who is identified as the Bodhisatta, or the Buddha in a previous birth. This is true even of the *JA*: although it contains some stories about karmicly significant acts and some stories that focus upon characters other than the Bodhisatta, one character is always identified as the Bodhisatta, suggesting that this is the unifying feature of *jātaka* stories. Whether hero, saviour, villain, fool or passer-by, the Bodhisatta is always there.

Another feature that unifies the *jātaka*s of the *JA* in particular is that all of the stories of past births are narrated by the Buddha himself. This might be seen as inextricably linked to the presence of the Bodhisatta, for it is the Buddha's extraordinary memory that allows him to reveal *jātaka* stories to his audience. If the Bodhisatta did not participate in – or at least witness – the story then how could the Buddha remember it? However, in Buddhism the ability to recall past lives of oneself and others is achieved through meditative prowess; it is not a skill limited to *buddha*s, and indeed even non-Buddhists are capable of telling stories of their past lives or the lives of other people. Thus the Buddha can see the births of others as well as his own, and selected others can see their own (and, presumably, his). Such a situation makes it all the more curious that the

[11] I use the term here in a very general sense, relating to the ideas or doctrines contained within and negotiated by the stories and the collections which contain them.

jātaka genre became defined by the time of the *JA* as a story of a past life of the Buddha related by himself.

Given all the past-life narrative possibilities open to the early Buddhists, why did *jātaka*s become defined in this way, and how did they become such a prominent genre in Theravāda Buddhism? I will argue in this book that the answer is found in the person of the Buddha and the importance of his biography. This book, briefly put, is an investigation into the ideological relationship between the person of the Buddha and his *jātaka* stories in the tradition that is now known as Theravāda.[12]

'CLASSICAL JĀTAKAS' AND THE *JĀTAKATTHAVAṆṆANĀ*

Why, in over 100 years of scholarship on *jātaka*s, has the relationship between the Buddha and his birth stories not yet been established, or even fully investigated? One reason for this is the prioritisation of the study of formal aspects of *jātaka*s, over and above their ideological features. As a consequence, *jātaka*s have been defined by their form: either because of their inclusion in the *JA*, or because they mimic the structure established in this great collection. This structure is well-known: each story in the *JA* begins with a quotation from the first line of the first verse, followed by the story of the present (*paccuppanna-vatthu*), which sets out the Buddha's reasons for telling the story. The story of the past (*atīta-vatthu*) follows, and this is the part considered to be the *jātaka* proper, since it is in this section that a previous birth of the Buddha is related. At some point either within or shortly after the story of the past we find the verse or verses (*gāthā*), which are both canonical and in an old form of Pāli, and thus are followed by a word commentary (*veyyākaraṇa*). At the end of the *jātaka*, the consequences of the Buddha telling it, such as the hearer becoming a stream-enterer, are related. The *jātaka* is rounded off with the 'connection' (*samodhāna*), or identification of the births, where the Buddha links present and past with an explanation of who was who. This distinctive structure of the *jātaka*s of the *JA*, which is mimicked also in many later stories and collections, inspires Skilling to use the term 'classical *jātaka*s' to describe them.[13] This term is clearly preferable to the alternative of 'canonical *jātaka*s', since the text as a whole has only semi- or quasi-canonical

[12] I use this term in full awareness that 'Theravāda' can be an unhelpful designation, since despite referring specifically to both to a *vinaya* lineage and a textual tradition it has recently become a 'catch-all' term amongst scholars for countries, kings, and so on. The use of the term here is merely pragmatic, in order to distinguish the objects of my study from those texts preserved in other schools.

[13] Peter Skilling, 'Jātaka and Paññāsa-jātaka in South-East Asia', *The Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 28 (2006): 113–73.

status, and there are in any case great problems inherent in any attempt to classify the Theravāda scriptures.[14]

The study of *jātaka* texts has long been focused on the *JA*, both because of its apparent centrality within Theravāda, and because of its early availability in the West.[15] In trying to ascertain the authenticity of the text, much attention has been focused upon the division between the verses and the prose, which was described by Winternitz as '[i]n many cases ... nothing but the miserable performance of a very late period'.[16] Oldenberg applied his *ākhyāna* theory to the text, thereby identifying it as a poetic-prosaic tale in which only the verses were fixed and the prose sections were improvised by each narrator.[17] Evidence for his position is fourfold: first, the verses alone are canonical (the prose commentarial); second, the prose cannot have been fixed at the time of the verses for it frequently contradicts the message of the verses, and is in a more modern style of Pāli; third, the text is structured according to the number of verses contained within each story, and each story is identified by the first *pāda* of its first verse; fourth, the verses circulated (and continue to circulate) without the prose.

Thanks to this research on the structure of the *JA*, recently crowned by von Hinüber's meticulous analysis,[18] it is now possible to outline the development of the text in broad terms: the *JA* is a commentary on the verses of the *Jātakapāli*, which now forms the tenth section of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* of the Theravāda scriptures. Since these verses are clearly incomplete without the stories that accompany them, we can assume that they have always circulated with the stories of the past in some (possibly quite flexible) form. Though there are a few exceptions, many of the stories of the present seem to have been artificially created to match their stories of the past, suggesting they may be from a

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[14] Distinguishing between 'canonical' and 'commentarial' with regard to Buddhism imposes Western conceptions of textual hierarchy and 'sacred' texts onto the tradition. Although it is clear that Theravāda scholastics viewed the *JA* as a commentary upon canonical verses, it is not a natural consequence to thus view the *JA* as less important than 'purely canonical' texts. It is also not clear to what extent such distinctions matter(ed) to the majority of Buddhists. There is in any case little historical evidence for the early formation of a fixed 'canon' in the Theravāda tradition.

[15] The *JA* was edited in its entirety by V. Fausbøll (1877–1896), who had already translated several of the stories. T.W. Rhys-Davids began a translation even before Fausbøll's endeavour was completed, but after completing the *Nidānakathā* and the first 40 *jātaka*s, he handed the work over to a team of translators: R. Chalmers, W.H.D. Rouse, H.T. Francis, R.A. Neil and E.B. Cowell, under the editorship of the latter (1895–1907).

[16] M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, *Vol. II: 'Buddhist Literature and Jaina Literature'*, trans. Ketkar and Kohn (Calcutta, 1933), p. 119.

[17] A useful survey of the arguments on each side of this identification is found in L. Alsdorf, 'The Ākhyāna Theory Reconsidered', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, 13 (1963/1964): 195–207.

[18] Oskar von Hinüber, *Entstehung und Aufbau der Jātaka-Sammlung* (Stuttgart, 1998).

somewhat later period of redaction. The overall text of the *JA* as we have it now can be dated to the fifth or sixth centuries CE. There are therefore several discernable layers in the history of the text.

To demonstrate the insight that can be gained from examining these different layers we may return to the *jātaka* outlined earlier. In the story of the monkey gardeners, on the level of the *Jātaka-pāli* all we have is the verse:

> Assistance from a fool does not lead to happiness:
> A fool fails, just like the monkey gardener.

Thus there is an aphorism, with reference to an event or story that supports it. There is no discernable Buddhist content. In the story of the past we have the story to which the verse relates. We see that a wise man spoke the verse as a comment on the situation, though the comment is addressed *to* the monkeys, despite being *about* them. The wise man plays no part in the action himself. In the story of the present we are told that this particular *jātaka* – the *Ārāmadūsaka-jātaka* – was told by the Buddha after he was informed of a similar set of events involving a village lad and the garden of a wealthy landowner. At the end of the *jātaka*, in the identification of the births, we hear that the village lad was the king of the monkeys in those days, and the Buddha was the wise man. The Buddha told the story of the past to show that this is not the first time the village lad has spoiled a park. There is therefore no discernable Buddhist content in the story itself, and the Buddha and Bodhisatta are regulated to the sidelines, yet their presence is enough to identify the story as a *jātaka*.

As this brief example shows, studies of the formal aspects of the *JA* provide an invaluable springboard for work on the ideological impact of the *jātaka* genre more broadly. However, such studies should not be seen as the end of the road, for an understanding of the history or structure of a text is very different to an understanding of the history or pattern of a text's influence on a community or religious tradition. Whilst studies of the formal aspects of the *JA* have laid the foundation for further work, it is clear that a definition of *jātaka*s according to their inclusion in certain texts, or their peculiar structure, will give us at best only a partial understanding of the significance of the genre.

ARE JĀTAKAS BUDDHIST?

This may seem like a silly question. Of course *jātaka*s are Buddhist: they are ubiquitous in Buddhist texts and Buddhist contexts. However, there has been a tendency to treat *jātaka*s as somehow non-Buddhist or pre-Buddhist. The main interest in the *JA* when it became available to Western scholars in the late nineteenth century was in its worth as a historical document. The first scholar to thoroughly examine the text, T.W. Rhys-Davids, described it as 'full of information on the daily habits and customs and beliefs of the people of India,