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The Identification of Kizil Paintings IV

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The present paper is the fourth in a series identifying some previously unrecognized narrative paintings in the Buddhist monasteries of Kizil in Chinese Central Asia. The first part of this cycle, focusing on identifications of the (1) Ya¸sas and (2) Måkandika stories, was published in issue 9 of the Indo-Asiatische Zeitschrift (IAZ). The two following papers analysed the stories of (3) Sudåya and (4) B¡haddyuti (published in issue 11 of IAZ), and discussed (5) the sports discipline of “cutting (a bunch of) reeds” (kalamacchedya) and (6) the conversion of the Brahmin Sundarika-Bhåradvåja (published in issue 12 of IAZ).

7. Kapila

The Buddhist textual tradition conveys a story about Kapila, who – due to his misconduct during the lifetime of the Buddha Kå¸yapa – was reborn as a fish during the life of the Buddha Šákyamuni. The story is known in Pali, as well as in the ‘northern’ sources. The Pali version, in the commentary on the Dhammapada verses 334-337,1) tells how Kapila became a Buddhist monk, learned the entire Tripi¶aka by heart and gained an enormous following. Nonetheless, he was obsessed with a desire to win arguments and tended to be cruel and contemptuous towards those who refused to believe in what he was telling them. For such an attitude towards the Buddhist teaching, Kapila was reborn in the Avïci hell, where he had to remain during the entire interval between the two Buddhas. As a result of his evil deeds, he was then reborn as a brownfish, kapila-maccha. The fish was of a golden hue but had a terrible stinking breath; it was caught by 500 fishermen and brought to Jetavana, to the Buddha. The Teacher told the story of the fish’s past and explained that the golden colour of the fish was a reward for preaching the Buddhist law, whereas its stinking breath was a punishment for abusing the monks.

The northern version of the story is preserved in the vinaya of the Mûlasarvåstivådins, known today from Tibetan and Chinese translations.2) This story was prototypical for the version in Ksemendra’s Bodhisattvåvådånakalpalatå (BAK)3) of the 11th century. The narrative is quite different from the one in Pali: It is set not in Šrávastî but in Vaisålî, by the river Valgåµatå, and says nothing about the golden hue or stinking breath of the fish. In its previous life, the fish (called in the BAK: matsya and makara) was not a monk but a learned Brahmin named Kapila. The story of his past life starts one generation earlier: The father of Kapila, Vådisiºha, was a famous Brahmin who won all debates against his learned colleagues. Shortly before his death, Vådisiºha warned his son never to start a philosophical discourse with Buddhist monks. However, due to the repeated urgings of


2) Kanjur 200.3.8-202.4.7, Peking ed. Vol. 42 (Che), pp. 145b-160a, analysis. PANGLUNG 1981: 129-130; the story is a part of the Vinayavibhaºga and illustrates exclusion from the Buddhist order as a consequence of claiming superhuman powers. The Chinese translation is to be found in T 1442, Genben shuyiqiyou bu pinaiye, Ch. 9, 669c18-675a4. A short version of this narrative appears in Xuanzang’s travelogue, T 2087, Datang xiyuji, Ch. 7, 910a10-b5, on which is again based the story in T 2088, Shijia Fangzhi, Ch. 1, 961a11-12. I would like to thank Prof. Zhen Liu from the National Institute for Advanced Humanistic Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai, for providing me with this information.

3) Bodhisattvåvådånakalpalatå XXXIX ed. Vol. 1, pp. 247-254. The narrative is represented in several scenes on a Tibetan tankha, illustrated in TUCCI 1949, 3: pl. 112, left from the Buddha image; cf. also ibid. 2: 481 for an analysis of the narrative based on the Tibetan version of the Bodhisattvåvådånakalpalatå.
his mother, Kapila went to the Buddhist monastery, was ordained, gave statements confusing all the teachings, lost his dispute with the monks, and then abused everyone calling them by the names of different animals. For this deed, he was reborn as a monster-fish, whereas his mother was born again in hell. Fishermen caught the monster *(ghoramakara)*: Its body had the shape of a mountain and it had eighteen heads, with the faces of lions, elephants and mules. 4) Many curious onlookers watched the monster and the Buddha also betook himself to the riverbank, where he explained to the *makara* his wrongdoing in the past. The monster refused to eat, starved to death and was reborn in heaven.

The narrative concerning Kapila is represented among the paintings of Kizil. One of the rhomboidal sections of the paintings in the vault of Cave 163 (Fig. 1a-b) (cf. ‘List of paintings under discussion’ at the end of the paper) shows the conventionally depicted Buddha, whose hand gesture signifies a conversation. Below, a green surface with a wavy edge is represented, undoubtedly symbolizing water. On this surface, a strange animal is depicted: It has the body of a fish with a white stripe along the stomach and four dark fins. The head looks like a grey human face with short hair, like the usual representation of monks. Around the face, several objects painted alternately with white and blue paint, are depicted: These are additional heads of different animals. The heads looking to the (viewer’s) right have the long snouts of boars or dogs, whereas the heads looking to the left have rather roundish shapes, of bears or cats. The blue object on the top looks like an entire bird. 5)

The picture becomes more comprehensible after taking into comparison a parallel depiction from Cave 23 in

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5) The animal heads had not been noticed before and the painting was explained in Xu (et al. 1983-85: 2: 211), in Mural Paintings in Xinjiang (2008: 68), and in Li (2008: 99 & fig. 5) as the representation of “a great snake in muddy water”, a story about a man who was reborn as a worm living in sewage because he had once badmouthed monks, when merchants offered them jewels. This narrative is told in *Xian yu jing*, T 202, ch. 13, story 61, ed. *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō*, Vol. 4, pp. 443c26-444b17.
Kizil Kargha, 14 kilometers from Kizil, (Fig. 2a-b). Here, the body of the fish is relatively easier to recognize. The white stripe on the stomach is placed vertically along the side where the Buddha is sitting, whereas the fins are placed on the back. The fish is lying on the bank of the green river, the other shore of which is shown as a black line below the Buddha’s throne. Only after a very careful examination is it possible to recognize that here too there are zoomorphic heads around the face of the monk. Above the right shoulder there is a bird’s head with an open beak, and above the left is the head of a boar.

Once recognized, the same representation can be found again on a mural now preserved only as a photograph in the Museum für Asiatische Kunst at Berlin (Fig. 3). In the photograph, however, it is no longer possible to recognize which animals formed the side heads of the fish. Below the fish there is a riverbank, whereas on the other side of the Buddha sits a monk listening to His teaching.
Although the depictions fail to show all the eighteen heads mentioned in the texts, the diverse animal heads above the body of a fish certainly validate the identification. The number eighteen goes back to a piece of information in the Mālasarvāstivādinava that Kapila abused 18 arhats. The number, however, should not be taken literally, as it apparently has a symbolic meaning (like the 18 Purāṇas, the 18 schools of the Hīnayāna, and later the 18 Arhats of Chinese Buddhism).

Satomi Hiyama has recognized a fish with many heads in one depiction on the vault of cave 8, where the animal, however, is not accurately represented (i.e., there are no fins or a fish tail) and the heads look like they are jutting out of a sack. Hiyama also proposes to connect the fish with animal heads in the Hippokampenhöhle (Cave 118) with the Kapila narrative. The creature appears there by the side of winged hippocampi, camels with human heads and Nāgas, hence certainly embodying its character of a ghoramakara, known from the narrative.

8. The Promise of the Four Kings

The majority of pictures on the side walls of the Kizil caves cannot be properly interpreted, these paintings are preserved in very bad condition, far worse than the paintings on the vaults. An even greater difficulty in their interpretation arises, however, from problems in analysing the art of narrative representation: the scenes primarily show the Buddha on a throne, being worshipped by numerous persons, and the story is conveyed merely as an allusion, which can easily remain unrecognized. It may even be questioned if the artists intended to convey a story as such. For instance, a scene that represents the adoration of the Buddha by different gods, among whom there appear Viṣṇu on Garuḍa and Śiva with Pārvatī on the bull, also includes the Yakṣa Āṭavika with the boy Hastaka. Āṭavika is depicted here predominantly as a person accompanying the Buddha and the presence of the boy is of significance primarily for his iconographic function, just like the presence of Garuḍa or the bull. The story of the subjugation of the Yakṣa by the Buddha and the rescue of the boy Hastaka is not depicted. Apparently, we shall never know if the representation of the ogre leading a human child by the hand was intended to help the viewer recall the narrative at all, or whether the presence of Hastaka in the picture should simply indicate that: “Here the Buddha is being worshipped by Śiva, Pārvatī, Viṣṇu and Āṭavika”.

A similar manner of representation can be observed in several other cases, e.g. Devadatta throwing a boulder on the Buddha, or Mākandika offering Him his daughter for a wife — the narrative instances vanish in the opulence of the adoring gods, singing Gandharvas etc. in these serialized depictions.

Cave no. 80 at Kizil displays many interesting scenes, since the large surfaces especially across the vault are very well preserved. The painting in the upper part of the rear wall shows the preaching Buddha (the gestus of his hands is, nevertheless, not the dharmacakramudrā — he is raising His right hand). On the right side of this scene, five Brahmins are shown seated and gesticulating. Vajrapāṇi, by holding the vajra above them, makes it absolutely clear that they do not enthusiastically acknowledge the teaching of the Buddha.

The right-hand wall of the cave also displayed six scenes (three in the upper and three in the lower row respectively) with the enthroned Buddha in the middle of each picture (Fig. 4). The centre of the wall is today completely destroyed and there is a door leading outside in the middle of this missing part. So far it has been possible to recognize the upper right scene as a representa-
tion of the Brahmin Mākandika.\textsuperscript{15) It seems rather doubt-
ful whether the lower sequence of the pictures and the scene in the upper left corner will ever be identified due
to their poor state of preservation. However, part of the middle
scene in the upper row – even though its left side together with the Buddha is entirely destroyed – is unex-
pectedly well preserved and very remarkable (Fig. 5a-b).

In the upper part, directly by the mandorla of the
Buddha, stands a gesticulating lady. There is nothing in
her appearance that could establish her identity. Her head
is not surrounded by a nimbus but the reason for this
might not be of any significance, except for practical mo-
tives: The nimbus might simply have covered too much
of the surface behind her. As a matter of fact, such
practice can be frequently observed and the gods, parti-
cularly in the last but one row from the top, are also
represented without nimbi. It appears, though, that the
lady in our picture does not play any important role apart
from simply belonging to the group of worshippers. The
only preserved item on the left-hand side of the scene is
a fragment of a nimbus in its upper left corner, which
clearly seems to provide sound evidence for the fact that
the upper row must have included several customary ad-
oring deities.

In contrast, the right-hand side of the depiction dis-
plays something very unusual: Two demons are depicted
there, who are nonetheless not shown as worshippers of
the Buddha. The demon in the corner has a dark-brown
complexion and green hair with two typical peaks above
the forehead. He is wearing a dark-blue shirt, green scarf

\textsuperscript{15) ZIN 2005: 31.}

\textbf{Fig. 4 Kizil, Cave 80. After Xu et al. 1983-85, 2: fig. 48}
and a bell hanging around his neck. His nose is broad, his mouth open, so that his teeth are visible. His ears are abnormal, as they have the form of little jars – he is a “pot-ear” demon, a kumbha-karna. The demon is holding a broad curved knife in his left hand and is keeping his right hand, with its palm of light colour, near his face. He looks scared. The second demon is not easy to recognize at first glance: His legs are near the face of the former demon. Hence, the latter demon is obviously falling down. He is of a fair complexion and possesses an ugly face with round eyes and light-blue hair. The form of his ears is no longer visible, but they do not seem to have been of pot shape. The latter demon is wearing only a blue loin-cloth and hand bracelets.

Behind the demon who is falling down, one can see vaulted windows and a wall crowned with pointed merlons. Further merlons can be seen above and at the side, by the manderla, indicating that this is a city: apparently the city of demons inside which the dark kumbha-karna is standing and from where the fair-skinned goblin is falling. The reason for his fall and the fear of the other demon may be easily figured out. A turbaned, nimbate male with bare chest is aiming an arrow towards the upper right side; part of his bow is still clearly visible. This person, probably a god, is thus shooting at the demons. Below, in front of the Buddha, two other men are sitting with their heads surrounded by nimbi; one has a fair complexion, the other dark. They are both wearing turbans and body armour with collars in the god-like manner, just as the Four Gods of the Directions, in particular, are often clad in the paintings; the other two gods probably sat on the other side of the Buddha.

This depiction of the city of demons by the side of the Buddha is, to the best of my knowledge, the only instance and is therefore difficult to explain. It can be taken for

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16) The explanation of such armour as an attribute of the Four Kings goes back on GRÜNEWALD; cf. GRÜNEWALD 1912, s.v. “Lokapāla.”
granted that the scenes show not jātaka stories, but episodes from the lifetime of the Buddha. There are certainly numerous stories about His encounters with demons (the most important are collected in the Samyuttanikāya X, northern version, Samyuktāgama preserved in Chinese T 99-100). Nevertheless, such narratives are based on the assumption that the Buddha (or his disciples) subdued and converted horrific demons on His own – or at most, with the help of Vajrapāni – and not that someone else, like the bowman in the picture, conquered the demons by His side.

What seems to be of crucial importance in searching for the explanation of this painting is the recognition of a general meaning behind the pictures on the walls, repeatedly showing the Buddha surrounded by adoring persons. Their main function is to illustrate the glory of the Buddha, who is worshipped by gods, deities and humans. Such representations seem to match the tradition of the region, as it is known from Das Sonnenaufgangswunder des Buddha (The Sunrise Wonder of the Buddha) translated from Tocharian by Emil Sieg.17) The preserved parts of the Sonnenaufgangswunder contain accounts of all sorts of beings – not only human kings, teachers of different faiths, gods and millions of Gandharvas and Apsaras, but also animals, pretas or dwellers in the hells (who all gather together to see the Buddha performing the Great Miracle, mahāprātihārya).18) The beliefs and imagery in Tocharian correspond closely with the Sanskrit texts found in the region; manuscript fragments of the Ūśnārājastra (Pali: Āṭānātiyasutta), were found in the “Rotkuppel-Höhle” (cave 66) in Kizil. But the Āṭānātikasutta is more than just a mere listing of gods and genies gathering together to worship the Buddha. The sūtra belongs to the rakṣā literature;19) it grants protection (rakṣā, Pali: rakkhā) against malevolent deities. In the sūtra, the Four Kings, leaders of the celestial beings, such as the Yakṣas, Gandharvas or Kumbhāṇḍas, are declared as protectors of the Buddha, His monks and nuns, as well as of his laymen and laywomen. The ruler of the North, Vaiśravaṇa (Pali: Vessavana), plays the role of speaker. After naming and describing the protecting armies of the

Four Kings, he states that there are also unfriendly beings between them:

... There are creatures not human, dear sir, who are rough, irascible, violent. They heed neither the [four] kings, nor the officers of the kings, nor their men. They are called rebels against the four kings. Even as brigand chiefs suppressed by the king of Magadha, so do they act. Now if any Yakṣa whatever, or Gandhabba, Kumbha a or Nāga should approach a brother or sister of the Order, or a lay-disciple, walking, standing, sitting or lying, with malevolent intent, then should [the molested one] incite and cry aloud and shout to those Yakkas, the Great Yakkas, their generals and commanders, saying: ‘This Yakka is seizing me, is assailing me, is hurting, injuring, harming me, and will not let me go!’ Which are the Yakkas [to whom appeal should be made]? (...) Those are the Yakkas, the Great Yakkas, the commanders, the chief commanders, who should be invoked. This, dear sir, is the ward rune [āṭānātiyā rakkhū] whereby both brethren and sisters of the Order, and laymen and laywomen may dwell at ease, guarded, protected and unscathed.20)

It seems highly likely that our painting illustrates the protection given by the Four Kings of the Directions to monastic and lay persons against the attacks of the evil Yakṣas – as formulated in the Āṭānātikasūtra. The only way for the painter to visualize this protection against evildoers was to show them scared and defeated. It is telling that Vaiśravaṇa describes the malicious deities (?)

17) Sieg 1952: 26-34.
20) Āṭānātiyasuttanta, Diṅghakāya XXXII.9-11, transl. T.W. and C.A.F. Rhys Davids, Vol. 3, pp. 195-196; ed. Vol. 3, p. 203-05: santi hi mārīsa amanusṣa cañjā ruddā raḥāhāti te na eva mahārājānaṁ adīyanti na mahārājanum purṣakamānaṁ adīyanti (...) te khe te mārīsa amanusṣa mahārājānaṁ avaruddhā nāma vuccantī/ seyyat āpi māraṁ raḥo magadhassā vijitte mādhocārā te na eva raḥo adīyanti (...) yo hi koci mārīsa amanusso yakko vā yakkkhiṁ vā ... pe ... padutthacitto bhikkhuṁ vā bhikkhuniṁ vā upāsakam vā upāsikam vā gacchantam vā anugaccheyya phītaṁ vā upatīṭheyya nisinnam vā upanīṭheyya nisannam vā upanīṭheyya imesaṁ yakkhānaṁ mahā-yakkhānaṁ senāpatināṁ mahāsenapatināṁ ujjhāpetabbaṁ vikkanditabbaṁ viravitabbaṁ ayaṁ yakko gahāti ayaṁ yakko avissati ayaṁ yakko heṭheti ayaṁ yakko vihbeti ayaṁ yakko hīseti ayaṁ yakko hīseti ayaṁ yakko hīseti ayaṁ yakko na mānūcaṭi/ katamesam yakkhānaṁ mahāyakkhānaṁ senāpatināṁ mahāsenapatināṁ ujjhāpetabbaṁ vikkanditabbaṁ viravitabbaṁ ayaṁ yakko gahāti ayaṁ yakko avissati ayaṁ yakko heṭheti ayaṁ yakko vihbeti ayaṁ yakko hīseti ayaṁ yakko hīseti ayaṁ yakko na mānūcaṭi/ katamesam yakkhānaṁ mahāyakkhānaṁ senāpatināṁ mahāsenapatināṁ ujjhāpetabbaṁ vikkanditabbaṁ viravitabbaṁ (...) ayaṁ khe na mārīsa āṭānātiyā rakkhā bhikkhunīṁ vā bhikkhuṁchinaṁ upāsakāṁ na upāsikāṁ na ujjhāpetabbaṁ vikkanditabbaṁ viravitabbaṁ ...
as big bandits (mahācorā) and rebels (avaruddhā) against the Four Kings; they are clearly characterized as a marginal fraction of non-human society, which could be controlled by the mainstream. The majority of the Yakṣas are benevolent and always eager to help.

The characteristic mark of the rakṣa literature is that it was actually used, e.g. it was memorized and recited in an hour of need. It seems very probable that some paintings, showing protecting deities, as well as overpowered evildoers, played exactly the same role.

As it is widely known, the Catur Mahārāja and their Yakṣas, Gandharvas, Kumbhāṇḍas and Nāgas play an extremely important role in Buddhism, primarily as the protectors of the Buddhist dharma. Therefore, it is likely that the depiction of the subjugated evil-doers in the middle of the side wall could have belonged to the same pictorial program as the picture on the rear wall showing the defeat of the five Brahmins by the sermon of the Buddha and by the strike of the commander-in-chief of Vaiśra-vaṇa’s Yakṣa army, Vajrapāṇi.

**List of paintings under discussion**

7. Kapila
   - Kizil, Cave 163, vault, right side; ill.: TAN et al. 1981, 2: fig. 65; XU et al. 1983-85, 2: fig. 169; *Mural Paintings in Xinjiang* 2008: fig. on p. 68, and detail on p. 69; Li 2008: fig. 5 (supra, Fig. 1a)
   - Kizil Kargha, Cave 23; ill.: *Mural Paintings in Xinjiang* 2008: figs. on pp. 319 & 320 (supra, Fig. 2a)
   - Kizil, Cave 184, “I. Anlage, Drittletzte Höhle”, front wall; ill.: LE COQ 1924: pl. 14a; *Verlust-Katalog* 2002: 146, IB 8446 (supra, Fig. 3)

8. The Promise of the Four Kings
   - Kizil, Cave 80, right side wall; ill.: TAN et al. 1981, 1: fig. 178; XU et al. 1983-85, 2: figs. 48, 50-51 (supra Fig. 5)

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


HOFFMANN/SANDER (1987) cf. Āṭṭhānātikasūtra


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