



Buddha Shakyamuni and Stories of his Previous Lives

Date

mid-late 14th century

Medium

Pigments on cloth

Description

This remarkable painting portrays the Buddha with more than a hundred stories of his previous lives (jataka) organized into a geometric grid. One such scene, found in the top-left corner, shows him sacrificing himself to feed a hungry tigress and her starving cubs. The narrative scenes closest to the central Buddha figure depict his deeds during his final life as Prince Siddhartha, during which he achieved enlightenment or awakending (bodhi). Directly below the Buddha appears to be the Third

Karmapa (1284–1339), a religious leader who is famous for first compiling a set of one hundred jataka tales in the Tibetan language, presumably the very stories pictured here. His appearance helps date this painting. Scrolling floral patterns within the red halo, the dark-blue background, and some of the narrative cells, as well as the thin yellow lines that separate the scenes and demarcate the painting's outer edges, are features drawn from Nepalese painting.

Dimensions

59 1/2 × 46 7/8 in.