



Major Events of the Buddha's Life

Date

12th century

Medium

"Andagu" stone with pigments

Description

The northeastern Indian village of Bodhgaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, was and continues to be an important pilgrimage site. While in Bodhgaya some pilgrims picked up small souvenir sculptures dedicated to the Buddha's life, and this small portable stone relief carving is an example of such an object. The image of the Buddha at the center of the stele shows him seated under a tree with his right hand touching the earth, a common visual reference to the moment of his enlightenment. This figure and the six buddhas at its sides

represent the seven weeks the Buddha spent meditating in Bodhgaya. The scenes on the stele's periphery depict events from the Buddha's life, culminating at the top with his achievement of nirvana at death. The physical appearance of the Buddha, featuring a disproportionately short and thick neck, is a direct reference to the main image that occupied the temple at Bodhgaya from about the eleventh to the thirteenth century, when after waves of foreign invasions Buddhism declined in India and Bodhgaya seems to have become defunct as a pilgrimage site, thereby ceasing to be a cultural conduit for Tibetans for whom these images were important.

Dimensions

6 1/2 × 4 1/2 × 1 1/2 in.