



Stories of Noble Deeds (Avadana)

Date

late 18th-19th century

Medium

Pigments on cloth

Description

Buddha Shakyamuni, the central figure in this painting, is seated on a lotus, holding a begging bowl and making the gesture of giving. He is surrounded by scenes of visual narratives relating the teachings in his stories. Landscape elements frame each scene, identified by Tibetan inscriptions in gold letters. However, the unifying landscape makes it difficult to distinguish where one story ends and another begins. Three red trilobed vignettes, which give the title and number of the avadana stories help to make sense of this busy tapestry-like painting. The narrative moves clockwise around the Buddha, beginning in the lower part, then moving to the upper left, the upper

right, and the right side of the painting. This painting comes from a set of more than twenty depicting one hundred eight stories. It includes stories fifty-seven through fifty-nine, which illustrate cause and effect (karma) in relation to building stupas, telling of King Punyabala's unlimited generosity and of King Ashoka's son Kunala experiencing the ripening of his karma and merit.

Dimensions

35 × 23 3/8 in. (estimated)