

The Life of the Buddha and the tOSACHAT in Thai Mural Painting  
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In Theravada Buddhism there are two types of Dhamma (truth, reality, wisdom): Lokuttara Dhamma and Lokiya Dhamma. Lokuttara Dhamma is used to refer to the lower Dhamma of this world, while Lokiya Dhamma is used to refer to a higher, transcendent Dhamma. Every sentient being is different and thus has a slightly different perception of what is the Dhamma from other sentient beings. Thus, what is easy for one individual to comprehend might be beyond the means of another. Accordingly, two levels of teaching have evolved; one is aimed at those who are bound to the forms and values of this world, while the other is intended for the religious virtuosi. Lokuttara Dhamma, the Dhamma of the forms and values of this world, is the Dhamma taught through Thai mural painting.

Thai mural painting is first and foremost didactic. Its purpose is to instruct, to elevate the moral level of those who might view it. Simple, clear and direct images illustrate basic moral values. Conceived as clear and unambiguous images, Thai murals were traditionally repainted whenever they became damaged: aesthetic considerations are subordinate to functional considerations. Only in the late nineteenth century did an awareness of the evolution of aesthetic style develop, while only in the last twenty years has there been any effort to preserve older, damaged works.

Subject matter portrayed varied from temple to temple depending on what the monks residing there felt was the most appropriate. The most common subjects portrayed in Thai temples are scenes from the Life of the Buddha, the stories of the last ten births of the Buddha before his final birth as the Buddha and the illustration of the Three worlds of existence. Most accounts of the Life of the Buddha in Thai temples are drawn from references scattered throughout the Vinaya and Sutta Pitakas and popular Thai texts on the Life of the Buddha such as the Pathamasombhodhikatha which are based on the references in the Vinaya and Sutta Pitakas. The stories of the Buddha's previous lives are drawn from the Jataka volume of the Sutta Pitaka.

Most Thai temples do not contain mural paintings. Those that do usually have them in either the vihan (lay worship or image hall) or the bot (ubosoth, the hall for the rituals of the monastic community including ordinations and the recitation of the Patimokkha.). The paintings were executed by anonymous artisans who considered their work as a form of religious expression. They would be given everything they needed while staying and painting at a temple, and richly rewarded with gifts at the completion of their labors. Religious communities that could not afford to have painters come to the temple, but desired paintings for teaching purposes would commission painters in larger population centers to paint the scenes on paper, or more rarely on wood panels. These paintings would then be displayed in the Sala Kan Parian (pavilion for lay teaching) of the monastery.

In temples that could afford to have painters come to them, the murals would be painted on the plaster walls in tempera, a very fragile medium prone to damage from leaking roofs and paint exfoliation. As Thai temples are for the most part built of brick on marshy land, the crystallization of salt on the surface of the walls from the evaporation of ground water rising through the porous brick walls is a major problem. The problem of paint exfoliation has been accelerated during the last few years by the paving over of temple courtyards that were once covered with sand and the use of non-porous cement instead of plaster to repair the basements of buildings. As the moisture that used to evaporate near the ground on the exterior of the building is forced higher and higher with its load of mineral salts, paintings that have survived over one hundred years are disappearing in less than five. With each use of cement to repair plaster higher and higher on the wall, the cycle progress. Porous lime plaster, while needing repair periodically, allowed water to evaporate before

reaching the level of the mural paintings. As a result of the recent switch in building materials, many Thai paintings have been damaged or destroyed in the last ten years. An example can be seen in slide number 8122, a representation of the Buddha Sheltered by the Naga King Mucalinda: it has been destroyed to the level of the hands since the photograph was taken nine years ago. Expensive conservation techniques such as injecting chemical water barriers into the walls below the murals would not be needed if appropriate materials were used in the repair of temples and the maintenance of their courtyards.

## THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

8101 Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan. Bangkok. Interior overview. First to Third Reigns: originally painted c. 1795.

Most of the present paintings probably date from the period of renovation at the beginning of the Third Reign c.. On the grounds of the National Museum Bangkok, the former Wang Na, this chapel was built by the Uparat (second king) to Rama I, Rama I's brother, the Somdet Phra Bowonrachachao Maha Surasinghanath, to serve as his throne hall. It also served to house the image known as the Phra Buddha Sihing, the palladium of the kingdom of Lanna, which was obtained by Rama I during a military campaign in the north. Construction work was begun in 1795. The building was extensively renovated during the reign of King Rama III when the Uparat, Maha Saktiphonseph, built a new throne hall and made the old throne hall a chapel exclusively for the Phra Buddha Sihing image. At this time the hall was renamed the Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan.

8102 The Life of the Buddha. Overview. Wat Parohit, Thonburi. Fifth Reign

8103 The Life of the Buddha, Birth through Maravijaya. Detail 8102, right section. Wat Parohit, Thonburi. Fifth Reign.

8104 The Life of the Buddha, Maravijaya. Detail 8102, center section. Wat Parohit, Thonburi. Fifth Reign.

8105 The Life of the Buddha, the Seven Weeks and the First Sermon. Detail 8102. Wat Parohit, Thonburi. Fifth Reign.

8106 The marriage of King Suddhodana of Kapilavatthu and Princess Sirimahamaya of Devadaha. Overview. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

To the upper left Princess Mahamaya receives betrothal gifts from the parents of King Suddhodana. In the upper right she journeys in a palanquin from her home in Devadaha to her future husband's city of Kapilavatthu. The lower scene represents the wedding ceremony. King Suddhodana is seated with the Gods Sakka (the personal name of Indra, green) and Phra Narai (Brahma, four faced) to the left of the ceremonial vessel, the bai sri, while Princess Mahamaya and her attendants are seated to the right.

8107 Maya's dream: the conception of the Buddha. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

She has a dream in which the Buddha is conceived when a white elephant touches her side with a lotus flower.t.

8108 The birth of the Buddha. Overview. Wat Thong Dhammachat, Thonburi, Bot. Third reign.

In the curtained enclosure in the lower right Queen Maya grasps a tree branch: the Buddha springs from her side. Above her, Sakka and Narai have received the new born Buddha on a lotus pedestal. He took seven steps and proclaimed that he is the lord of all the world and this was his last rebirth. In the palace to the right the Buddha miraculously appears on top of the sage Asita. The sage has just proclaimed to the Buddha's parents that the child has only one destiny: he will either be a cakkavattin (universal monarch) or a Buddha.

8109 The birth of the Buddha's son Rahula. Wat Suthat, Bangkok, Vihan Luang. Third Reign.

8110 The Four Encounters. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok, First to Third Reigns.

Prince Siddhattha sees for the first time: a sick man, an old man, a dead man and a holy man. He realizes that there is suffering in the world. (see ACSAA slide 7064)

8111 The Great Renunciation. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, c.1830.

The lower left scene depicts the four encounters. The central portion depicts the Buddha looking at his wife and son whom he is leaving while they

sleep. In the courtyard his groom Channa and horse Kanthaka await him. The upper portion depicts the Great Departure.

8112 Prince Siddhattha preparing to leave his palace looks on his sleeping wife and son. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

8113 The Great Departure. Wat Thong Dhammachat, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

Prince Siddhattha's horse is carried through the air by the gods so that it makes no noise. Sakka and Narai accompany the entourage while the groom Channa hangs onto Kanthaka's tail. Ahead of the party Mara, the great deceiver, attempts to halt Prince Siddhattha so that world will not have a chance to benefit from his teachings as the Buddha.

8114 Prince Siddhattha takes the tonsure of an ascetic. Wat Thong Dhammachat, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

The cutting off of his hair symbolizes his renunciation of the world. Indra hovers overhead to claim the hair which he will take to the Tavatimsa Heaven (the Heaven of the Thirty-three) and enshrine it in the Culamani Chetiya (Culamani stupa). Phra Narai holds a umbrella over his head while other gods offer him the robes and begging bowl of an ascetic. The horse Kanthaka dies of sorrow to be reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three; the groom Channa cries.

8115 The Three Notes. Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

Having practiced extreme austerities, starving himself almost to death, the Buddha was no closer to enlightenment than when he began meditating. Sakka seeing this, played his three stringed instrument. The first string was so loose that it could not be heard. The second string was so tight that it snapped. The middle string produced a beautiful sounding note. From this the Buddha realized that a proper understanding of the nature of reality could not be achieved by either the extremes of pleasure or self mortification and denial, it could only be discovered if one followed the middle path between the two.

8116 Sujata's offering. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

A young woman comes into the forest to make an offering of food in a golden bowl to a tree spirit. The Buddha is seated under the tree and he accepts the offering and breaks his fast..

8117 The floating of the Golden Bowl. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

Having finished Sujata's offering of food, the Buddha took the golden bowl and threw it into the river, requesting that if he was destined to become a Buddha, the bowl would float upstream. It did so and finally came to rest in the underwater palace of a naga king on top of the pile of bowls thrown into the river by the previous Buddhas.

8118 The Temptation of the Buddha. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

While the Buddha meditated, three of Mara's daughters came to try and seduce him. They appeared as beautiful young women, but when ignored by the Buddha, they left as old hags.

8119 The Maravijaya: The Victory Over Mara. Wat Wang, Phattalung, Bot. Third Reign.

When his daughters failed to distract the Buddha from his meditation, Mara approached him with his demon army and demanded that he stop; that he had no right to reach enlightenment. The Buddha responded by asking the earth to bear witness to his past merit. The earth goddess Torani responded by wringing out of her hair the water which he had poured over the hands of those he had given gifts to in previous lives (see ACSAA slide 8195) for the Buddha as Vessantara, his last incarnation, pouring water over the hands of Sakka). The resulting flood washed the army away and those that survived and Mara worshiped the Buddha. This is the way the point at which the Buddha attained enlightenment is most often represented in Thai mural painting. Traditionally this scene usually

occupies the entire upper portion of the walls opposite the main Buddha image in temples that are painted.

8120 Torani wringing her hair while standing on Rahu the eclipse demon who holds two naga tails. The east wall of the Bot, Wat Dusitaram, Thonburi. First Reign.

8121 The Gods come to pay homage to the newly enlightened Buddha. Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

8122 The Buddha sheltered by the Naga King Mucalinda. Wat Dusitaram, Thonburi, Bot. First Reign.

For seven weeks after his enlightenment, the Buddha meditated. During the sixth week while he was meditating by the pond of the Naga King Mucalinda, it rained heavily and the countryside began to flood. The Naga King not wanting the Buddha's meditation to be disturbed, raised the Buddha off the ground with the coils of his body and protected him from the rain with his many heads. (see ACSAA slide 7062 for the Buddha seated under Mucalinda at Wat Ko Keo Suttharam. Dated 1734)

8123 The Conversion of Yasa and a miracle. Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

After the first sermon, the Buddha's first lay convert was Yasa. He was the son of a wealthy money lender, who, like the Buddha, sought more than the life of luxury that he had been born to and left home. He is one of the six disciples watching the miracle in the following scene.

8124 The Conversion of the Younger Kassapas and the Visit to Sri Lanka. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

The lower left section presents the younger Kassapas in their hermitage. The Buddha had already converted the three Elder Kassapas and they had discarded their old robes into the river when they put on the robes of the Buddha's disciples. When these floated downstream to the Younger Kassapas' hermitage, there was a great disturbance. When they encountered the Buddha, they were also converted. The upper and righthand portion of this scene describes the Buddha's visit to Sri Lanka. When he was staying with the Kassapas in their hermitage, a festival was held for one of the older Kassapas. The Buddha thought that it would be best he left during the festival, so he decided to visit Sri Lanka. In the upper left the Buddha is shown flying on a lotus bud to Sri Lanka. At this time Sri Lanka was inhabited by many demons. He hovered over them until they agreed to give him a place to land. They permitted him to land on a spot of ground the size of a small rug. However, when the Buddha sat down, flames spread in all directions from the carpet, covering all of the island. The demons leapt into the sea. The Buddha rescued them by extinguishing the flames and moving the island to pick up the demons who had jumped off it. The Buddha then began to preach to an audience of gods (in the upper left corner). One of the gods asked for a relic of the Buddha, so the Buddha gave him a lock of his hair that the gods placed in a chedi and worshiped it. (see ACSAA slide 7073 for the depiction of Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka in the late 17th century Samnak Phra Buddha kosachan)

8125 King Jambupati Visiting the Crowned Buddha. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

A monarch named Jambupati would not listen to the Buddha's teachings because he did not seem important enough. The Buddha therefore created a magnificent city and a splendid palace complete with a white elephant out of nothing. He garbed himself in the trappings of a cakkavattin and then he invited King Jambupati to visit him. Jambupati arrived by boat and can be seen on the dock in the lower lefthand corner of the scene. He is seen again seated before the palace looking up at the Buddha. The Buddha preached that worldly possessions are not important, spiritual attainment is much more important. Jambupati listened, renounced his throne and became a monk. He eventually attained enlightenment.

8126 The resolution of the quarrel over irrigation water. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok, First to Third Reigns.

During an extended drought, the Sakyas, the family of the Buddha's father, quarreled over the division of irrigation water with their neighbors, the Koliyas, the family of the Buddha's mother. They were about engage in battle when the Buddha learned of the problem. He appeared on the scene and resolved the dispute, converting many people.

8127 Overview of the south wall of the Bot. Wat Ko Kaeo Suttharam, Petchburi. Dated 2277 B.E. (1734 A.D.).

The scene to the left depicts the Buddha confronting the heretics at Savatthi who are represented as Moghuls (see slide 8130). The next scene to the right depicts the Buddha multiplying himself in the mango tree at Savatthi (see slides 8130 and 8131). The next scene represents Ananda subduing the Elephant called Thanapala Hatthi while a group of Frenchmen, including a Jesuit missionary in the robes of a Thai Buddhist monk, look on (for a detail of the Frenchmen, see ACSAA slide 7064). The final scene on the right occurs in the Palileyaka forest. When the Buddha was meditating away from his disciples, he became hungry. A monkey offered him a honeycomb and elephant offered him a lotus leaf containing water. The lower portion possibly represents a theme similar to that of Kubera, the god of wealth and good fortune. (a close up of this scene is reproduced in ACSAA slide 7063) Above the scenes, Vidhyadharas (celestial hermits) of every nationality worship the main Buddha image.

8128 Mogallana overcoming the Naga King Nantopananda. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

When the Buddha was on his way to the Tavatimsa heaven with his monks to preach to his mother, he passed over the head of the Naga King Nantopananda. This enraged the Naga and he set out an ambush to waylay the Buddha on his return from heaven. Mogallana, one of the Buddha's two great disciples, changed himself into a serpent and challenged Nantopananda. They fought as serpents, but Mogallana was unable to overcome the naga. Mogallana then changed into a garuda, the traditional enemy of the nagas and quickly vanquished Nantopananda. Nantopananda was later converted by the Buddha.

8129 The Battle of Mogallana and Nantopananda. Mogallana appears as the red serpent, Nantopananda as the green. Detail of 8128. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

8130 The Miracles at Savatthi. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns. (to the right of the panel shown in slide 8128).

The Buddha announced that a miracle would occur at the foot of a mango tree at Savatthi, home to many people that derided his teachings. When the heretics learned of this prophecy, they bought up all of the mango orchards in the city and cut down all of the trees. They then erected a platform (seen on the right of the slide) and began to perform magical tricks. The Buddha on seeing this, asked a gardener to plant a single mango seed which immediately grew into a mature tree with ripe fruit. Sakka (Indra), the god who is the protector of the true teachings of the Buddha, then unleashed a storm against the platform of the heretics, a bolt of lightning struck the platform and it fell down. Sakka can be seen above the platform ready to throw another thunderbolt. A short while later the Buddha rose into the air to perform the prophesied miracle: he rose standing into the air and caused two seated images of himself and two reclining images to appear.

8131 The miracle at Savatthi and the purchase of Prince Jeta's garden. In the scene of the meditation on the asubha kammattana atthika in the Bot of Wat Somanat Vihan, Bangkok. Fourth-Fifth Reign.

The upper portion of this painting is inspired by the plates of the railing medallions of the Bharhut Stupa that were published by James Cunningham in 1879. The left portion shows the miracle at Savatthi with the just watered mango seed shooting upwards as a mature tree with fruit, toppling the pavilion

of the heretics. The Right hand portion shows Anathapindika covering the Garden of Prince Jeta with gold to purchase what was to become the Jetavana monastery. 8132 The descent from the Tavatimsa Heaven. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Region.

The Buddha is shown descending from the Tavatimsa Heaven where he has just finished preaching the Dhamma to his mother who died when he was just one week old. Sakka had built three ladders for his descent: one of jewels for the Buddha, one of gold for himself and one of silver for Phra Narai.

8133 Mara asking the Buddha to enter the state of nibbana. Phra Thi Nang Phutthaisawan, National Museum Bangkok. First to Third Reigns.

During the last rainy season retreat, the Buddha became ill with stomach problems. As Mara had been anxious to be rid of the Buddha even before his enlightenment, he appeared to ask the Buddha to enter the state of nibbana immediately. This can be seen in the top two left hand scenes. The retreat was near the great city of Vesali: at the lower left a prince or important person is being told about the Buddha's presence. At the top right the King of Vesali orders food to be taken to the Buddha and his disciples. In the lower right portion, people make offerings to the Buddha. In the center right portion, some water buffaloes are shown drinking from a pond of water. As reflections are rarely seen in Thai painting, perhaps their reflections can be viewed as part of the illusion of existence and the drinking from the lotus pond, the imbibing of the teachings of the Buddha.

8134 The Buddha's Last Meal Wat Kanmatuyaram, Bangkok, Bot. Fifth Reign.

The lower right portion of this panel most likely illustrates the offerings of food by the King of Vesali to the Buddha and his monks. Common people also place alms in their begging bowls as they leave the palace. The scene in the upper left depicts the house of the blacksmith Cunda. The Buddha accepted the opportunity to stay in Cunda's mango grove and the offer of a meal for himself and his followers from Cunda. The Buddha realized that one of this dishes containing pork was spoiled and requested that Cunda offer it to him only and then bury the rest so that no one else could eat it. The unfortunate pig is shown being carried through the gate of Cunda's house. After the meal in the mango grove, the Buddha became very ill. He told his disciples not to blame Cunda for his death because as Sujata's meal had enabled him to achieve enlightenment, so had Cunda's meal enabled him to enter the state of nibbana .

8135 The Buddha preaching to his mother in the Tavatimsa Heaven, The Parinibbana and the Funeral of the Buddha. Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

The upper left scene shows the Buddha preaching to his mother and the Gods in the Tavatimsa Heaven. The Lower Right hand scene shows the Buddha lying on his side between two sal trees entering the state of nibbana. Even though he is close to death, the Buddha answers the questions of the hermit ascetic Subhadda who became his last convert. The cremation pyre of the Buddha can be seen in the upper right portion of the panel.

8136 The Parinibbana and The Buddha's Funeral. Wat Kanmatuyaram, Bangkok, Bot. Fifth Reign.

The upper left scene depicts the Parinibbana of the Buddha, the lower center scene depicts the Buddha's Funeral. The funeral is represented as a Fifth Reign Thai royal cremation. The cremation pyre is built in the form known as the Phra Men or a model of Mt. Meru. It is surrounded by screens depicting the Ramakien, the Thai version of the Ramayana. Around the pyre the king has thrown a festival. To the rear, acrobats perform atop towers. In the lower left foreground a puppet theater performs, in the lower right female dancers. To the right of the funeral pyre, the lakhon drama based on the Ramakien is performed.

8137 The Division of the Relics. Wat Dusitaram, Thonburi, Bot. First Reign.

The Eight Buddhist kings of the world come to Kusinara to obtain a portion of the relics of the Buddha and are shown leaving with the relics in golden

urns. While the Brahmin Dona claimed only the bowl used to divide the relics for himself, Sakka saw that he had secreted the tooth relic in his hair and is shown descending to take it away. .

8138 Sakka retrieving the Tooth Relic. Detail 8137. Wat Dusitaram, Thonburi, Bot. First Reign.

8139 The Buddha returns to Kapilavatthu to preach to his father. Wat Panataram (Wat Mai), Surat Thani, Bot. Fifth-Sixth Reign.

During the first year after the Buddha's enlightenment, his father heard that he had become a Buddha and invited him to return to Kapilavatthu. When the Buddha came he preached to his father and relatives. Many of them were converted immediately, but his father was not converted until many years later, shortly before his death.

8140 The Buddha preaching in Benares. Wat Tha Sang, Chainat. Sixth Reign. Painted by the Monk In.

This scene most likely depicts the Buddha preaching in Benares shortly after his First Sermon in the deer park at Sarnath which is near Benares. Paintings in this unique style by the Monk In survive at the two temples where he resided.

## THE TOSACHAT

The Thai call the last ten birth stories, Dasa Jataka, of the Buddha before his final birth as Sakyamuni the Tosachat. They correspond to the Mahanipata section of the Pali collection of Jatakas, although the Thai have changed their order of presentation. Each jataka story within the Tosachat illustrates one of the ten Paramita or principle virtues to which all should aspire.

### The Temiya Jataka (The Muga-pakka Jataka) The Paramita of Determination, Adhitthana Paramita

In this life, the future Buddha is born as Prince Temiya, the son of the King of Kasi (Benares). When he was still very young he witnessed his father dispensing justice to some robbers. Remembering a previous life when he had ruled as the King of Kasi, he recalled that his actions during his reign resulted in a rebirth entailing several thousand years in hell. Fearful of becoming King again, he listens to the advice of a goddess to remain motionless and not to speak. In this manner he would not be crowned King. Everything possible was done to evoke a response from him. When he turned sixteen, the court astrologers pronounced that if he did not exert himself in seven days, he was to be taken to the cremation ground, knocked unconscious and buried. On the way to the cremation ground, Sakka tricked the charioteer into taking the wrong road. When he stopped and began to dig the grave, Temiya leaped up and grabbing the chariot by its shaft, swung it around his head. He then announced his plans to become an ascetic. After the charioteer brought him the news, the King visited his son, listened to his teachings and gave up his throne to become an ascetic himself.

8141 Overview of Temiya Jataka. Wat Yai Intaram, Cholburi, Bot. 4th Reign. North wall, west panel.

8142 Temiya witnessing his father, The King of Kasi, pronouncing judgment on a criminal. Detail 8141. Wat Yai Intaram, Cholburi, Bot. 4th Reign. North wall, west panel. (For detail of attempts to frighten Temiya see ACSAA slide #7075, from the . 17th c. paintings in the Samnak Phra Buddhakosachan, Ayuthya)

8143 Temiya twirling the chariot around his head. Detail 8141. Wat Yai Intaram, Cholburi, Bot. 4th Reign. North wall, west panel.

8144 Temiya as an ascetic preaching to his father. Detail 8141. Wat Yai Intaram, Cholburi, Bot. 4th Reign. North wall, west panel. (For a detail of the attempts to frighten Temiya see ACSAA slide 7075, from the 17th c. paintings in the Samnak Phra Buddhakosachan, Ayuthya)

### THE MAHAJANAKA JATAKA The Paramita of Energy, Viriya Paramita

The King of Mithila died and was succeeded by his eldest son, while his younger son became viceroy. The younger son was found guilty of maladministration and imprisoned. He escaped, raised an army and killed his brother to usurp the throne. The rightful queen, pregnant, managed to escape to a foreign country where she was adopted by a wealthy Brahmin. She gave birth to a son, called Mahajanaka after his grandfather. When he turned sixteen, he set sail on a ship for Suvannabhumi. A terrible storm arose and his ship sank. After swimming alone for seven days, he was saved by Manimekhala, the goddess of the sea. She flew through the air with him and left him in a mango grove in Mithila. In the meantime, the usurping prince had died and his daughter was to be given to the man who could succeed at a number of trials. As all were unsuccessful in winning her hand, the royal chariot was allowed to wander throughout the kingdom

to choose a possible king. It stopped before the sleeping Mahajanaka. The usurper's daughter married Mahajanaka and after a long and peaceful reign, they both retired to the forest and became ascetics.

8145 Overview. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

8146 The ocean goddess Manimekhala rescues Mahajanaka from the shipwreck. Detail 8145. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

8147 Mahajanaka asleep in a mango grove on the outskirts of the city of Mithila. Detail 8145. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

8148 Detail 8147. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

8149 Mahajanaka Jataka. Overview. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi, Vihan. Fourth Reign.

SAMA JATAKA  
The Paramita of Loving Kindness, Metta Paramita

Two hunters in a remote village married their son and daughter together. The children, are married, but because they are both well along the path to enlightenment, they do not consummate their union and live as ascetics in a hermitage. Sakka was concerned for them and convinced them to have a son that will be conceived by the husbands' touch. The future Buddha is born as their son, Sama. When he reaches the age of sixteen, his parents were blinded by the poison of a spitting cobra and Sama was obliged to keep constant watch over them. One day, when he went to fetch water from the well accompanied by two stags, he was shoot by Piliyakkha, the King of Benares who is hunting in the forest with a poison arrow. A goddess revealed his true identity to the King, who, overcome by remorse vowed to take care of Sama's parents. As the three viewed Sama's body, Sakka removed the poison from his body and he recovered. The parents' tears restored their sight and Sama preached to the King of Kasi.

8150 Sama Jataka. Overview. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. North wall.

8151 Sama Jataka. Overview. Wat Bang Yikan, Thonburi. Late Third Reign. North wall.

8152 King Piliyakkha of Kasi shoots an arrow at Sama thinking he is a deer. Detail 8150. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. North wall.

8153 Sama being hit by the King's arrow. Detail 8150. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. North wall.

8154 The remorseful King returns Sama's water pot to his blind parents at their hermitage. Detail 8150. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. North wall.

8155 Sama's parents and King Paliyakkha weep over Sama's corpse along with deities and forest kinnaris. Detail 8151. Wat Bang Yikan, Thonburi. Late Third Reign. North Wall

NEMI JATAKA (NIMI JATAKA)  
The Paramita of Renunciation, Nekkhamma Paramita

King Nemi was the ruler of Mithila. He was a fervent observer of Buddhist law, but he was unsure as to which was better: to live a holy life as an ascetic or to give alms? His anxiety attracted the attention of Sakka who informed him that the life of the ascetic is the most suited for achieving a better rebirth on the path to nibbana. When Sakka returned to the Tavatimsa heaven, the highest heaven of sensual delight, he mentioned his conversation to the other gods. Amazed by the King's character, they request that Sakka invite him to visit them in the Tavatimsa heaven. Sakka sent his charioteer Matali to Nemi, but Nemi first asked to see the different hells. He arrived in Sakka's city where he spent one week conversing with the gods. When he returned to his city, he lectured to the townspeople about the rewards of proper actions and the punishment awaiting evildoers. When he grew old, he abdicated his throne and became an ascetic.

8156 Nemi Jataka. Overview. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall.

8157 Sakka's heaven. Detail 8156. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall. Nemi preaches while Sakka and his consort, along with Brahma and other deities listen attentively. However, as this is the highest heaven of sensual pleasure, some gods ignore the teachings and play in the heavenly garden.

8158 Nemi preaching while Sakka and his consort listen. Detail 8156. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall.

5859 Gods playing. Detail 8156. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall.

5860 Gods playing. Detail 8156. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall.

5861 Manimekhala, the Ocean Goddess. Detail 8156. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall. Running from a demon who is after her pearl, she is located in the sky above the twisted ribbon signifying the distance in space and time lying between heaven and hell.

8162 Nemi touring hell before he proceeds to the heaven of the Thirty-three. Detail 8156. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Thong Yu. North wall.

8163 Nemi Jataka. Overview. Wat Yai Intaram, Cholburi, Bot. 4th Reign. Middle of north wall

MAHASODHA JATAKA (THE MAHA-UMMAGA JATAKA)  
The Paramita of Wisdom, The Vanna Paramita

King Videha of Mithila had a dream about the birth of a sage whose knowledge would surpass that of the four at his court. On searching his kingdom he found the young Mahasodha, the future Buddha, who had built a beautiful pavilion with just the help of his playmates. He was appointed as the King's fifth counselor but as he displayed greater wisdom than the others, they grew to hate him. When he became sixteen he married a very wise woman. Shortly after this he discovered that each of the counselors has a terrible secret: one had killed a courtier, another had leprosy, another was possessed by an evil spirit and the last had stolen one of the king's most precious jewels. The four counselors escaped banishment only because Mahasodha intervened on their behalf. Through a parrot spy, Mahasodha then found out that King Bhramadatta and his counselor Kevatta were preparing to attack the city. When they came with their army, they found that Mahasodha had prepared it to withstand the longest siege. When the attacking armies had settled down for a siege, Mahasodha asked King Videha for one of his great jewels. Mahasodha then went outside of the city to speak with Kevatta. He offered the gem to Kevatta as a gift, dropping it on the ground, when Kevatta bent over to pick it up, he spoke very loudly so that all could hear, that the aged teacher should not do obeisance to him because he was younger. When the opposing army saw that their great sage was apparently paying homage to Mahasodha became afraid and fled from the city walls. Through this and other types of tricks, Mahasodha wore down the opposing army. Realizing that an attack would fail, they sought to lure King Videha into a trap by describing the beauty of Brahmadatta's daughter and how a marriage would be advantageous to all. Mahasodha was warned of a plot by his parrot spy again and he set about planning to overcome any treachery. Some distance from King Brahmadatta's city he built a magnificent palace. Underneath it he secretly dug a passage to the Ganges river. When King Videha came to meet King Brahmadatta's daughter, he received them in Mahasodha's splendid new palace. The trap was sprung, but Mahasodha captured the visiting princess and her mother. He then led them and King Videha to safety and his waiting fleet on the Ganges river. King Videha married Brahmadatta's daughter. Shortly thereafter King Brahmadatta realized the error of his actions and listened to the counsel of Mahasodha.

8164 Mahasodha Jataka. Overview. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Khong Pe. Middle of north wall.

8165 Mahasodha jataka. Overview. Wat Bang Yikan, Thonburi. Late Third Reign. Middle of north wall.

8166 His city under attack, King Videha in a pose designating deep sadness, weeps. His four Brahmin sages confer to his right. Detail 8165. Wat Bang Yikan, Thonburi. Late Third Reign. Middle of north wall.

8167 Mahasodha holds off the attacking armies of 101 kingdoms. Detail 8165. Wat Bang Yikan, Thonburi. Late Third Reign. Middle of north wall.

8168 Mahasodha tricks Kevatta, the evil minister of the attacking King Bhramadatta. Detail 8164. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Khong Pe. Middle of north wall. Mahasodha pretends to drop a rare jewel at his feet and when the greedy Kevatta gets down on his knees to look for it, Mahasodha pushes him down to the ground. As Kevatta was perceived to have great magical power, the attacking armies interpreted his apparent submission to Mahasodha as a sign that Mahasodha was invincible and they fled.

8169 A European adventurer in the employment of the King Videha with Moghul soldiers in the foreground. Detail 8164. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Khong Pe. Middle of north wall.

8170 King Brahmadata's army. Europeans attacking the city of Videha while the sage Kevatta flees. Detail 8164. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Khong Pe. Middle of north wall.

8171 Europeans in the service of King Brahmadata. Detail 8164. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. Third Reign, 1830. Painted by Khru Khong Pe. Middle of north wall.

BHURIDATTA JATAKA  
The Paramita of Moral Conduct, Sila Paramita

A young prince, Brahmadata ( not the previous story's Brahmadata), was exiled by his father, the king of Benares, and went to live on the banks of the Yamuna river. He fell in love with a nagi, a serpent, and they had two children. When his father died he went to rule in Benares while the nagi returned to the subterranean world of the nagas. Later his daughter married the king of the nagas and they had four sons and a stepdaughter. One of these sons, Datta, was the future Buddha. Sakka gave Datta the name Bhuridatta because "his wisdom was as broad as the earth (bhuri). He wished to be reborn in the realm of the gods and accordingly practices ascetic observances. One day an outcast brahmin and his son were hunting in the forest when they came across a group of nagis who were dancing for Bhuridatta. They were invited to visit the world of the nagas, and were given many gifts when they returned home. His wife scolded him for not asking for Bhuridatta's "jewel that increases desire." They set off again and encountered a brahmin named Alambayana who had a magic charm that could place the most powerful of nagas totally in the holder's power. The brahmin obtained the jewel they were seeking and they made a bargain to lead him to Bhuridatta's forest retreat. When the bargain was completed, the jewel fell from the evil Brahmin's hand and rolled in a crack in the earth to find its way back to the land of the nagas. As the vow has been made, Alambayana was lead to Bhuridatta's retreat. He was easily able to capture Bhuridatta and place him in a basket as Bhuridatta had taken a vow never to resist violence, even if he was to be killed. Alambayana then set off for the court of the King of Benares, Bhuridatta's uncle, to display him in a snake charming show. In the meantime his mother had a dream about what had happened and sent his three brothers off to search for him. They came across Bhuridatta as he was being made to perform for the King in the market of Benares. One of Bhuridatta's brothers, in human guise, challenged Alambayana to prove the superiority of his magic powers. Bhuridatta's brother wins the contest, all assumed their normal forms and the King recognized his nephews.

8172 Bhuridatta Jataka. Overview. Wat Phawanapirataram, Thonburi. Fifth Reign.

8173 Bhuridatta Jataka. Overview. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi. Fourth Reign.

CANDAKUMARA JATAKA (THE KHANDAHALA JATAKA)  
The Paramita of Patience, Khanti Paramita

The future Buddha was born as Prince Canda, the son of King Ekaraja of Pupphavati. He was renowned for his patience and wisdom. A powerful Brahmin at court, Khandahala, hated him for his popularity with the people of the city, the result of Canda opposition to his own bad judgments. One night the king had a dream in which he saw heaven and the gods who dwelled there. He asked the Brahmin what it was necessary for him to do to visit heaven before he died. The evil Khandahala, seeing an opportunity for revenge, advised him that all he had to do was to sacrifice his sons, his queens, the cities great merchants and most precious possessions. The king ordered that the sacrifices be carried out against the advice of all of his other counselors. On the day of the sacrifice, when the victims were assembled at the place of sacrifice, Canda's wife made a prayer to Indra, the king of the gods. Indra appeared and stopped the ceremony by breaking the umbrellas that consecrated the site. When the ceremony was miraculously stopped, the citizens and the victims turned on Khandahala and the king. Khandahala was killed and the King banished into exile. Canda was then chosen to become king.

8174 Candakumara Jataka. Overview. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi. Fourth Reign.

8175 The freeing of all the animals that were to be sacrificed and the punishment of the wicked Brahmins by the city's population. Detail 8174. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi. Fourth Reign.

8176 Candakumara Jataka: Sakka striking the parasols to stop the false sacrifice. Overview. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall. At Wat Suwannaram both the Candakumara and the Narada Jatakas are reduced to their essential elements and portrayed in the same panel.

8177 Sakka striking the parasol. Detail 8176. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

NARADA JATAKA (The Mahanaradakassapa Jataka)  
The Paramita of Equanimity, Uppekkha Paramita

The king of Mithila, Angati was a wise and just ruler. However, despite his having 16,000 wives he only had one daughter whom he loved dearly. On night during a feast he asked his general, minister and brahmin what would be the best entertainment for the evening. The general proposed new conquests, the minister dance and song and the brahmin proposed visiting a holy man. The king liked the brahmin's suggestion and went to visit a holy man named Guna. Guna was really a trickster who taught many false doctrines such as there are no heavens or hell and both good and evil actions have no effect. These doctrines are supported by the king's general and the king ceased to rule act virtuously. Later, when the king's daughter Ruja went to get alms for the poor, her request was denied. She went to the king and tried to convince him to correct his actions, he refused. The argument continued all night. The future Buddha who had been reborn as the Brahmanic god Narada Kassapa observed this argument and intervened. He appeared in the guise of an ascetic over the palace. He preached the true doctrine to the king who listened intently, recognizing his error in listening to his advisors and the false holy man. After achieving his goal in instructing the king, Narada Kassapa revealed his true identity and flew in all of his splendor to the heaven of Brahma. This is the scene most often represented in Thai mural painting. This Jataka also pre-sages the conversion of Kassapa of Uruvela in the life of the Buddha.

8178 Narada Jataka. Overview. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

8179 Narada descending to King Angati. Detail 8178. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. North wall, east end.

THE VIDHURA JATAKA (THE VIDHURAPANDITA JATAKA)  
The Paramita of Truthfulness, The Sacca Paramita

Four of the most powerful rulers of heaven and earth were trying to decide who was the most virtuous. Because they were Dhananjaya, the king of Indapatta, Sakka, the king of the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods, Varuna, the king of the nagas and Yenateyya, the king of the garudas, they could not agree. They decide to have the pandit (wise man) Vidhura, a minister in the court of Dhananjaya and the future Buddha, to decide the case. He listened to their reasoning and pronounced them all equal in virtue. The kings accepted his judgment and returned to their various realms. The queen of the naga King Varuna, Queen Vimala, wanted to meet Vidhura but was unable to ask him directly to come to her because of her position. She therefore pretended to be ill, declaring that only Vidhura's "heart" could cure her. Varuna promised the hand of his sister, Irandati, in marriage to whoever could bring Queen Vimala Vidhura's "heart". The yaksha Punnaka was in love with Irandati and set off to fulfill the quest. He challenged king Dhananjaya to a chess game, offering his magic horse and jewel as stakes. The king could not win against Punnaka's magic powers and lost the match. Punnaka demanded Vidhura as his prize. Punnaka flew off dragging Vidhura after his magic horse to kill him on a remote mountain and thus obtain his heart. No matter what he tried to kill Vidhura, Vidhura's merit protected him. Finally Punnaka listened to Vidhura's preaching and realized that the heart that Queen Vimala wanted was not the fleshy heart of Vidhura, but the "heart" of his wisdom. Vidhura then had Punnaka take him to the reign of the nagas where he preached to King Varuna and Queen Vimala and Punnaka married Irandati. He then returned to the service of King Dhananjaya in Indapatta.

8180 Vidhura Jataka. Overview. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi. Fourth Reign.

8181 Punnaka, the King of the Yakshas and the Naga Princess as she asks for Vidhura's heart. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. 1830.

8182 Vidhura and Punnaka playing dice. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi. Fourth Reign. Detail Slide 8180.

8183 Vidhura Jataka. Central Section. Wat Chong Non Si, Ubosoth. L. 17th century.

8184 Vidhura being dragged through the air behind Punnaka's flying horse. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. 1830.

8185 Punnaka throwing Vidhura off of a mountain top. Wat Nai Rong, Thonburi. Fourth Reign. Detail Slide 8180

8186 Punnaka listening to Vidhura preach the Dhamma. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi. 1830.

## VESSANTARA JATAKA

### The Paramita of Perfect Generosity, Dana Paramita

The Vessantara Jataka is called in Thai Mahachat, the Great Birth. This was the final incarnation of the Future Buddha before his incarnation as Prince Siddhatta. It is the longest of the Jataka stories and traditionally occupied a prominent place in the teaching of moral values to the populace. It became the source of inspiration for many Thai Buddhist folk arts and religious festivals. If only one Jataka story was to be illustrated in a temple, this Jataka would inevitably be chosen.

The Buddha was born to King Sanjaya of the city of Sivi. He was born able to speak and when he was eight, he vowed to be extremely generous in giving alms. When he was sixteen he married Maddi and they had two children, a boy, Jali, and a girl, Kanhajina. One year there was a terrible drought in the neighboring kingdom of Kalinga. Eight brahmins came to him to request the use of his white elephant, the symbol of a universal monarch or cakkavattin, which had the power to make rain. He agreed and gave the brahmins from the neighboring city the symbol of his merit and the cities good fortune. His subjects were furious and demanded his abdication from the throne and banishment. Before leaving the city with his family, he distributed his possessions to the needy. As they proceeded away from the city in their chariot, they met four brahmins who arrived too late to receive any of the possessions that he gave away. They asked for the horses and were given them. Some gods then assumed the guise of deer and drew the chariot further away from the city. A fifth brahmin appeared and asked for the chariot. The gods disappeared and Vessantara and Maddi continued on foot, carrying their children. After traveling a great distance they arrive at a hermitage prepared for them by Vissukamma, the master builder of the gods. Vessantara and his family moved into the hermitage and happily began living a life of meditation and contemplation.

In the meantime, a poor and elderly brahmin named Jujaka had married a young and pretty girl. As he had no wealth, she was forced to do all of the menial chores. The neighboring wives made fun of her and tormented her constantly. She complained to Jujaka about this and asked him to go to Vessantara to obtain slaves. Jujaka went off and after a number of misadventures finally arrived at Vessantara's hermitage. Maddi had gone to fetch water and Sakka assumed the form of a pair of lions to keep her from returning to the hermitage. Vessantara gives away their children to Jujaka who returns to the city. Sakka then decides to further test Vessantara by assuming the guise of a brahmin and asking for Maddi. Vessantara was ready to give her away when Sakka assumed his true form and offered to grant the couple anything that they wanted. In the meantime, Jujaka returned to Sivi where the children were immediately recognized. Jujaka was beaten and taken before the king who then ransomed the children from Jujaka. Jujaka took the money and soon died from debauchery. The king then sets out with Vessantara's children at the head of a great procession to find Vessantara and Maddi. When Vessantara and Maddi are reunited with their children, all present are overcome with emotion. The king offered the crown once again to Vessantara and they all returned to the capital. After a long and prosperous reign, Vessantara died and ascended to the Tushita Heaven where he remained until his final incarnation as the Buddha.

8187 King Vessantara giving away all of his possessions, including his white elephant. Wat Thong Noppakhun, Thonburi. Fourth Reign.

8188 The eight Brahmins from the city of Kalinga return home with the white elephant. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8189 Having been banished from his city for giving away the white elephant, Vessantara leaves in a chariot drawn by horses. A short distance from the city, he is asked for the horses and gives them freely away. Seeing this the gods

descend and in the guise of deer, draw the chariot. Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

8190 Jujaka's attractive young wife is teased by her neighbors for not having any servants to do her work for her. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8191 Jujaka in the wilderness. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8192 Jujaka asking the way to Vessantara's hermitage from a ascetic hermit. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8193 To the left, Sakka in the guise of two jungle cats preventing Maddi from returning to Vessantara's hermitage while he gives their children away. In the center portion, Sakka reveals his true identity to Vessantara and Maddi. Wat Ratchasittaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign.

8194 Sakka preventing Maddi from returning home. Detail of 8193. Wat Bang Yikan, Thonburi.

8195 Sakka wishing to test Vessantara even further, dons the guise of a brahmin and asks Vessantara for his wife. Vessantara gives her to Sakka, formalizing the gift by pouring water over Sakka's hands. It is this water poured when making a gift that Torani wrings out of her hair during the Maravijaya. Wat Mai Thepnimit, Thonburi, Bot. Fourth Reign.

8196 Jujaka being beaten when his two new slaves are recognized as Vessantara's children. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8197 Jujaka and Vessantara's children before the king. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8198 In the background, Jujaka uses the ransom given by the king for the freedom of Vessantara's children to lead a short but decadent life. In the foreground, the king, his wife and Vessantara's Children prepare to mount a procession of elephants to bring Vessantara and Maddi back from the wilderness. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.

8199 The Royal Procession to Vessantara's hermitage. Wat Bot Sam Sen, Bangkok, Bot. First Reign.

8200 The reunion of Vessantara, Maddi and their children. The king invites them to return from exile. Wat Suwannaram, Thonburi, Bot. Third Reign, 1830. South wall.