

**Commonalities of Jain and Theravada Buddhist iconographies of Sri Lanka: A Sanskrit textual intervention?**

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The Theravada Buddhist iconography as observed in the murals of the Buddhist Image Houses in Sri Lanka shares many common features with the Jaina Iconography seen in the '*KalpaSūtra*' manuscripts of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries of Western India – specially in narrating miraculous scenes. Some similarities in the narrations of the birth of Prince Siddhārtha and Mahāvīra may go back to early Buddhist and Jainanarratives structures of North India. The mural tradition of the Central Kandyan Period (*Uḍaraṭ aSaṃpradāya*), beginning with the conferring of the Higher Ordination to monks of the hill country about mid18<sup>th</sup> century, does not seem to focus on the miraculous narrations depicting the conception of Prince Siddhārtha, nor scenes leading to the 'Great Renunciation' (*Mahāparinibbāna*). But the tradition of miniature paintings of the '*KalpaSūtra*' devotes many scenes on the miraculous conception of Mahāvīra.

This comparative study is based on the research hypothesis, that the scenes from the life of Prince Siddhārthain Sri Lanka, seen in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Buddhist Image Houses were influenced by Sanskrit texts such as the '*LalitaVistaraSūtra*' (dated to about the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) or Aśvaghōsa's '*Buddha Carita*' (dated about 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) because the PaliTripiṭaka, which was written down about the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD in Sri Lanka, does not contain information about the above mentioned miraculous scenes. Taking a selection of key scenes from Jaina and Buddhist iconography, I argue that the commonalities between the two visual traditions go back to independent textual sources. This leads us to question if Sri Lanka received iconographies for the life of Prince Siddhārtha and Buddha from Amarapura and Hamsawathi(Burma) in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of Amarapura Chapter (*KalyānivaṃśaNikāya*) in the Southern and Western Maritime Region of the Low Country, in Sri Lanka (*PahataRaṭ a*) based on a later texts, influenced by the aforesaid Sanskrit texts.

Key Words: Buddhist and Jaina Iconography, Kalpa Sutra, LalithaVistara Sutra

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