



Yale MACMILLAN CENTER  
*Council on East Asian Studies*

## International Workshop

### “Miraculous Images in Global Perspectives”

Centre Paul Langevin, Aussois, France  
20-23 June 2022

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## Abstracts

Balzamo, Nicolas

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**Title: *Locus et Imago*: Some Thoughts on the Relationship Between Miraculous Images and the Place of Their Veneration (Western Europe, 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

A manuscript composed at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century reports that an icon of the Virgin Mary kept at Santa Maria in Tempulo, in Rome, attracted the Pope's attention: arguing that such an ancient icon attributed to Saint Luke's brush deserved to be venerated elsewhere than what was just a modest abbey church, the Pope ordered it to be transported to his palace in the Lateran. The next morning after the order was executed and the piece moved to the palace, it was found that the image had disappeared and gone back to its original place in its abbey church. This story is in fact the first occurrence of a phenomenon that became a widespread genre of a miracle repeatedly re-told in sources from the Middle Ages and modern times—namely, those of recalcitrant images that refuse to be moved from one place to another, choosing themselves the place where the faithful must worship them. Such stories cannot be considered as mere "popular" legends or clerical inventions intended to enhance the prestige of the objects concerned, but reveal the fundamental link between the miraculous image and the place where it is housed. Place is indeed a key element in the individuality of the image, this set of characters that distinguishes it from the mass of analogous objects and justifies a preferential cult towards it. It is also what allowed the faithful to build an exclusive relationship with a very particular image, to make this image the patron saint of the community and to confer a local identity on the celestial being it represented. Finally, the question of the location of miraculous images has a significant theological dimension. In order to overcome the theoretical difficulties caused by the concept of miraculous image, theologians of the Middle Ages and modern times frequently put forward arguments on the significance of place, explaining that God had chosen certain places over others to manifest his miracles there. Based on a corpus of some fifty examples from France and Italy

(from the eleventh to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries), this contribution aims to shed light on multiple facets of the interplay between places and images as well as the different issues underlying these relationships.

## Charleux, Isabelle

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### **Title: Manjushri at Wutaishan: Miraculous Statues at a Buddhist Pilgrimage Site**

This paper introduces tales about miraculous images, their relation to apparitions of the bodhisattva, and corresponding images located in a specific temple, on Wutai Mountain, a sacred mountain that was identified as the abode of bodhisattva Manjushri and became a major international Buddhist pilgrimage (Shanxi Province (China)). During a two-millennium layered history starting with Daoism followed by Chinese Buddhism and later Tibetan Buddhism, miracle tales were developed, remade and embellished in the modern period and are still written, told and depicted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper will highlight the transformation of stories through time and also through languages when translated into Tibetan and Mongolian. I would like to show how the tales aimed (and still aim) at attracting pilgrims (and their donations) to worship specific statues in monasteries of Wutaishan, in the context of a competition between more than a hundred temples and monasteries.

## Fabre, Pierre-Antoine

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### **Title: La fresque de Saint Gilles dans l'église Saint-Nicolas de Civray: image miraculée, image d'un miracle, image miraculeuse ?**

La fresque consacrée à Saint Gilles dans l'église Saint Nicolas de Civray a été retrouvée au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle sous les décorations réalisées dans cette église sur le modèle des restaurations du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui visaient à restituer le système décoratif des monuments romans, dans l'inspiration des entreprises de Viollet le Duc et de Paul Abadie. Cette fresque propose donc trois types d'interrogations: d'une part, pour ce qui concerne la fresque elle-même et l'iconographie du miracle attaché à la genèse de la sainteté de Gilles ; d'autre part pour ce qui concerne les conditions de sa redécouverte ; et enfin pour ce qui pourrait toucher l'efficacité spécifique de cette fresque dans la longue durée de son histoire et des pratiques dévotionnelles liées à l'église Saint-Nicolas. C'est entre ces trois dimensions que cette contribution tentera de se situer.

## Gazizova Valeria

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**Title: Powerful objects, numinous places and distribution of the miraculous: Strategies of religious continuity in a post-atheist context (a case of Kalmykia)**

Based on fieldwork research in Kalmykia throughout 2010s, the paper will look at social memories, local lore and contemporary practices and accounts of experiencing the miraculous centered on what one may broadly term “powerful objects”. These include relics, religious art objects and images, and various ritual implements whether housed in monasteries or used by individual non-institutional practitioners. Why and how do certain material objects become concentrations of miraculous power and what kinds of efficacy are such things imbued with? I shall discuss diverse types of agencies of the miraculous that religious objects are invested with among the Kalmyks – such as protection and healing, retribution and punishment, foundation of monasteries and pilgrimage sites. In postsocialist contexts, the role of powerful objects and miracles in recreating a ruptured ethno-religious continuity, as well as legitimating renewed religious institutions and practices, has been particularly significant, with a mutual distribution of power between a miraculous object and a particular place in the landscape playing a key role. The contexts of Tatarstan and Buryatia can be incorporated for comparative purposes.

Greenlee Justin

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**Title: “The Reliquary Head of Saint Andrew and the Preservation of the Morea”**

The reliquary head of Saint Andrew arrived in Rome on Holy Tuesday, 1462. According to Pope Pius II in his Commentaries, people lined the streets on a processional route laid out between the Milvian Bridge and the church of Old Saint Peter’s. Spectators were eager to see—and maybe touch—a miraculous object that had the ability to remit sins, protect the city, and act out against the enemies of the Faith. The reliquary was seen as powerful because it contained fragments of both the skull and jawbone of an Apostle who was known as the “first called,” the follower who ushered his brother, Simon Peter, into the faith, and a vessel for the Holy Spirit. Until 1461, the head was kept in the city of Patras in a region of southern Greece known as the Morea, but after a thousand years and a significant Ottoman incursion the object was brought to Italy. The transport of the reliquary fell to the Thomas Palaiologos, the Despot of the Morea and the last Byzantine Emperor, and my presentation tracks the material pathway of the relics’ arrival in Italy, images of the head, and the religious and political use of the reliquary in the early 1460s.

Holmes Megan

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**Title: “The ‘Miraculous Image’ Across Cultures”**

This paper offers a framework and agenda for a trans-historical, trans-cultural, and comparative consideration of “miraculous images.” The term itself will be interrogated and tested for its historicity and relevance across religious belief systems and within specific historical religious cultures, with some

parameters and qualifications offered. Importance will be given to historical and cultural specificity in defining and characterizing efficacious extraordinary images, and to related religious practices, theological conceptions, and discourses. There will be an interest, too, in establishing the complex social operations of these images within and across devotional communities and in inter-faith negotiations.

The “miraculous image” will also be shown to be a useful and timely heuristic device. On the one hand, it can facilitate an opening up of scholarly inquiry to categories of visual art and to forms of imagistic devotion and use that traditionally have been dismissed as idolatry, superstition, and manifestations of a devalued “folk” or “popular” religion. On the other hand, cross-disciplinary and cross-field dialogue will inevitably reveal distinctions and tensions in approaches and purviews. Anthropologists, for example, have pointed to critical distinctions between “western” and “non-western”/indigenous conceptual categories and theories about animism and supernatural “presenting” within crafted artifacts and in the natural environment, and about how figurative images mediate relationships between human and non-human persons.

### Kendall Laurel & Ni Wayan Pasek Ariati

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#### **Title: “Miraculous or Ordinarily Agentive? A Balinese Temple Mask”**

The idea of a “miraculous image” as an academic topic gestated within a Euro-Christian history of miracle-working statues. This presentation broadens a conversation intended to shed new light on materiality, religious devotion, and the transmission of ideas and objects. Jero Amerika abides in Ubud, Bali and within the logic of Balinese belief and practice but also pushes at the expectations of a Balinese temple mask in ways that are signs and measures of this image’s thaumaturgic power. Jero Amerika is a mask, not a statue, and the god/image’s most visible exercise of agency—identifying and neutralizing practitioners of black magic—is abetted by an entranced dancer. Even so, Jero Amerika’s story is resonant with a project that concerns itself with the agency of miraculous images, the visual transaction between image and devotee, stories of origin and the construction of miraculous tales (in this instance within the last two decades), the power of place, the image as a portal to another plane of experience, and the thaumaturgic power of images. While Jero Amerika contributes to a broadly comparative framing of “miraculous images, Jero Amerika and other Balinese temple masks trouble the core notion of the “miraculous”—that statues only become so when they act beyond the expectations of their materiality by bleeding, weeping, lactating, or granting miracles. Balinese temple masks are expected to exert magical agency in the first instance; this is how they “work” if they have been properly constructed and appropriately enlivened.

## Kim Youn-mi

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### **Title: Should We Punish Sweating Buddhas? Discourses Surrounding the Miraculous Statues in Chosŏn Korea**

At the Confucian court of Chosŏn, only one type of miracle was continuously reported to the king: perspiration of Buddhist statues. Throughout the Chosŏn era, perspiration of Buddhist images all across the county was usually report even when the king persecuted Buddhism. This paper examines the reason why the sweating miracle of statues was regarded particularly important at the Chosŏn court. Particularly informative for this research is a series of debates at the court surrounding the frequent perspiration of Buddhist statues reported in 1662 during the reign of Hyŏnjong 顯宗 (r.1659-74). For several days, court officials had usually lengthy debates. Some strongly appealed to the king to punish the local governor who reported the miracles and to destroy the statues that showed miracles, while some objected to harsh punishment. The records of the debated contents suggest that the statues' perspiration was generally regarded as ominous sign, and the Chosŏn court encouraged local officials to report such miracles to collect the data to predict the calamities and wars that could cause threat to the state. The bronze bells at the monastery, the *tripitaka* woodblocks, stone stele, although infrequently, were also reported to sweat, which were all unanimously thought as inauspicious signs. The Chosŏn court's nervous attitude towards sweating statues left such a deep imprint in the psyche of Korean people that similar beliefs continued to modern times. Even after the Korean War (1950-53), some famous Buddhist statues, such as the large stone statue of Maitreya at Kwanch'oksa 灌燭寺, were believed to perspire as a prophesy of national disasters.

## Kormina, Jeanne

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### **Title: “The Cup That Cannot Be Emptied”: On Social Life of One Holy Icon in Eastern Christianity**

The miracle-working icon of the Mother of God “Neupivayemayachasha” (can be roughly translated as The Cup that cannot be emptied) is well-known in the Russian-speaking Orthodox world as a powerful helper in the cases of alcoholism and other kinds of addiction. It became known since 1870s as one of many miraculously appeared icons, but it obtained its special reputation later, during the years of anti-alcohol campaign in 1910s due to misinterpretation (or, rather, folk-etymology) of its name. The original image was lost in the Soviet period, but its copy is believed to be as authentic and powerful as the first image. The paper tells the story of veneration of this image in post-Soviet period focuses on the questions of agency, materiality and authenticity.

## Lamotte, Charlotte

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**Title: “Images and Objects of Worship in a Japanese Pilgrimage Town: The ‘New Shikoku’ of Sasaguri, Fukuoka, Japan**

In today's Japan, there is a category of images with a special status: objects of cult, and especially statues. In Sasaguri, a town hosting a Buddhist pilgrimage, there are a great number of sacred statues and religious objects. The site constitutes a privileged place of observation for the ethnologist, with the extraordinary richness of Buddhist materiality and density of its religious panorama. Founded in 1835 by a mysterious wandering nun who made the vow to carve 88 statues in order to heal the villagers of Kido (now part of Sasaguri), this modern pilgrimage expanded and rapidly earned a reputation of miracle maker and still attracts thousands of visitors per year, and a growing number of charismatic religious specialists. Nowadays, the temples and shrines are ruled by a single pilgrimage association called Reijokai, who decide to incorporate temples by granting them a number, or to exclude them. Each of the 88 shrines contains a statue representing the Buddha or bodhisattva worshipped in the temple, often hidden from view.

Observing the rituals related to the statues of cult and the discourses associated with them, I will discuss the relationship between believers and religious objects considered with a strong affective and symbolic value, almost as living persons. Far from being envisioned as a mere support hosting the spirit of a buddha or the symbol of a formless and abstract Buddha, they are often thought as the very presence of Buddha in the world.

Starting from Buddhist images, I will extend my analysis to non-Buddhist practices as well, since the ambivalent attitude towards Buddhist objects is also observable in native Shinto cults, with the popular belief that the material embodiment of a god (*yorishiro*) is the real presence of the same god inhabiting the material, an idea that shows the intrication of Buddhism and native concepts in Japanese religion.

## La Cruz, Cantaura

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**Title: “From Penicillin to Ointment of Dr. José Gregorio Hernandez. Miraculous Images of the Saint Under Construction in Contemporary Venezuela”**

This presentation focuses on Doctor Jose Gregorio Hernandez, a distinguished physician, scientist, scholar and philanthropist, who unexpectedly and tragically died in 1919 in Caracas. Following his death, a cult grew very quickly around his grave which continued to grow. The impact of the figure of José Gregorio Hernandez in the religiosity of Venezuelans is a key to understanding the links between politics and religion. This character, sanctified in a popular way, crystallizes around him an unprecedented synthesis of canonical Catholic beliefs and those resulting from “popular Catholicism”.

## Lei Yang

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### Title: The Sound of Miracles? Stories of the Underground Bells in Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century Beijing

In the Chinese tradition of religious storytelling, the underground bells are often recounted to make sounds without being struck, to emit light, or even to appear in one's dream in human form. Such stories are still common in Buddhist and Taoist texts of the Ming-Qing period (1368-1911). However, these miraculous bells seem to have lost their supermundane power in local literature of Beijing published in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Through four stories in the Study of "Ancient Accounts Heard in the Precincts of the Throne" (*Rixia jiuwen kao* 日下舊聞考), the most important Qing compendia on Beijing compiled between 1774 and 1785, this talk will analyze why and how the miracle narratives of the underground bells were criticized, altered, and accepted by the local literati of 18<sup>th</sup> century Beijing. We will see that, despite several changes, the core purpose of these stories remained the same. The miraculous behaviors of an underground bell reveal a temple's history of decline and revival. The stories of the underground bells may help us to better understand the history of certain local cults by serving as testimony to their rise and fall.

## Leoshko, Janice

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### Title: The Power of Place in Defining the Miraculous: The Case of Vajrāsana in India

Although grouping the eight great places (*aṣṭamahāsthānacaitya*) of the Buddha's life became an extremely popular in the last centuries of Buddhist practice in India (8<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> centuries), there is little evidence that it was then a significant pilgrimage network despite widely-held scholarly consensus that this was so. This paper considers how such emphasis on pilgrimage effaces the true ritual efficacy of depictions of this grouping. Becoming visually important only after the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the imagery of this grouping functions in a manner akin to repetitions of magical verses such as *dharanis* and mantras, emerging ritual technologies for visualizations and consecrations. A depiction of a pilgrimage network or even just commemoration of the Buddha's life was decidedly not the point. The interest was in developing practices that enhanced an image's miraculous power.

This paper further contends that the emphasis on how this grouping principally connotes the life of the Buddha and pilgrimage concerns occludes understanding the connections with other then emerging places of power. The marked increase of this imagery of the eight great places happened in tandem with greater activity at various sacred sites in India known as *pīṭha*. The term, *pīṭha* (literally seat or bench), is most often used to denote particular places associated with some aspect of goddess worship, understood as places manifesting her power. The term is not often found in discussions of sites associated with the biography of the Buddha. This paper focuses on several extremely large sculptures (measuring two meters) of the Buddha from Bodhgaya, the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, that also present this grouping. Details in these works demonstrate how this grouping connotes the power of the Buddha as a further definition of understanding the *vajrāsana* at Bodhgaya, the particular spot which enabled enlightenment. The paper concludes by briefly considering how this



imagery refining the magical quality of the *vajrāsana* was congruent with regard then accorded Buddha relics.

## Morse, Samuel

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### **Title: “Living” Images of Amida in the Late Kamakura Period**

The Nara sculptor Kaikei is known for formulating a distinctive type of standing Amida image that over time it came to be known as the “An’ami style” after the religious name given to the artist by the monk Chōgen. This formulation was adopted by Kaikei’s disciples and became particularly popular among members of the rapidly expanding Pure Land community during the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Kaikei and other artists of the Kei school were also some of the first artists in Japan to use inset rock crystal for the eyes of their images to blur the distinction between the real and the imagined.

Some of the images in the An’ami style produced in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, including an statue by Kaisei now housed at Mangyōji in Fukuoka and datable to 1242, are constructed in a distinctive manner. Rather than being attached to the pedestal on which they stand in the conventional way, by tabs of wood protruding from the soles of the feet, they are secured by metal poles that are inserted into the carved robes behind the legs. Since the feet are not flush with the pedestal these statues give the illusion that they are moving or floating in air, corresponding closely to descriptions in the Kanmuryōjukyō.

Among the works in this group some statues are further elaborated with the symbols said to have been on the feet of the Historical Buddha. Others are depicted with their mouths open and teeth (made of bronze or rock crystal) visible as if they are speaking. Best known of this group is a standing Amida, part of a triad at Manpukuji in Ibaraki, dating to the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. On still other images the hands are fashioned of bronze, the nails on their hands and feet are made of rock crystal or bronze, or the big toe depicted slightly raised. Thus, the statues are portrayed as animate rather than inanimate objects and are part of the tradition of “living images” in Japan, the most notable of which is the statue of Śākyamuni at Seiryōji in Kyoto, brought to Japan from China in 987 by Chōnen. Some scholars believe that the “living” Amida images were produced in response to the Seiryōji statue since the manner by which they are attached to their pedestals is similar.

In Japan the notion that Buddhist statues possessed an animate force and miraculous agency gained particular currency in the late Heian and Kamakura periods in response to and as a solution to the arrival of the Period of the End of the Buddhist Law. This paper will discuss the appearance of those beliefs and the distinctive innovations employed by sculptors to respond to the devotional needs of the Pure Land community.



## Mumtaz, Murad Khan

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### **Title: Beseeching the Friends of God: Tipu Sultan's Album of Saints**

In 1799 the British defeated and killed the last independent ruler of Mysore, Tipu Sultan (r. 1783-1799). Three years prior to his tragic demise, he ordered the compilation of an album consisting of 96 folios focusing on one theme: images of Muslim saints from India. Representing various styles of painting from the Deccan and southern regions of South Asia, the album of saints is an enigmatic object that has yet to receive any scholarly attention.

In my presentation I will contextualize the album and read the portraits using the one-page album preface in the opening folio as an interpretative tool. An additional primary textual source that I will refer to is Tipu Sultan's personal journal in which he wrote down his dreams and visions. In many instances the same saints that visited him in his dreams also featured in the album. By connecting the icon-like images of individuals in the album to his personal diary of miraculous dreams and visions, I will show how the portraits were used as a device to attract the divine presences of saints in a time of desperation for the king.

In addition to examining an important, yet practically unknown album of Indian paintings, the paper will also shed light on Southern Indian painting done for Muslim patronage, another theme that has received very little consideration in art history.

## Murray, Julia

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### **Title: "Miraculous Portraits of Confucius"**

Although Confucius is often characterized in secular terms, certain stories point to religious elements in his veneration. Early accounts describe heavenly omens surrounding his birth and claim that his body bore 49 supernatural features. Later, Confucius became the focus of an official cult and received regular sacrifices at government-funded temples all over China. Many schools and academies displayed a portrait of him, usually reproducing an image incised on a stone tablet that had become famous for causing a miracle in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Some replicas quote an inscription describing how the tablet had been placed face-down in a stone bridge and was discovered only after a horse reared up and refused to step on it. Initially unidentified but obviously potent, the tablet was taken to a Daoist temple. Later it was recognized as the 8th c. master Wu Daozi's portrait of Confucius and was moved to a prefectural school, where it inspired rubbings that were used to make replicas for other schools to share its numinous aura. Stories are also recorded about portraits of Confucius that moved on their

own, or revealed themselves through flashing lights or other paranormal manifestations. These portraits embodied Confucius's efficacious spirit and made him present.

## Ogden, Amy

Ogden, Amy, Associate Professor in the Department of French at the University of Virginia.

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### **Title: Smashing Idols and Abusing Icons in Old French Miracle Narratives**

The Old French Life of St. Nicholas written by Wace in about 1150 presents a series of miraculous anecdotes, many of which examine the supernatural power or powerlessness of different kinds of images. Set in the transitional period between paganism and Christianity (4<sup>th</sup> century C.E.), Nicholas updates early concerns about religious images for 12<sup>th</sup>-century France. The popularity of these stories into the 13<sup>th</sup> century is evident in the stained glass window sequences in cathedrals such as those of Chartres, Bourges, and Tours. In their architectural setting, amidst multitudes of holy images, the Nicholas miracles about icons and idols assume the very clear function of commentary on their immediate surroundings. If we focus on the representation of violence against images—both pagan idols and Christian icons—, we begin to see the complex and delicate relations between materiality, physical actions, words, beliefs, and miracles that textual and visual narratives about St. Nicholas convey. Rather than asserting a dogmatic position on these relations, the narratives condition their audiences to reflect on the value of the material world around them.

## Wong, Dorothy

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### **Title: “What Did Miraculous Images do in the Chinese Buddhist Tradition”**

In Buddhist cultures across Asia, the “First Images” of the Buddha hold a special status. Derived from the prototype allegedly commissioned by King Udayana and made in the likeness of the Buddha, the prototype and its copies possess attributes commonly associated with miraculous images, including supernatural forces in creation, mobility or immobility, light emission, and protective power as palladia. From China to Japan, Mongolia, and Tibet, the so-called Udayana Buddhas were widely worshiped. Acquisitions of Udayana Buddha statues enabled monastic institutions to claim religious orthodoxy and empowered royal patrons to assert legitimacy. Artistically, two very distinct types of Udayana Buddha images exist, one seated and the other standing with stylized drapery. This paper is part of a larger project studying miraculous images in China, employing the case study of Udayana Buddha images to analyze what accounts for miraculous attributes, contexts for cultic developments, the intersections (or lack thereof) of textual and visual records, artistic sources, and how recent discourse on material religion can shed light on this phenomenon.

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**Title:** Sekidera's Shiny Black Ox: A Miraculous Image from the Animal Realm in Medieval Japan

**Abstract:** There are many ways to think about miraculous images and how such images are given shape. In the majority of cases the miraculous image put to critical speculation is anthropomorphic in form. In this paper I look at a case from medieval Japan in which an ox at the temple Sekidera becomes the focus of a miracle cult during a measles epidemic in the Kyoto region in 1025. The ox is believed to be a reincarnation of Buddha Kāśyapa. However, when its portrait is painted, the ox is depicted as "small and attractive, with a shiny black coat." Scores of people come to weep and pray before the painting of the ox, including members of the royal family. This interesting case prompts some questions—does an animal make a miracle—along with insights into the fabric of the animal-human partnership.