Relics and Relic Worship in Early Buddhism: India, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Burma

Edited by Janice Stargardt and Michael Willis

The British Museum

Published with the support of ERC Project No. 609823

Publishers
The British Museum
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3DG

Series editor
Sarah Faulks

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ISBN 978 086159 218 0
ISSN 1747 3640

Front cover: the great silver reliquary from Sri Ksetra as originally made, with three-dimensional tree shrine top. Composite image constructed by Vicki Herring using data provided by Janice Stargardt (see Chapter 7)

Printed and bound in the UK by 4edge Ltd, Hockley

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Introduction

Janice Stargardt

Much has been made of the fact that, among world religions, only Buddhism and Christianity attach a central importance to the role of relics. Yet, both conceptually and materially, the two traditions are different. In Buddhism the most sacred relics are those considered parts of the cremated remains of the Buddha – a hair, a tooth, a small fragment of bone – or the tiny bead-like relics generated by the Buddha before entering *nirvāṇa/nibbāna*. In Christianity, such direct relic-embodiment is excluded by the Crucifixion/Resurrection story, so only objects, or pieces of objects closely associated with Christ, such as the thorns, cross or robe belonged to the first generation of relics, later joined both by bodily relics of the saints and items used by them.

This book is the result of a long-running project entitled *Relics and Relic Worship in the Early Buddhism of India and Burma*. Initially a Research Project of the British Academy (from 2003), it became a Research Project of the British Association for South Asian Studies (until 2010). Annual workshops took place in Cambridge and Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh), complemented by fruitful exchanges among members between meetings. This volume has also benefitted from the financial support of the ERC Synergy Project, 'Beyond Boundaries: Religion, Region, Language and the State' (project number 609823), which has provided the services of a sub-editor in the preparation of the volume for publication. Late in 2017, Dr Michael Willis, Principal Investigator of the ERC project became co-editor of the volume, since it has from its origins exemplified the synergy to be found in the study of early Buddhism in different areas of South Asia and Myanmar. He has kindly undertaken the final editorial scrutiny of the volume. The book's title reflects both the diverse interests of the contributors and the synergy gained from their presence in a single volume.

The contributors to this volume are core members of this project, whose expertise has shaped it in the long term. While the volume is indebted to, and responds to, the existing tradition of relics' scholarship in Buddhist studies in the late 20th and 21st centuries (e.g. in alphabetical order, Baums, Jongeward, Salomon, Schopen, Strong, Subrahmanyam and Trainor[1]), it also takes the subject into new territories (both metaphorically and literally) that have not previously been published. Readers will notice some diversity of views among contributors on Buddhist topics, including what constitutes a relic. As Editor, I have welcomed this individuality and diversity.

Before proceeding to introduce this material, I should like to pay tribute to the enthusiastic contributions of Lance Cousins, who sadly died before publication, but whose chapter appears in this volume. I should also like to acknowledge the contributions to our evolving discussions of some scholars who only participated in one or two of the workshops, but were much appreciated, among them K. Rajan, Alexander Wynne, Julia Shaw, Krishnakumari Myneni, Anna Ślączka and Susan Huntington.

Peter Skilling opens the volume with a wide-ranging analysis of what constitutes a relic. He presents a comprehensive review of primary canonical sources, notably of the vocabulary pertaining to relics, and accompanies it with a concurrent critique of the secondary literature. He makes vital distinctions between relics and other objects of

veneration, such as objects of use (which some regard as relics) and tree shrines. Lance Cousins takes this discussion of the etymology of words meaning 'relic' further, and proceeds to explore how the terms *cetiya* and *stūpa*, as the places where relics were installed, should be understood, while offering a critical response to some of Schopen's recent work. In an Appendix, Cousins presents his selection of relevant Pali texts.

With Elizabeth Errington's chapter, we stride into the broader, and sometimes enigmatic, context within which relics, relic chambers and reliquaries existed. Fruit of her long research on the Masson collection in the British Museum, this chapter provides the first systematic ordering of the evidence uncovered in the first half of the 19th century in the Darunta area of the Gandhara region, by Masson, Wilson and others. Errington exposes the astonishing complexity of the material evidence: ruins of stupa-like structures with human inhumation burials in a central cell constructed like a relic chamber; stupas with prepared cavities like relic chambers with and without reliquaries, with and without inscriptions, with and without fragmentary bones. She constructs persuasive arguments for the wider significance of this area in the history of Buddhist ritual and Buddhist art, notably in the early depiction of the standing Buddha.

Within the context established by Errington, Joe Cribb presents a history of related research, and makes a new and detailed examination of the most famous single object from this group of sites: the Bimaran golden reliquary from Stupa no. 2 and the objects, especially coins, found with it (now in the British Museum). His conclusions provide a cautious new chronology for the Bimaran reliquary and its significance in the development of the standing Buddha in Buddhist art.

Addressing the theme of relics indirectly, Michael Willis delineates the parallels to be found between offerings deemed to be suitable for them and the offerings made to the Triple Gem. Exploring how offerings are described in inscriptions and early texts, he illuminates the perceived nature of relics and their ritual contexts in pre-modern Buddhism.

Karel van Kooij marshals textual alongside sculptural and archaeological evidence to expose the variety in the treatment of relics – those hidden from view in stupas, or those displayed before rulers, monks and laity in magnificent rituals. If the latter, on what basis? In a ceremony preliminary to enclosure in a stupa, in temporary structures, or permanently in shrines, temples or palaces for a daily or an annual display? Like Skilling and Cousins, he discusses what distinguishes a relic from other rituals in Buddhism such as the creation of foundation deposits, again drawing on both material and textual evidence, uniting his contemporary observations in Sri Lanka with fresh analyses of some of the earliest depictions in India of the veneration of relics at Bharhut.

Finally, the last chapter (my own) broadens the geographic and conceptual scope of the book again by exploring the spread of Buddhist knowledge outside South Asia where it interacted with pre-existing funerary culture. This chapter examines the creation of a richly endowed relic chamber in Burma in the 5th or 6th century at the ancient Pyu city of Sri Ksetra. The two most remarkable objects in this chamber were a golden manuscript of 20 leaves of canonical Pali texts, preserved in perfectly legible condition, which is probably the oldest (and certainly the longest) example of Pali in the world in those centuries, and – as the centrepiece of the chamber – a very large reliquary made of gilded silver bearing important early Buddhist sculptures and significant inscriptions in Pali and Pyu. The examination of the art and epigraphy of the reliquary opens up perspectives on the areas of India and Sri Lanka involved in the spread of Buddhist knowledge to Burma (Myanmar), demolishes claims of passive reception and reveals an unexpected link between the Pali inscriptions of the golden manuscript and the reliquary, whereby part of the reliquary inscription was used to correct a defect in the text of the manuscript.

I wish to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to all the institutions mentioned, for their sustained scientific and financial support, and to our distinguished contributors for keeping faith with the publication despite delays caused by events in the societies studied and in the lives of individual contributors. Echoing the Oxford philosopher, Michael Dummet, not only must I accept responsibility for any errors that remain but if I could recognise them they would no longer be there.

Notes

1 D. Jongeward, E. Errington, R. Salomon and S. Baum (eds), *Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2012; G. Schopen, 'On the Buddha and his bones: the conception of a relic in the inscriptions of Nagarjunakonda', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, 1988, 527–37; J. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2004; B. Subrahmanyam, *Buddhist Relic Caskets in Andhra Pradesh*, Hyderabad, Ananda Buddhist Vihara Trust, 1999; Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Abbreviations used throughout the volume

ARIRIAB: *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University*

ASIAR: *Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report*

B^{e}: Burmese edition of the Pali Tipiṭika (Chaṭṭha-saṅgāyana CD, Vipassana Research Institute)

BM: British Museum

CDIAL: R.L. Turner, *A Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*, London, Oxford University Press, 1966

C^{e}: edition in Sinhaḷa script (cited from VRI unless a date is given)

CPD: D. Andersen *et al.*, *A Critical Pāli Dictionary Begun by Vilhelm Trenckner*, 3 vols, Copenhagen, Royal Danish Academy of Letters and Sciences, 1924–2011

CSIBI: Keisho Tsukamoto, *A Comprehensive Study of Indian Buddhist Inscriptions*. Kyoto, Heirakuji Shoten, 1996–2003

DP: Margaret Cone, *A Dictionary of Pali*, 2 vols, Oxford and Bristol, PTS, 2001–

E^{e}: European edition of the Pali Tipiṭaka, Pali Text Society

EI: *Epigraphia Indica*

GBR: David Jongeward, Elizabeth Errington, Richard Salomon and Stefan Baums, *Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries*, Seattle, Washington University Press, 2012

MPS: Ernst Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, vol. 3, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1951

PṬC: F.L. Woodward *et al*., *Pāli Tipiṭakam Concordance: Being a Concordance in Pāli to the Three Baskets of Buddhist Scriptures in the Indian Order of Letters*, London, PTS, 1956–

PTS: Pali Text Society

S^{e}: edition in Thai script (cited from VRI unless a date is given)

SP: N.A. Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna. Being a Translation and Edition of the Bahiranidāna of Buddhaghoṣa's Samantapāsādikā, the Vinaya Commentary*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists 21, London, PTS, 1962

Suttāgame: Mahārāj Phulchandjī, *Suttāgame*, 2 vols, Gurgāon, Śrī Sūtrāgama Prakāśaka Samiti, 1953

Utt: Uttarajjhayaṇa

VRI: Vipassanā Research Institute

Notes on transliteration

The transliteration employed for words in Indic and other languages follows, as far as possible, the standard modern scholarly system. The spelling of modern place names, including the ones of archaeological sites such as Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, follows the spelling in the Survey of India maps. In terms of ancient names of places, those listed in *Archaeological Remains: Monuments and Museums* (Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1996) are used. As for proper names and various technical terms mentioned in the historical texts and inscriptions, the spelling of the original documents is employed rather than Sanskritized versions. If inscriptions record multiple spellings for one term, the most common one is taken. Names of Indic scripts and languages, such as Pali, Gandhari, Sanskrit and Brahmi, are spelt as naturalized English terms without diacritical marks. Other Indic terms are transliterated with diacritical marks.

Chapter 1
Relics: The Heart of Buddhist Veneration[1]

Peter Skilling

Abstract

Relics lie at the heart of Buddhist devotion, and the relic cult, as well as relics themselves, travelled as Buddhist monasticism expanded.

The imprecise use of the word 'relic' for a wide and ill-defined range of objects has caused a lack of focus in the discussion of Buddhist relic practice. This chapter will concentrate specifically on the bodily remains, such as ashes, bones (including teeth) and tiny gem-like balls or pellets. In Indic languages, they are called *dhātu* or *śarīra*.

> The Buddhist cult from the earliest age of Buddhism, as it is known to us from the most ancient remains and documents until the present day, has always been characterized by the prominence of relic-worship.
>
> Vincent Smith, 'Relics (Eastern)', *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, 1918

Relics are at the centre of Buddhist devotion. As Buddhism travelled and as Buddhist monasticism expanded, it did so with relics, and the landscape of ancient India was transformed: first by the erection of stupas, and later by the construction and elaboration of residential complexes (*saṃghārāma* or *vihāra*). In an early period, relics travelled in style, transported like kings on elephant back, as depicted in the early art of Vidisha (**Fig. 1**), Bharhut (**Fig. 2**) and Kanaganahalli (**Fig. 3**). Over the last two centuries, the remains of these relic complexes have enabled us to trace the spread of Buddhist activity and to reconstruct the topography of early Buddhist civilization. The presence of stupas marks the presence of Buddhism – from the plains of Magadha to the Indus valley and the mountains of Afghanistan; north to the Nepalese Terai around Lumbini and the Kathmandu valley and across the towering mountains to Central Asia and Tibet; through the hills and valleys of the Betwa river complex to the Narmada valley; across the Krishna-Godavari deltas of the south; on the island of Sri Lanka, the Maldive islands, or across the Bay of Bengal in the Irrawaddy valley and around the Gulf of Siam. The stupa is Buddhism's signature monument: and stupas mark the presence of relics (**Fig. 4**).

Figure 1 Railing from Vidisha. Elephants bear relics on their heads in a grand procession of celebrants. An inscription (*asabhāya dāna[ṃ]*) not visible in this image records that the railing was sponsored by a woman named Asabhā (Gujri Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh; photo Phongsathorn Buakhampan, February 2016, courtesy of FPL Foundation, Bangkok)

Figure 2 (above) Relic procession on a stone railing from Bharhut Stupa, Madhya Pradesh (National Museum, New Delhi; photo Māyāpuruṣa February 2012, courtesy of FPL Foundation, Bangkok)

Figure 3 (right) Relic procession: fragment of slab from Kanaganahalli stupa, Karnataka (photo taken *in situ* courtesy of Christian Luczanits, CL00 37-38)

Narratives about the relics of the Fortunate One were integrated into the collective Buddhist memory from a very early date. The division (**Fig. 5**) and distribution (**Fig. 6**) of the relics was a core event that was preserved, elaborated and transmitted by the Saṃgha in conjunction with local communities. Relics were the stuff of ritual, and they defined and shaped landscapes, building projects and economic structures. Writing – epigraphic practice – grew up around relics and stupa sites (**Fig. 7**).

Just as a relic is a tiny object embedded in a stupa (**Figs 8–9**), so the ideology of relics is embedded in the history of Buddhist architecture. The housing of relics inspired the contributions made by Buddhist communities to building technology, craftsmanship and the arts, and animated the trade in precious commodities and the 'commerce of the great caravans'.[2] The relic cult generated circuits of material and spiritual exchange, and determined patterns of patronage. Relics are the seeds (*bīja*) of the whole garden of religious culture (**Fig. 10**).

In this essay, I restrict my use of the English word 'relic' to the physical or corporeal remains left behind after the cremation of a Buddha, in this case, Śākyamuni. Effectively, these relics should be ashes or bones (including teeth) or tiny gem-like balls or pellets. In Indic languages, they are called *dhātu* or *śarīra*.[3]

I am not concerned here with the personal effects left behind by the Buddha, such as his alms-bowl, his staff or his robe. In English and other European languages, personal effects like these may be called 'relics', but as far as I know they are not classed as *śarīra* or *dhātu* in Indic languages or in translations from Indic languages.[4] There does not seem to be any traditional generic name for these artefacts. Modern scholars tend to use a terminology that derives from developed Pali scholasticism of the Theravaṃsa of Sri Lanka. In this system, Śākyamuni's personal effects are neither *dhātu* nor *śarīra*, but rather are 'objects of veneration by association with the Buddha during his lifetime', one of three types of *cetiya*:[5]

1. Physical relics as an object of veneration (*dhātu-cetiya*);
2. Object of veneration by association (*paribhoga-* or *pāribhogika-cetiya*): the bodhi tree, the Buddha's bowl, robe and water strainer, etc.;
3. Object of veneration by designation (*uddissa-* or *uddesika-cetiya*): Buddha images.

These *cetiya*s are 'objects that deserve or merit veneration or worship'. They are not, as such, relics, and the word *cetiya* should not be translated as 'relic'.[6] Endo notes that:

> The worship of the Buddha's corporeal remains gave rise later on to the concept of three kinds of *cetiya*, namely, *sarīra-cetiya*, *uddissa-cetiya*, and *paribhoga-cetiya*. Since this classification is not seen in the *Tipiṭaka* but in the commentarial literature, it could be a commentarial development. Further, as *uddissa-cetiya* is defined as *buddhapaṭimā* [an image of the Buddha], this notion would have come into being later than the time of the human representation of the Buddha ascribable to about the first century AC. This fact leads to a reasonable assumption that the three kinds of *cetiya* as a unified concept came to be formulated after the appearance of the Buddha image (i.e., after first century AC).[7]

Figure 4 Stupa complex at Murel Khurd, Dist. Raisen, Madhya Pradesh (photo Māyāpuruṣa, courtesy of FPL Foundation, Bangkok)

Figure 5 Division of Śākyamuni's relics into eight portions: slab from Kanaganahalli (photo taken *in situ* courtesy of Christian Luczanits, CL00 37-37)

Figure 6 Distribution of relics: fragment of slab from Kanaganahalli stupa (photo taken *in situ* courtesy of Christian Luczanits CL00 42-33, 42-34, 42-35)

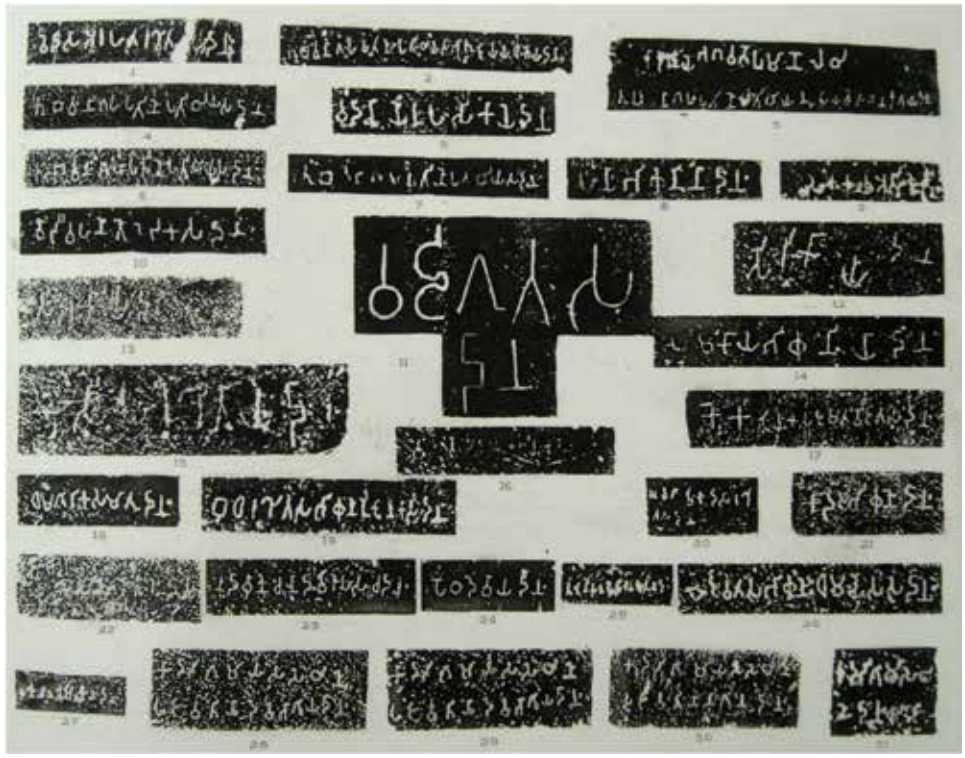


Figure 7 Estampages of dedicatory inscriptions from Sanchi stupa, Dist. Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, 2nd–1st centuries BCE (from Sir John Marshall, N.G. Majumdar, and A. Foucher, *Monuments of Sanchi*, Calcutta, 1940, vol. 3, stupa 1: ground railings)

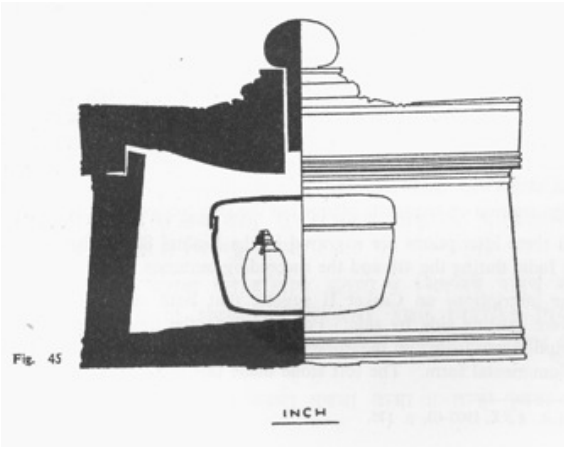


Figure 8 (left) Relics retrieved from Devnimori Mahāstūpa (Department of Archaeology and History, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat; photo Phongsathorn Buakhampan, February 2016, courtesy of FPL Foundation, Bangkok)

Figure 9 (right) Section of schist relic casket I from the Mahāstūpa at Devnimori, Dist. Sabarkantha, Gujarat (from R.N. Mehta and S.N. Chowdhary, *Excavation at Devnimori (A Report of the Excavation Conducted from 1960 to 1963)*, Baroda, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1966, 119, fig. 45)

The Pali tradition also mentions the *dhamma-cetiya*, the written text as an object of reverence. Together with the *dharma-śarīra* of Indian traditions, the written text functions as a 'Dharma relic' when it is installed in a reliquary, a stupa or an image. Imprecise use of the word 'relic' for a wide and ill-defined range of objects, though justifiable to a degree in English, causes the discussion of Buddhist relics to lose focus.[8] For example, one of the *paribhogika cetiya*s is the bodhi tree, which even in English is not a 'relic'.

In traditional Buddhology, corporeal relics are not the natural by-products of cremation: before he passes away, a Buddha makes a resolution to produce relics.[9] This is one of the acts of a Buddha – his final and posthumous act. The purposeful generation of relics is taken for granted in developed Buddhology. For example, the poet Mātṛceṭa, who is provisionally dated to the 2nd century CE, writes in his 'Hymn in one hundred fifty verses':

> Powdering your bones into tiny particles with the diamond of concentration,
> Even in the end you did not give up
> The performance of deeds so difficult to do.
>
> My Dharma body and my physical body both exist
> Only for the sake of others': speaking thus
> Even in *nirvāṇa* you taught this reluctant world.
>
> Having given your entire Dharma body to the virtuous,
> You broke your physical body into fragments
> And attained final *nirvāṇa*.[10]

The importance of relics was universally recognized as a mainstream value by all schools of thought. A Mahāyāna *sūtra* entitled 'The white lotus of compassion' (*Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*), for example, relates the story of Samudrareṇu, a brahman chaplain who will become a Buddha in the future. Samudrareṇu recites a series of vows in the presence of the Tathāgata Ratnagarbha. Among them are the vows that he will display the distribution of relics,[11] and that, at the time of his *nirvāṇa*, he will break his body into pieces as tiny as mustard seeds. Beings who make offerings to his relics will all attain irreversibility in whichever of the three vehicles suits them.[12]

A Buddha chooses the *kind* of relics he will leave behind in terms of his lifespan. Broadly speaking, there are two types.

Figure 10 Stone railing retrieved by Bhagwanlal Indraji from Vidisha. The relief depicts worship of a stupa with fragrant water, flowers and music (Gujri Mahal Museum, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh; photo Phongsathorn Buakhampan, February 2016, courtesy of FPL Foundation, Bangkok)

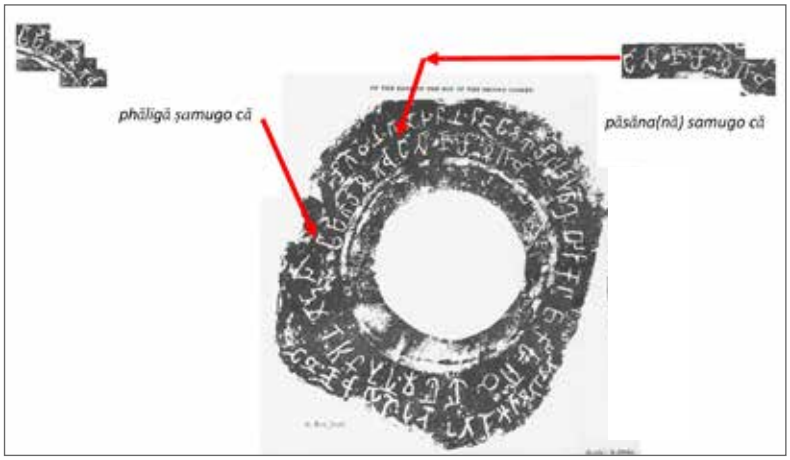


Figure 11 Bhattiprolu casket inscription: edge of box of second casket (from G. Bühler, 'The Baṭṭiprolu Buddhist inscriptions', *EI* 2, 1894, 324–5)

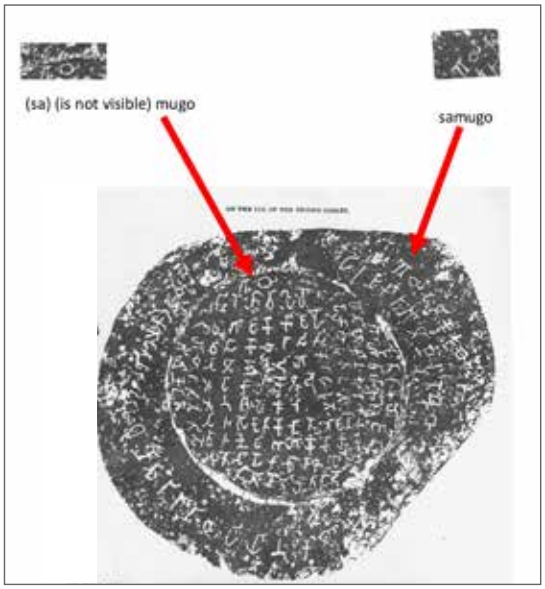


Figure 12 Bhattiprolu casket inscription: lid of second casket (from Bühler, 'Baṭṭiprolu Buddhist inscriptions', 324–5)

First, if a Buddha has a short lifespan, he will leave behind multiple and extensive relics, and many stupas will be built to house them. This gives people the opportunity to worship him through his relics after he has passed away. The smallest relics are described as 'the size of a mustard seed' (*sarṣapa-phala*). Venerating a Buddha while he is alive or venerating him after his death, even through a relic as small as a mustard seed, are said to yield equal terms of merit. Second, if a Buddha has a long lifespan, he may leave a single mass of relics, over which a single stupa will be erected. Śākyamuni had a short lifespan: he lived a mere 80 years. Therefore he vowed to leave behind extensive relics to benefit sentient beings. The origins of this notion may lie in the story of the division of relics in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and in the legends that Aśoka raised 84,000 relic stupas. This ensured an embarrassment of relics, which led to the proliferation of stupas that we see in the historical landscape of India.

Figure 13 Bhattiprolu casket inscription: lower stone first casket (from Bühler, 'Baṭṭiprolu Buddhist inscriptions', 324–5)

Terminological excursus

In European languages we use 'relic' and cognate terms to stand for the Indic words *dhātu* and *śarīra*. The terms themselves have complex histories, as do their counterparts in the 'translated Buddhisms' of China and Tibet.[13] The polysemous *dhātu* can mean layer, stratum, ore, ingredient, element, constituent part or essential ingredient of the body, as well as the root or stem of a word. In Buddhist usage, there are various sets of *dhātu*s: the Mūlasarvāstivādin 'Sūtra on many elements' (*Bahudhātuka-sūtra*) enumerates 62, and the Abhidharma treatises discuss their meanings at length. *Śarīra* is physical body, bodily frame and relic. Traditional writing, especially homiletics, exploits these layers of resonance.

Reliquaries or relic caskets are described with ordinary terms. Just as everyday vessels could be used to keep holy relics, so the language used would have been that of everyday life. The vessel in which relics are kept is called a 'reliquary' or 'relic casket'.[14] Like the English word 'relic casket', the Indic terms for reliquary are combined forms that use a word for 'relic' plus one for 'container', for example Pali/Sanskrit *dhātu-mañjusā* or *dhātu-karaṇḍa*. Reliquaries have been recovered in large numbers in South Asia. Few of them bear inscriptions and those that do rarely name or describe themselves. An important and early exception is three reliquaries from Bhattiprolu (Andhra Pradesh) which were unearthed in the late 19th century (**Figs 11–13**). Here we meet the Prakrit terms *majusa* (1, 2, 7), *majūsa* (10) and *ṣamuga* (3, 10), with the specifications 'golden container', 'crystal container' (*kāca-majusa* 2; *phāliga-ṣamuga*, 2, 7),[15] and 'stone container' (*pāsāna-ṣamugo*, 7).[16] On the basis of their lettering, Georg Bühler (1837–98), one of the leading epigraphists of the time, concluded that 'they cannot be placed later than 200 B.C., but may be somewhat earlier', that is, perhaps 'only a few decades later than Aśoka's Edicts'.[17]

Half a millennium later, the 4th-century dedication inscription on the body of Casket II from Devnimori in Gujarat uses one of the same terms in the Sanskrit forms *samudgaka* and *samudga* (**Fig. 14**).[18] At an uncertain date, perhaps a thousand years later again, 'The nibbāna of the

nun Bimbā' (*Bimbābhikkhunī-nibbāna*), a Pali work transmitted in Thailand, relates how the Great Brahma brings a golden *mañjusā* to the funeral of Bimbā, the Buddha's former wife. The Great Brahmas place the Bhikkhunī's body in the golden *mañjusā*, which here must mean a casket, which is later cremated.[19] Her relics (*aṭṭhi-dhātu*) are collected and a stupa erected, but the account does not specify the vessel in which the relics are placed.

The so-called 'Kaniṣka casket' from Shah-ji-ki Dheri near Peshawar in Pakistan refers to the donation of a 'perfume box' (Prakrit, *gadha-karaṃda*).[20] It is uncertain, however, whether this simply refers to a 'cosmetic box' that was re-used as a reliquary, or whether it might also mean a casket fragrant with the relic of the Buddha, a 'casket perfumed by the pure and fragrant relics of the Fortunate One'. The rare textual occurrences of the term suggest the former. *Gandha-karaṇḍaka* is used in an evocative simile in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*.[21] The Buddha first states that 'when it is new, cloth made of bark fabric is unattractive, uncomfortable, and of little value'. Old cloth made of bark fabric is used for scrubbing pots or is discarded on a rubbish heap. In contrast, new cloth from Kasi is attractive, comfortable and valuable. People use old cloth from Kasi to wrap gems, or they deposit it in a fragrant casket (*gandha-karaṇḍake vā naṃ pakkhipanti*). The *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, an expansive and flamboyant text belonging to the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* corpus, contains a long encomium of *bodhicitta*, the aspiration to awakening. It compares *bodhicitta* to a perfume casket because it creates the fragrant scents of virtue and because it holds the fragrant scents of all virtues.[22]

Some of these terms are used in the Pali chronicles or Vaṃsa literature composed in Sri Lanka. *Dhātu-karaṇḍaka*, for example, is used in the 'Great Chronicle', the 'Chronicle of the relic', and the 'Chronicle of the stupa' (*Mahāvaṃsa*, *Dhātuvaṃsa*, *Thūpavaṃsa*). We also meet the terms in Mahāyāna *sūtra*s, such as the 'Supreme Golden Light Sūtra' (*Suvarṇabhāsottama*), which uses *karaṇḍaka*, *dhātu-karaṇḍaka* and *samudgaka*.[23] The Tibetan translation of the 'Satyaka chapter' (the *Satyaka-parivarta*, a Mahāyāna *sūtra* that is lost in Sanskrit) relates a version of the distribution of Śākyamuni's relics and the activities of Aśoka associated with the *sūtra* itself: at the time of King Ajātaśatru a golden manuscript of the *sūtra* is installed in Śākyamuni's relic casket, where it is to remain until King Aśoka retrieves it. The *sūtra* uses the terms **karaṇḍa*, **ratna-karaṇḍa* and **dhātu- karaṇḍa*.[24]

'Nested reliquaries' are well known from archaeological excavations. Some of the most detailed descriptions of nested reliquaries are found in Pali literature.[25] There is also a description in the '*Jātaka* of the hungry tigress' as related in the 'Supreme golden light sūtra'. Travelling in the land of Pāñcāla, Śākyamuni stops at a certain spot and asks the monks who are accompanying him whether they want to see the relics (*śarīrāṇi*) of the 'bodhisatva who performed deeds difficult to do'. They answer in the affirmative, and the Buddha strikes the earth with his hand, which is adorned by a wheel with one thousand spokes and is as soft as a fresh lotus. The earth shakes in six ways, and a stupa fashioned from gems, gold and silver rises up. At the Buddha's command, Ānanda opens it to see within a 'casket (*samudgaka*) made of gold, covered with abundant gold, gems

Figure 14 Inscribed relic casket from Devnimori Mahāstūpa; green grey chlorite schist (h. 12.7cm, incl. top knob; diam. of base 17.2cm) (top) side view 1; (middle) side view 2; (bottom) view of base (courtesy of Department of Archaeology and History, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Vadodara, Gujarat)

and pearls'. He informs the Buddha, who replies, 'There are seven caskets. Open all of them.' Ānanda does so, and within he sees the bones of the bodhisatva, 'as pure white as bones or a lily-flower'.[26] The Fortunate One asks Ānanda to give him the 'bones of the great being'; he lays them down before the *saṃgha*, pronounces a verse and orders the monks to 'Venerate the relics of the bodhisatva (*bodhisatva-śarīrāṇi*), which are permeated by virtue, which are extremely difficult to see, and which have been transformed into fields of merit.' The monks then raise their hands, palms together in respectful homage, and with focused minds bow their heads down in homage to the relics (*śarīrāṇi*). The Buddha then

recounts the story of his past birth when he sacrificed himself to a starving tigress.

The 'Condensed grand narrative' (*Saṃpiṇḍita-mahānidāna*), an elaborate biography of the Buddha composed in Pali and transmitted in Thailand, uses several of the terms in its description of how the Buddha's requisites, or personal effects, were distributed, enshrined and venerated. This account gives more detail than the standard Sri Lankan Vaṃsas.[27]

In Indapatta City in the land of Kuru, the razor and needle and the needle-case were placed in a crystal casket (*phalika-karaṇḍaka*). A golden *cetiya* was made for it, and they paid worship with golden flowers. The men of Aparantaka, in the brahman town of Uli (so Minayeff; Bhūmibalo has Usīra), placed the requisites of the water-pot (*kuñcika*: BhB), sandals (*-upāhaṇa-*) and purse (*thavika*) in a casket made of the seven precious substances (*sattaratanamaye karaṇḍake*). They made a *cetiya* of seven precious substances, and worshipped the relics.

The senior monk Mahākaccāyana (so Minayeff:; Bhūmibalo has Mahākassapa) took one relic from the relics which had not yet been distributed, and installed it within a sandalwood casket (*candana-karaṇḍaka*) in the city of Pota. He made a *cetiya* named Sujātakumāra with the son of the King of Assaka, and placed the relic therein. In this way, when the Fortunate One had passed away, many *thūpa*s were established.

The 'Perfection of wisdom in one hundred thousand stanzas' (*Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*) refers to the 'receptacle of the Tathāgata's relics', using a general term for receptacle, *bhājana*.[28] The word *kumbha* ('pot' or 'bowl') is also used, often when relics are initially collected, though it may have a wider context as well. In a story of the past related in the 'Chapter on the division of the Saṃgha' (*Saṃghabhedavastu*) of the *Vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādin school, King Kṛkin deposits the bones of the Buddha Kāśyapa in a pot made of four precious substances, and erects a relic stupa (*śārira-stūpa*), one *yojana* high and half a *yojana* around, in a secluded and spacious spot.[29]

Buddhist ashes, Christian objects of association

The choice of English (and other Western-language) terminology, and hence most dictionary definitions of 'relics', is based on Christian usages and understandings.[30] While there are certainly correspondences between the notions and material cultures of relics in Buddhism and those of Christianity, we must be careful to distinguish a number of significant differences.[31] One fundamental difference is that cremation of the corpse was forbidden in Christianity up until the 20th century (and is still forbidden in the Eastern and some Protestant churches), whereas in Buddhism cremation seems to have been the rule from the beginning. *Śarīra* are the post-cremation remains of a Buddha; these relics were (and, in the case of contemporary meditation masters or of others deemed to have attained, are) retrieved from the cremation ground. In contrast, relics of Christ are the remains of objects closely associated with him such as the Holy Cross. Christ died on the cross. His body was retrieved by his disciples and placed in a sepulchre from which it disappeared. He was 'resurrected' – seen by disciples as if alive – for a certain period, after which he ascended to heaven. He left no bodily relics: relics in the primary sense of Buddhism, *śarīra*, do not exist in Christianity.

Relationships between Christian devotees and the body of Christ are fundamentally different from those between Buddhist devotees and the body of the Buddha. The flesh and blood of the body of Christ, in the form of bread and wine, are part of the ritual of the mass, and are kept on the altar. There is no counterpart to this in Buddhist practice, although in recent decades in Thailand 'prestigious relics', usually brought from abroad, are set on altars in clear, crystal or glass stupas to be viewed and venerated. These are special events that in some cases draw hundreds of thousands of the faithful.

Attitudes towards the visibility and display of relics differ considerably. Christian reliquaries, and in some cases the relics that they contain, are more often designed to be *displayed* and *seen*, whereas Buddhist relics, including their containers, are more likely to be *sealed* and *interred* – with exceptions in both cases.[32] Christian reliquaries were designed to be admired as part of the prestigious *ornamenta* of a church, even more so after the 12th century when display became increasingly in vogue. As the repositories of the power (*tejas*, *ānubhāva*) of a Buddha, Buddhist reliquaries do not need to be seen. This does not hinder them from working miracles in their own way

Another significant difference is accession to sainthood. Christian saints are very often martyrs who died violent deaths: this concept is missing in Buddhism. Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, two leading monks who were direct disciples of the Master, did die violent deaths, but they were already 'saints' through the attainment of *arhat*ship long before. Violent death has nothing to do with sainthood in Buddhism; the majority of *arhat*s die peacefully and naturally, or, by an act of will, through auto-combustion. Their ashes are collected and placed in stupas.

Historiography and relics

Relics have a special role in the historiography not only of Buddhism but also of South Asia. Directly or indirectly, we owe much of what we know today about early Indian dynastic and social history, including the early development of Buddhism in India, to relics or to the built environment connected with relics. By this I mean the stupas, the monuments erected to enshrine, protect and announce relics. These monuments and their natural and built environments are best described as 'relic complexes' and treated comprehensively along with the associated archaeological and art-historical evidence. The material relic complex is a product of a system of ideas and practices which valorizes the veneration of relics, stupas and *caitya*s:[33] among Indian religions, Buddhism distinguished itself by the cult of relics and stupas,[34] and it produced the oldest monumental religious architecture in India. It is, however, not possible to write a master narrative of relic history.[35] Documentation is insufficient, and we can only patch together snippets of literary references, fragmentary inscriptions, and the testimony of ruins across far-flung landscapes.

Figure 15 (left) King Devanampiyatissa and the arrival of the Buddha's relics in Sri Lanka, wall painting, 18th century, Dambula caves, Sri Lanka (photo Studio Times, Colombo, January 2012, courtesy of FPL Foundation, Bangkok)

Figure 16 (right) Devanampiyatissa transports the Buddha's relics to be installed at Thuparama, mural painting, 19th century (from Phra Rajaveti (Suraphon Chitayano) (ed.), *Wat Pho's Phra Vihara of the Reclining Buddha*, Bangkok: Wat Phra Chetuphon Wimon Mangkhalaram, 2006, 316)

Our primary sources necessarily include inscriptions connected with relics and reliquaries, and donative inscriptions,[36] archaeological evidence and art-historical evidence connected with stupas. Reliquary inscriptions have aided the reconstruction of the dates and the relative chronologies of dynasties, especially in the north-eastern subcontinent, in Gandhara. In central India, casket inscriptions and dedicatory pillars have revealed early Indian monastic lineages that would otherwise be unknown.[37]

Relics lie at the heart of Buddhist devotion, and it is unwise to decontexualize them from the complex and shifting imaginations of Buddhist followers over time and space – to divorce them from the quest for benefits (*ānisaṃsa*, *anuśaṃśa*),[38] or from conceits of empowerment through the possession of special artefacts. It is inexpedient to reduce relics to mere 'material culture' by ignoring their rich ritual, liturgical and metaphysical contexts, their literary resonances or social practices such as pilgrimage and festivals.[39] Relics are embedded in the ideologies of early South Asian Buddhism, and they need to be seen in relation to societal and historical needs, rather than bowdlerized as an abstracted or free-standing 'cult'.

The centrality of relics in Buddhism has long been recognized in scholarship. The eminent Indologist Sir Monier Monier-Williams (1819–99), writing in 1889, maintained that 'Adoration of relics constitutes an important point of difference between Buddhism and Brāhmanism; for Brāhmanism and its offspring Hindūism are wholly opposed to the practice of preserving the ashes, bones, hair, or teeth of deceased persons, however much such individuals may have been revered during life.'[40] In a contribution to the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* entitled 'Relics (Eastern)', published in 1918, Vincent Smith (1848–1920) remarked on the 'prominence of relic-worship' in Buddhism (see epigraph to this chapter).

Since the 19th century, relic caskets and their contents have been kept in museums around the world. Information about relics and reliquaries is widely scattered in archaeological reports and journals in a daunting range of languages. Fortunately, we have a few synoptic studies on, for example, about 80 Gandharan stupa deposits reported in archaeological surveys and exhibition catalogues,[41] the relic caskets of South India,[42] the reliquaries in the Victoria and Albert Museum and their archaeological contexts,[43] reliquaries in the British Museum[44] and 406 reliquaries from Gandhara with their inscriptions.[45] There is a general study by Debala Mitra,[46] a useful inventory of relic caskets in Indian museums by Bhattacharya (1986–7)[47] and a study of relic caskets from Andhra.[48]

It is unfortunate that there is no comprehensive or even summary account of the relic caskets of Sri Lanka.[49] The stupa complexes and antiquities of Sri Lanka date back well over 2,000 years. According to the chronicles, relics arrived on the island *before* the bodhi tree, the celebrated sapling of the tree of awakening (**Figs 15–16**).[50] Stone, gold, silver, bronze, crystal and ivory reliquaries have been recovered in large numbers. Most frequently, they are in the shape of small stupas, but there are also cylindrical and other designs. None of them bears inscriptions.

Aśoka: pillars, epigraphy and relics

The topic of the early relic cult inevitably leads to the role of King or Emperor Aśoka, which is somehow taken for granted in modern narratives of relic history. Leaving legend aside, the primary archaeological association of Aśoka with relics is the fact that several of his inscriptions or pillars stand beside, or are associated with, stupas. These include the Sanchi pillar, the Bairat rock edict, the Panguraria rock shelter edict and separate inscription, and the Sopara fragment.[51] The Vaiśālī and Gotihawa (Nepal) pillars bear no inscriptions but are adjacent to stupas.

The literary record has it that Aśoka established 84,000 stupas for relics of the Buddha. Modern scholarship, since at least the 20th century, has given too much credit to this legend, and has tended to attribute the spread of Buddhism across India to the patronage of the king. Vincent Smith wrote that 'The interest of [Aśoka's] story is mainly psychological and religious, that is to say, as we read it we watch the development of a commanding personality and

Figure 17 Nigali Sagar Pillar, Nepal (photo courtesy Harry Falk)

the effect of its action in transforming a local Indian sect into one of the leading religions of the world.'[52] But is it not possible, or even likely, that Buddhism was already established at many of these sites? That the king was following the footsteps of the Saṃgha, rather than the Saṃgha following his footsteps? At many of the sites, stupas must have stood already. To ascribe the inspiration for the early stupas that dot the Indian landscape to Aśoka robs them of any local origins and meanings.

Admittedly, we cannot retrieve these meanings, except in the few cases where an inscription itself points the way, for example the statement that the monarch enlarged the stupa of Kanakamuni in what is now the Terai, in Nepal. We can grant that Aśoka saw stupa complexes as ideal places to display some of his 'royal messages', but his own inscriptions are silent about the extravagant stupa construction of the legends. The great monarch does not refer in his inscriptions to stupas or to relics, with two exceptions: the Nigali Sagar pillar inscription from Nepal and a version of Minor Rock Edict I found at Ahraura, Uttar Pradesh.

In the Nigali Sagar pillar inscription from lowland Nepal (**Fig. 17**), Aśoka states that he enlarged the *thuba* (Pali *thūpa*, Sanskrit *stūpa*) of the Buddha Konākamana (Pali Konāgamana, Sanskrit Kanakamuni and other forms) in the 14th year of his reign, and visited it himself to venerate it an uncertain number of years later (the inscription is damaged). This is the sole reference to a stupa in the Aśokan corpus. The exact sense of the phrase *dutiyaṃ vaḍḍhite*, translated here as 'enlarged', is not clear, and has been interpreted as 'increased to double the size', or 'enlarged a second time'. No stupa remains have been found in the vicinity of the pillar. At Gotihawa, 19.2km away, there is a broken pillar set beside a Mauryan stupa, but the pillar does not bear any inscription (**Fig. 18**).[53]

The second case is much more difficult. The version of Minor Rock Edict I (MRE I) discovered at Ahraura (Dist. Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh) in 1961 has an extra line at the end which contains the phrase *buddhasa salīle āloḍhe* (**Figs 19–20**).[54] MRE I has been the subject of discussion for nearly 150 years; at present count, it is the most widely distributed of Aśoka's edicts, disseminated in as many as 18 copies.[55] MRE I has attracted attention because it closes with an enigmatic sentence. In the recently discovered Ratanpurwa (Ratanpurvā) version, it is:

> *iyaṃ ca sāvane vivuthena duve sapaṃnālātisatā vivuthā ti 200 50 6 imaṃ ca aṭhaṃ pavatesu likāpayāthā yadi vā athi hetā silāthaṃbhā tata likhāpayāthā.*

In the Ahraura version, it reads:

> *esa sāvane vivuthe[na] [du]ve sapṃnā lāti sati aṃ maṃ ca budhasa salīle āloḍhe.*[56]

The problem in general is the significance of the figure 256 – does it refer to 'nights' (*lāti*), 'years' or something else?[57] Obviously, this is not a small difference. Not all versions have the term *lāti*, which has been taken to mean 'night'. Many just have the bare number with no referent, for example the Panguraria edict, which opens with *sāvaṇaṃ viyuthe[na] 200 50 6.*

Narain translated the Āhraura text as follows: 'This proclamation (was made) having given (i.e. allowed or having past) two hundred and fifty-six (years) to elapse (after) the ascension of the body of our Buddha.'[58] Leaving aside the question of 'years' versus 'nights', his interpretation of *budhasa salīle aloḍhe* as 'ascension of the body of our Buddha' introduces further elements of confusion. I have not seen any evidence that any Buddhist text, school or scholar interpreted the *parinirvāṇa* as an 'ascension of the body'. Can *salīla* mean 'relics', as some have suggested? This is problematic. When it refers to physical relics, the Indic term *śarīra* is commonly used in the plural, *śarīrāṇi* (as we have seen in the 'Golden light sūtra' above). Here we have a singular, *budhasa salīle*, which should normally mean 'body of the Buddha'. If we interpret the number to refer to nights,

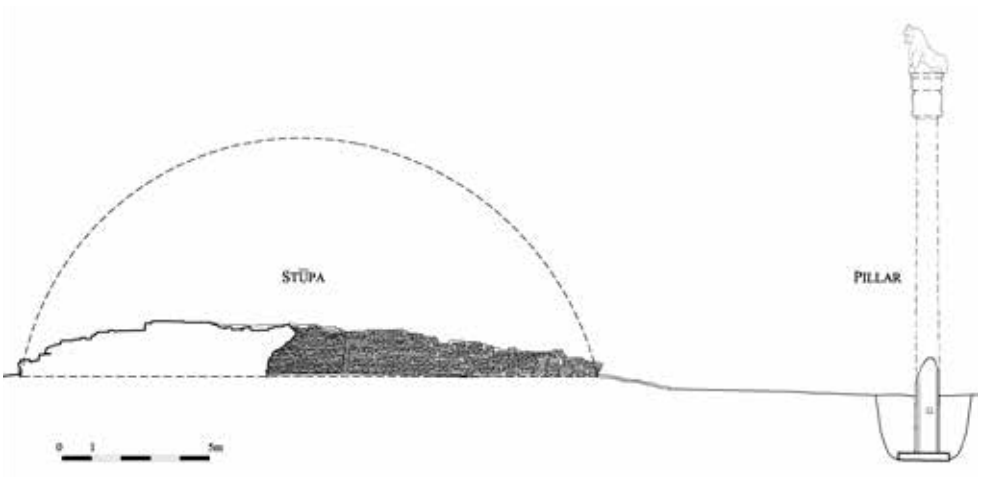


Figure 18 Mauryan stupa and pillar at Gotihawa, Nepal (from Verardi, *Excavations at Gotihawa and Pipri*, fig. 155)

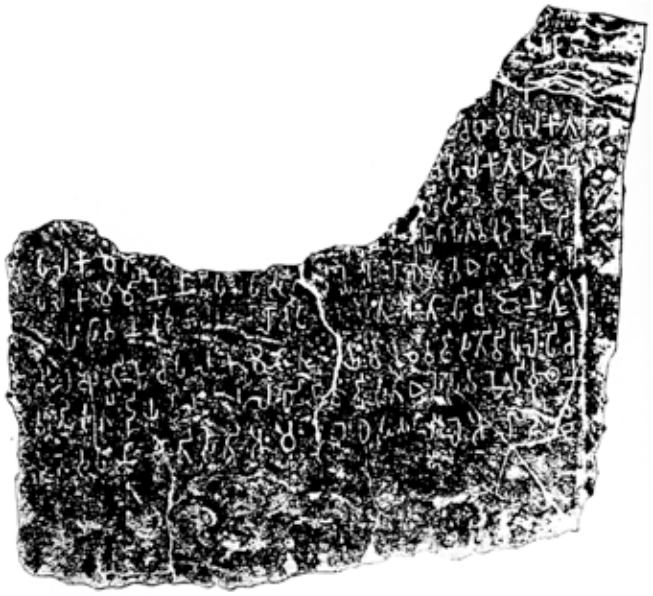


Figure 19 Minor Rock Edict I of Aśoka from Ahraura, Dist. Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh (photo courtesy of Harry Falk)

Figure 20 Minor Rock Edict I of Aśoka from Ahraura (drawing from rubbing by Harry Falk)

then something was done to the Buddha's body after 256 nights, during Aśoka's reign, one or two centuries after the death of the Buddha. Given that classical Indian accounts all agree that the Buddha's body was cremated soon after his passing, and that, from the beginning of the epigraphic record, *śarīra* refers to his highly prized relics, I find it unlikely – if not impossible – that here *salīla* can refer to his 'physical body'. If we take it to be 256 years, we face the problem: why is Aśoka writing about the Buddha's *body*, when he was cremated and his relics distributed immediately afterwards? Further, the meaning of words such as *āloḍhe* is not clear, and K.R. Norman and others have proposed that the line contains several scribal errors. We have seen above examples of the use of *ni-* or *pra- kṣip* for the *installation* of relics (*śarīra*), a usage that seems fairly consistent in inscriptions and texts over the centuries. What, then, can *āloḍhe* mean when used with *śarīra*? If *ālodha* (*ārūḍha*, etc.) can mean to raise up or collect, then this might mean 'reconstitute the relic-body of the Bhagavat' by digging up and reuniting the relics. That is, by retrieving the relics from the seven or eight stupas, Aśoka had recreated a 'whole-body relic' – but the idea that Aśoka had the relics exhumed in order to distribute them in vast numbers of stupas is found only in legendary literature that is considerably post-Aśokan. It is risky to read the legends into Aśoka's contemporary epigraphs.

I do not find any of the solutions offered to date convincing, and I have none of my own to offer. For now, I refrain from dogmatism with regard to the use of singular or plural for *śārīra* – is this not, after all, one of the earliest written records of South Asia?[59] Can we be so certain about grammatical or semantic usage at the time of Aśoka? I accept that it is *possible* that the Ahraura version of MRE I does refer to some kind of action towards relics, but that, for the time being, nothing more can be said.

The very centrality of relics stretches received categories, from Śrāvakayāna/Mahāyāna to spiritual culture/material culture. As far as we know, all traditional Buddhist communities and societies have participated in the cult of relics.[60] The relic cult is intensely spiritual – relics inspire devotion, visions, chronicles, liturgies and rhapsodies. The relic cult is also unabashedly material – relics are carefully enshrined in precious containers, which are in turn encased in caskets to be installed within stupas, pagodas and images. Extraordinary sums of wealth, of exchequer, have been, and still are, lavished on relics by devotees, monastics and rulers.

One of early Buddhism's signature texts is the 'Great Nirvāṇa Sūtra', which recounts Śākyamuni's last journey to Kusinara and his final teachings before he passed beyond to ineffable *nirvāṇa*.[61] The *sūtra* exists in multiple languages and versions, making a family of texts centred on the passage to *nirvāṇa*. It ends with Śākyamuni's cremation and the distribution and celebration of his relics. But that is only the end of the *sūtra*, not the end of the story. Soon enough Buddhism began to grow, and this does not simply mean that the Dharma – the intangible teachings, ideals and practices that are the legacy of Śākyamuni's 45-year career – spread throughout South Asia. The Dharma and the Buddha's relics travelled together. We have seen that early reliefs depict how relics were transported on regal elephants in grand processions to be housed in stupas which, within a few centuries, dotted the landscape of India. These were the relics of Śākyamuni Buddha, King of the Dharma (*dharmarāja*). He settled wherever a stupa was erected: his relics kept him alive in the spirits of those who gathered to venerate him through his relics. The stupas developed into architectural complexes with refectories, assembly halls and monastic residences. They were the centres of cult, education, religious instruction and meditation. Buddhism developed at and around the stupas. Stupas were the nuclei of the ever-expanding networks of the religion that spread through Southeast Asia and Central Asia to East Asia. Relics were not only the heart of veneration but also the engine of inspiration for the extraordinary material and intangible culture, the civilization, that we call Buddhism.

Notes

1 I thank Marcus Bingenheimer for help with East Asian languages. I am grateful to Lilian Handlin and the librarians of Widener Library, Harvard University, for their prompt help in tracking down articles difficult to find, and to Anirban Dash for highlighting the Bhattiprolu inscriptions.

2 D.D. Kosambi, 'Dhenukākaṭa', in *Combined Methods in Indology and Other Writings*, ed. Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002, 450–75, at 453 (first published in *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 30, 1955, 50–71).

3 *Śarīra* (Pali *sarīra*) are corporeal remains. *Dhātu* is somewhat broader because it includes bones like the forehead bone (*naḷāta-dhātu*) and the teeth and eye-teeth (*danta-dhātu*, *dāṭhā-dhātu*). For the latter, see Toshiichi Endo, 'The last verses of the Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta at D II, 167–168: a Sri Lankan contribution to the Pāli canon?', in *Studies in Pāli Commentarial Literature: Sources, Controversies and Insights*, Hong Kong, Centre of Buddhist Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2013, 157–77. The two Indic words took on new lives in East Asia. *Dhātu* settled down in China as *ta* (塔, 'pagoda', '*stūpa*'), and *śarīra* became *sheli* (舍利, 'relic'). The same two characters are pronounced *tap* and *sari* in Korean, *tō* and *shari* in Japanese, and *tháp* and *xá lợi* in Vietnamese.

4 The final verses of the last chapter of the 'Lineage of the Buddhas' (*Buddhavaṃsa*) describe the post-*nirvāṇa* fate of the personal effects or requisites of Śākyamuni. The chapter bears the title *Dhātu-bhājaniya-kathā* ('Distribution of the relics'), but I do not think that this means that the items listed were generally classified as 'relics'. In the Indian Buddhist textual tradition, titles are frequently extraneous, added by later redactors.

5 *Cetiya* is the Pali equivalent of Sanskrit *caitya*, but the threefold classification as such is unknown in Indian Buddhism and, as far as I know, *caitya* was not used in India as a category that can include the Buddha's personal effects (which could, however, be *enshrined* in a *caitya*). On the three kinds of *cetiya*, see Endo, 'Last verses', 160–1. For a concise note on *dhātu*, *cetiya*, and the three types of *cetiya*, see Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, 277–80, and the perceptive remarks in Juhyung Rhi, 'Images, relics, and jewels: the assimilation of images in the Buddhist relic cult of Gandhāra – or vice versa', *Artibus Asiae* 65, 2, 2005, 169–70. See also Cousins in this volume, chapter 2.

6 Endo, 'The Last Verses' 160, n. 10, points out that 'the most apt definition in terms of three kinds of *cetiya*' is found in the *Aṅguttaranikāya-ṭīkā*: *cetiyan ti pūjanīyavatthuṃ*, '*cetiya* is a thing worthy of honour'. For the *cetiya* according to a 19th-century Thai monk-scholar, Saṅgharāja Pussadeva, see Peter Skilling and Prapod Assavavirulhakarn, 'Tripiṭaka in practice in the fourth and fifth reigns: relics and images according to Somdet Phra Saṅgharāja Pussadeva's *Paṭhamasambodhi Sermon*', *Manusya: Journal of Humanities*, special issue 4: Tripitaka (the Buddhist canon), 2002, 1–6. The pervasive mis-translation of the three *cetiya* as 'relics' is a modern transposition of a European category, an instructive if unsatisfactory case of a back-formation or back-translation into English.

7 Endo, 'The Last Verses'.

8 'Importantly, Buddhists do not consider only body parts as relics; garments worn by the Buddha, his begging bowl, artistic images, combs, toothpicks, to name only a few, are all, in various contexts, considered his relics. There are, however, traditionally three categories of relics in early Buddhism' (Jacob N. Kinnard, *The Emergence of Buddhism*, New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2008, 45–6). Statements like this are misleading insofar as they conflate the different types of *cetiya*. Further, the three categories do not in the least belong to 'early Buddhism', whether that of India or elsewhere: they are first attested in the *later* texts of the Theravāda of Sri Lanka.

9 This can be *any* Buddha, or also a bodhisatva. See Peter Skilling, 'Cutting across categories: the ideology of relics in Buddhism', in *ARIRIAB*, 8, 2004, Tokyo, International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2005, 269–322. For my choice of the spelling 'bodhisatva', see Peter Skilling, 'Vaidalya, Mahāyāna, and Bodhisatva in India: an essay towards historical understanding', in Bhikkhu Nyanatusita (ed.), *The Bodhisattva Ideal: Essays on the Emergence of the Mahāyāna*, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 2013, 69. This spelling is already adopted by, for example, G. von Mitterwallner, 'The Brussels Buddha from Gandhara of the Year 5', in Marianne Yaldiz and Wibke Lobo (eds), *Investigating Indian Art: Proceedings of a Symposium on the Development of Early Buddhist and Hindu Iconography Held at the Museum of Indian Art, Berlin, in May 1986*, Berlin, Museum für Indische Kunst/Staatliche Museen Preussisicher Kulturbesitz, 1987, 241, n. 17.

10 *Śatapañcāśatka-stotra*, chapter 13: see Ven. S. Dhammika, *Mātṛceṭa's Hymn to the Buddha: An English Rendering of the Śatapañcāśatka*, Kandy, Buddhist Publication Society, 1989, 38; D.R. Shackleton Bailey (ed.), *The Śatapañcāśatka of Mātṛceṭa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1951, 143–5.

11 *Śarīravibhāgam upadarśayeyaṃ*: Isshi Yamada (ed.), *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1968, 249.9. In Mahāyāna Buddhology a Buddha 'displays' rather than 'performs' deeds.

12 Ibid., 262.12. 'Irreversibility' is a stage on the bodhisatva path after which the aspirant will not turn back from his goal, full Buddhahood. The three vehicles are the vehicle of the listeners or hearers (*śrāvaka-yāna*: those who will become noble ones [*ārya*] after they listen to the Dharma from a Buddha), the vehicle of the pratyekabuddhas (*pratyekabuddha-yāna*: those who achieve awakening on their own, but do not teach), and the vehicle of bodhisatvas (*bodhisatva-yāna*: those who will become fully awakened Buddhas).

13 In Tibetan there are two primary terms, *sku gdung* and *ring bsrel*, either of which can stand for *śarīra* or *dhātu*. For the skein of linguistic complications see Jonathan A. Silk, *Body Language: Indic Śarīra and Chinese Shèli in the Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra and Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Studia Philologica Buddhica monograph series 19, Tokyo, International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2006.

14 *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology*, 908a: 'reliquary. *n.* container for a relic. 1656, in Blount's *Glossographia*; borrowed from French reliquaire, from OF relique'. Cf. French *reliquaire*, German *Reliquiar.*

15 In the *Mahāvastu* (Senart II, 16.18), the pregnant Mahāmāyā sees the Bodhisatva in her womb 'like a *vaiḍūrya* gem in a crystal casket, his body shining in the womb like gold' (*yatha vaiḍūrasya maṇi sphāṭikasamudge kaṭi-utsaṃgasmiṃ, nihito syā evam eva bodhisatvaṃ paśyati mātā, kukṣiṃ obhāsentaṃ vigrahaṃ iva jātarūpasya*).

16 For Bhattiprolu (note that the name is variously spelt), see Alexander Rea, *South Indian Buddhist Antiquities, including the Stûpas of Bhaṭṭiprôlu, Guḍivâḍa, and Ghaṇṭasâlâ and Other Ancient Sites in the Kṛishṇa District, Madras Presidency; with Notes on Dome Construction; Andhra Numismatics; and Marble Sculpture*, Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series 15, Madras, 1894 (repr. New Delhi, 1997), pls I, V. For the inscriptions, see G. Bühler, 'The Baṭṭiprolu Buddhist inscriptions', *EI* 2, 1894, 323–9; CSIBI, vol. 2, Bhaṭṭiprolu, 1–11. For an analysis, see Harry Falk, *Schrift im alten Indien: ein Forschungsbericht mit Anmerkungen*, ScriptOralia 56, Tübingen, Gunte Narr Verlag, 1993, 189–94; and Richard Salomon, *Indian Epigraphy: A Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1998, 34–5.

17 Bühler, 'Baṭṭiprolu inscriptions', 325.

18 R.N. Mehta and S.N. Chowdhary, *Excavation at Devnimori (A Report of the Excavation Conducted from 1960 to 1963)*, Baroda, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1966, 121; S.N. Chowdhary, *Devnimori: Buddhist Monuments*, Vadodara, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Faculty of Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 2010, 134–6.

19 *Bimbābhikkhunī-nibbāna*, 203.2, *suvaṇṇamañjusaṃ ānesuṃ*; 203.9, *sabbe mahābrahmāno suvaṇṇamañjuse bhikkhunīsarīraṃ pakkhipitvā thapesum*; 205.7 *suvaṇṇamañjuse ukkhipitvā anto cittake āropayiṃsu*; 205.12, *sakko devarājā mahābrahmā cātummahārājāno suvaṇṇamañjuse jhāpesuṃ*. For the *Bimbābhikkhunī-nibbāna* see Peter Skilling, 'Reflections on the Pali literature of Siam', in Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (eds), *From Birch Bark to Digital Data: Recent Advances in Buddhist Manuscript Research (Papers Presented at the Conference Indic Buddhist Manuscripts: The State of the Field, Stanford, June 15–19 2009)*, Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens 80, Denkschriften der

philosophisch-historischen Klasse 460, Vienna, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014, 355–7. The text also uses *caṅkoṭaka* for a smaller vessel for flowers or gems: 204.2, *puppha-caṅkoṭaka-hatthā*, 204.8, *suvaṇṇa-caṅkoṭaka[ṃ] maṇi-mutta-pavāḷa-ratanāni pūretvā*: see *DP*, Part II, 97–8.

20 See *GBR*, chapter 6, no. 45 and n. 97, with reference to earlier literature; Elizabeth Errington and Joe Cribb (eds), *The Crossroads of Asia: Transformation in Image and Symbol in the Art of Ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan*, Cambridge, Ancient India and Iran Trust, 1992, cat. no. 193; Harry Falk, 'Appendix: the inscription on the so-called Kaniṣka casket', in Britta Schneider *et al*. (eds), *Hariśyenalekhapañcāśikā: Fifty Selected Papers on Indian Epigraphy and Chronology*, Bremen, Hempen Verlag, 2013, 59–63. CSIBI, vol. 1, 993–4, gives only Konow's early reading, made before the casket was cleaned at the British Museum in the 1960s.

21 *Aṅguttaranikāya*, *Tikanipāta* (PTS) I, 246–9, *navam pi bhikkhave kāsikaṃ vatthaṃ vaṇṇavantañ ceva hoti sukhasamphassañ ca mahagghañ ca, majjhimam pi bhikkhave kāsikaṃ vatthaṃ vaṇṇavantañ ceva hoti sukhasamphassañ ca mahagghañ ca, jiṇṇam pi bhikkhave kāsikaṃ vatthaṃ vaṇṇavantaṃ ceva hoti sukhasamphassañ ca mahagghañ ca. jiṇṇam pi bhikkhave kāsikaṃ vatthaṃ ratanapaliveṭhanaṃ vā karonti gandhakaraṇḍake vā naṃ pakkhipanti*. For an English translation, see Bhikkhu Bodhi, *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Boston, Wisdom Publications, 2012, 330. The simile also occurs in the *Puggalapaññatti* of the Abhidhamma, 33–5. The commentaries do not explain the term.

22 P.L. Vaidya (ed.), *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post- Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1960 (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 5), chapter 54, *Maitreya*, 397.2, *gandhakaraṇḍakabhūtaṃ guṇagandhakaraṇatayā*; 397.23 *gandhakaraṇḍabhūtaṃ sarvaguṇagandhādhāraṇatayā*.

23 Johannes Nobel (ed.), *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra: das Goldglanz-Sūtra, ein Sanskrittext des Mahāyāna-Buddhismus*, Leipzig, Otto Harrassowitz, 1937, 14.5, *dhātuṃ karaṇḍake nikṣiptavyam*; 14.8, *dhātukaraṇḍake nikṣipya*; 204.7, *samudgakaṃ dṛṣṭvā*. Note the verb *ni-kṣip*, also used in inscriptions.

24 *za ma tog*, *rin po che'i za ma tog* and *ring bsrel gyi za ma tog*, respectively: Lozang Jamspal and P.G. Hackett, *The Range of the Bodhisattva, A Mahāyāna Sūtra (byangs chub sems dpa'i spyod yul), The Teachings of Nirgrantha Satyaka*, New York, American Institute of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University Center for Buddhist Studies, Tibet House US, 2010, 193–5. For an English translation, see ibid., 120–1.

25 For references, see Michael Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*, London, British Museum Press, 2000, 17–21.

26 Nobel, *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*, 204.4, *vighaṭṭay-ānandemaṃ stūpaṃ / athāyuṣmāṇ Ānando bhagavataḥ pratiśrutya taṃ stūpaṃ vighaṭṭayāmāsa / sa tatra dadarśa kanaka-vibhūti-maṇi-muktā-saṃcchāditaṃ hiraṇya-mayaṃ samudgakaṃ dṛṣṭvā ca bhagavantam etad avocat / hiraṇya-mayaṃ bhagavan samudgakaṃ samuddhṛtam / bhagavān uvāca / saptaite samudgakāḥ / sarve udghāṭyantām iti / tathā ca sarvān udghāṭayāmāsa / sa tatra dadarśa hima-kumuda-sadṛśavarṇāny asthīni dṛṣṭvā ca bhagavantam etad avocat / bhagavann asthīni upalakṣyante / bhagavān uvāca / ānīyatāṃ ānanda mahāpuruṣasya asthīni / athāyuṣmān ānandas tāny asthīny ādāya bhagavate buddhāyopanāmāyamāsa / bhagavāṃś ca āsthīni gṛhītvā saṃghasya puratāḥ saṃnyasyovāca … tato bhagavān bhikṣūn āmantrayāmāsa / vandata bhikṣavo bodhisatva-śarīrāṇi śīla-guṇa-parivāsitāni parama-durlabha-darśanāni puṇyakṣetra-bhūtāni / tatas te bhikṣavaḥ kṛtakarapuṭā āvarjitamanasas tāni śarīrāṇi mūrdhnā vandante sma //*. The Tibetan for 'golden container' is *gser gyi za ma tog* in the Jinamitra *et al*. translation, and *sgrom bu* in Chos grub's translation from Yijing's Chinese.

27 The text remains unpublished, whether in the Thai or any other script, and my translation is tentative. I have access to a romanized excerpt in I.P. Minayeff, *Recherches sur le bouddhisme*, trans. R.H. Assier de Pompignan, Paris, Ernest Leroux, 1894, Appendice B, 'Les objets sacrés des bouddhistes', 131–2, and a typed transcription in Thai letters of a Khom-script manuscript from Wat Bovaranives, Bangkok, prepared by the Bhūmibalo Bhikkhu Foundation, Bangkok, dated 2520 [1977], where the passage occurs in *phūk* 15, folios 19b–20a. Some of the readings are questionable and cannot be resolved until an edition of this important text becomes available.

28 *tathāgataśarīrāṇi bhājanaṃ* (correct from *bhajanaṃ*), Takayasu Kimura (ed.), *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* II–4, Tokyo, Sankibo Busshorin, 2014, 108.25 ff. The preceding comparison (108.15) uses *karaṇḍaka* as a receptacle for a precious gem with *pra-kṣip*: *tat khalu punar bhagavan mahāmaṇiratnaṃ yasmin karaṇḍake prakṣiptaṃ bhavet*.

29 Raniero Gnoli (ed.), with the assistance of T. Venkatacharya, *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu, Being the 17th and Last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*, Part I, Serie Orientale Roma 49, Rome, Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977, 162.27: *tāny asthīnī catūratnamaye kumbhe prakṣipya viviktāvakāśe pṛthivīpradeśe śārīraḥ stūpaḥ pratiṣṭhāpitaḥ yojana ucchrāyeṇa ardhayojanaṃ vistāreṇa*. Tibetan from *'Dul ba gzhi*, *Dge 'dun gyi dbyen gyi gzhi*, Otani cat. no. 1030, repr. vol. 42, *'dul ba*, *ce*, 72b5, *sku gdung de dag ni rin po che sna bzhi las byas pa'i bum pa'i nang du blugs nas sa phyogs dben zhing yangs par sku gdung gi mchod rten 'phang du dpag tshad gcig la rgyar dpag tshad phyed pa zhig rtsig tu bcug go*. On the basis of the Tibetan, correct *śārīraḥ stūpaḥ* to *śārīra-stūpaḥ*.

30 Robert K. Barnhart (ed.), *Chambers Dictionary of Etymology* (Edinburgh, Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 1988), 907b, has the following: 'relic. *n*. thing, custom, etc., that remains from the past. Probably before 1200 *relik* object, especially body part, belonging to a holy person, kept as a sacred memorial, in *Ancrene Riwle*, borrowed from OF *relique*, from Late Latin *reliquiae*, pl., remains of a martyr, from Latin, remains or remnants, from *reliquus* remaining (*re-* back + *linquere* to leave)'. Cf., similarly from Latin, Italian *reliquia*, French *relique*, German *Reliquie*. The recently published *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* eschews the use of the words relic and reliquary, and simply directs the reader to 'see DHĀTU, ŚĀRĪRA, STŪPA, SUISHEN SHELI', or, for reliquary, to 'see STŪPA, SHELIJU'.

31 For relics in Christianity, see for example Carl Lindahl, John McNamara and John Lindow (eds), *Medieval Folklore: A Guide to Myths, Legends, Tales, Beliefs, and Customs*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 337–8. Recent comprehensive volumes include Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann and James Robinson (eds), *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011, and Henk van Os, *The Way to Heaven: Relic Veneration in the Middles Ages*, Baarn (Utrecht), de Prom, 2000 (publ. in conjunction with the exhibition held in the Nieuwe Kerk, Amsterdam, and the Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht, from 16 December 2000 to 22 April 2001), with a contribution on 'Relic veneration in Buddhism' by Karel R. van Kooij (I thank J. Silk, Leiden, for the gift of this book); see also van Kooij in this volume, chapter 6. For reliquaries, see Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty: Issues in the Making and Meaning of Reliquaries, 400–circa 1204*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania University Press, 2012. See also Bernard Berthold (ed.), *Reliques et reliquaires: l'émotion du sacré*, Lyon: Musée d'art religieux de Fourvière, 2014, for a selection of examples; for the opulent reliquaries of the Austrian imperial collections, see Kunsthistorisches Museum, *Hauptwerke der Geistlichen Schatzkammer*, Wien, Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2007 (Kurzführer durch das Kunsthistorisches Museum 7), passim; Rudolf Distelberger and Manfred Leithe-Jasper, *The Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna: The Imperial and Ecclesiastical Treasury*, London, Scala Publishers/ Munich, Verlag C.H. Beck, [1998] 2009, 70–95, passim; Wilfried Seipel (ed.), *A Brief Guide to the Kunsthistorisches Museum*, vol. 2: *Masterpieces of the Secular Treasury*, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum/Milan, Skira editore, 2008. The emperor was Christ's representative, and there was no firm line between 'spiritual' and 'secular': recesses in the Imperial Cross (ibid. § 2, 11th century), for example, held the Holy Lance (ibid. § 3) and the Particle of the Cross (ibid. § 4). See also ibid. §§ 6, 11, 12, 13, 15. See also Gregory Schopen, 'Relic', in Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 1998, 256–8. John S. Strong, 'Buddhist relics in comparative perspective: beyond the parallels', in David Germano and Kevin Trainor (eds), *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, 27–49, tries 'to go beyond parallelisms between Christian and Buddhist relic traditions, in order to isolate some of their distinguishing characteristics' (p. 29).

32 For some Christian examples, see Strong, 'Buddhist relics in comparative perspective', 28–9. On the Buddhist side, Strong (p. 29) cites 'the good pilgrim Ennin who tells us that in 841, he not

only saw one of the four tooth relics of the Buddha then enshrined in Chang'an but also physically handled it' (reference to E.O. Reischauer, *Ennin's Diary*, New York, Ronald Press, 1955, 301). For the idea of display in Gandharan Buddhism, see Kurt Behrendt, 'Relic shrines of Gandhāra: a reinterpretation of the archaeological evidence', in Pia Brancaccio and Kurt Behrendt (eds), *Gandhāran Buddhism: Archaeology, Art, Texts*, Vancouver and Toronto, University of British Columbia Press, 2006, 83–103; see also Karel van Kooij in this volume, Chapter 6.

33 *Stūpa* and *caitya* are the same in this case.

34 In the early Kuṣāṇa period there was a 'Jain stūpa at Mathurā' (the title of a monograph by Vincent A. Smith, *The Jain Stûpa and Other Antiquities of Mathurâ*, repr. New Delhi, Archaeological Survey of India, 1994, originally published in 1901 as Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series, vol. 20, North-Western Provinces and Oudh, vol. 5, *Muttra Antiquities*), but as a rule the Jains did not continue the cult in the way done by the Buddhists – for their practices, see now Peter Flügel, 'Jaina relic stūpas', *Jaina Studies: Newsletter of the Centre of Jaina Studies* 3, 2008, 18–23; Peter Flügel, 'The Jaina cult of relic stūpas', *Numen* 57, 3, 2010, 389–504. Vincent A. Smith criticized the assumption 'that the stūpa and its concomitant railing are Buddhist only' in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, The Indian Empire*, vol. 2: *Historical*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1909, 110–11. The fact that very few of the extant stupas or reliquaries bear inscriptions supports his criticism, although context and other factors do suggest that the majority of stupas were Buddhist.

35 Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty*, xiv, remarks that 'I have been reminded over and over again that there is no general book on [Christian] reliquaries in English'. So also Charles Freeman, *Holy Bones, Holy Dust: How Relics Shaped the History of Medieval Europe*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2012, xii, writes that 'it is quite extraordinary that there has been no full-length study of medieval relics in English'. Research for this article reinforces my impression that the same may be said for Buddhist reliquaries, for which we have a dearth of literature. The exception is the comprehensive survey of sources and narratives in John S. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2004. See also Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravada Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997; David Germano and Kevin Trainor (eds), *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2004.

36 For an early note on 'relic-receptacles' and 'external parts of Stūpas' as historical sources, see J.F. Fleet, 'Epigraphy', in *The Imperial Gazetteer of India, The Indian Empire*, vol. 2: *Historical*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1909, 43–7.

37 See the lineages of the Buddhist saints in Michael Willis, 'Buddhist saints in Vedisa', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* ser. 3, 11, 2, 2001, 219–28, or those on the Deorkothar pillar in Peter Skilling and Oskar von Hinüber, 'Two Buddhist inscriptions from Deorkothar (Dist. Rewa, Madhya Pradesh)', *ARIRIAB*, 16, 2012, Tokyo, International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2013, 13–36, pls 4–11; Richard Salomon and Joseph Marino, 'Observations on the Deorkothar inscriptions and their significance for the evaluation of Buddhist historical tradition', *ARIRIAB*, 17, 2013, Tokyo, International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2014, 27–39.

38 *Ānisaṃsa* (Pali), *anuśaṃśa* (Sanskrit) is a concern for benefits and blessings in this life or the next – for oneself, for one's relatives and ancestors, or for rulers and the state. See Peter Skilling, 'For merit and *nirvāṇa*: the production of art in the Bangkok period', *Arts Asiatiques* 62, 2007, 76–94; Peter Skilling, 'The aesthetics of devotion: Buddhist arts of Thailand', in Heidi Tan (ed.), *Enlightened Ways: The Many Streams of Buddhist Art in Thailand*, Singapore, Asian Civilizations Museum, 2012, 18–31.

39 For festivals, see Ulrich Pagel, 'Stupa festivals in Buddhist narrative literature', in Konrad Klaus and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (eds), *Indica et Tibetica: Festschrift für Michael Hahn zum 65. Geburtstag von Freunden und Schülern überreicht*, Vienna, Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 2007, 369–94.

40 Monier Monier-Williams, *Buddhism, in Its Connexion with Brāhmanism and Hindūism and in Its Contrast with Christianity*, London, John Murray, 1889 (repr. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009), 495–6 (brought to my attention by Strong, *Relics of the Buddha*, 15).

41 K. Walton Dobbins, 'Buddhist reliquaries from Gandhara', in Devendra Handa and Ashvini Agrawal (eds), *Ratna-Chandrikā: Panorama of Oriental Studies (Shri R.C. Agrawala Festschrift)*, New Delhi, Harman Publishing House, 1989, 105–24.

42 B. Subrahmanyam, *Buddhist Relic Caskets in South India*, Hyderabad, Ananda Buddhist Vihara Trust, 1999.

43 Willis, *Buddhist Reliquaries*.

44 Elizabeth Errington, 'Reliquaries in the British Museum', in *GBR*, 111–63. For Gandharan reliquaries in the British Museum collections, see also W. Zwalf, *A Catalogue of the Gandhāra Sculpture in the British Museum*, London, British Museum Press, 1996, vol. 1: *Text*, 340–56, nos 64–7; vol. 2: *Plates*, cat. nos 636–80. In general, see Shoshin Kuwayama, 'The stupa in Gandhara', in C. Luczanits and M. Jansen (eds), *Gandhara, The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Legends, Monasteries, and Paradise*, Mainz, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2008, 170–8; Abdul Samad, 'Buddhist reliquaries from Gandhara', in *ibid.*, 191–2; and Errington and Cribb, *Crossroads of Asia*, 172–98. For Indian, Chinese and Japanese reliquaries, see Nara National Museum, *Ultimate Sanctuaries: The Aesthetics of Buddhist Relic Worship*, 2001.

45 *GBR*. This is an advance over the 15 Kharoṣṭhī inscriptions (plus 2 Brāhmī) listed by Sudha Sengupta, 'Redistribution of Buddha's relics: a problem', in Kalyan Kumar Dasgupta (ed.), *Buddhism, Early and Late Phases*, Calcutta, Centre for Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University, 1985, 23–39. For reliquaries from Butkara I and Saidu, see Pierfancesco Callieri and Anna Filigenzi (eds), *Il Maestro di Saidu Sharif, all origini dell'arte del Gandhara*, Rome, Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale/ Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2002, 165–6.

46 Amalananda Ghosh, 'Relics and relic caskets', in Amalananda Ghosh (ed.), *An Encyclopaedia of India Archaeology*, 2 vols, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1989, 270–5. Debala Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971 (2nd edn 1980), makes frequent reference to relics.

47 S.K. Bhattacharya, 'Buddhist relic caskets in Indian museums', *Puratattva: Bulletin of the Indian Archaeological Society* 17, 1986–7, 43–9.

48 K. Venkateswara Rao, 'Relic caskets from the Buddhist stupas, Andhra Desa', *Journal of Archaeology*, Hyderabad, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 2, 1, 1984, 67–72 and pls I–II.

49 See Ulrich von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures of Sri Lanka*, Hong Kong, Visual Dharma Publications, 1990, who does give a short illustrated treatment of reliquaries. See also Van Kooij, this volume.

50 *Mahāvaṃsa*, chapter XVII: Wilhelm Geiger (ed. and trans.), *The Mahāvaṃsa*, London, Luzac & Company Ltd for the PTS, 1958, 133–9; Wilhelm Geiger (ed. and trans.), *The Mahāvaṃsa or the Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, 1912 (repr. New Delhi, Asian Educational Services, 1986), 117–21; Stephen Berkwitz, *The History of the Buddha's Relic Shrine: A Translation of the Sinhala Thūpavaṃsa*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007, 150–4.

51 Bhagwanlal Indraji recovered a fragment of Rock Edict VIII in the area of Sopara north of Mumbai. Chakrabarti, *The Deccan Routes*, 112, remarks that 'the fact that Asoka chose to leave behind here a set of his Rock Edicts is a certain indication of its [Sopara's] importance in Mauryan India'. For the inscription, see D.C. Sircar, *Aśokan Studies*, Calcutta, Indian Museum, 2000 (first published 1979), 42–4. The status of an inscribed pillar fragment from Amaravati is contested: see e.g. Sircar, *Aśokan Studies*, 118–22; Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-Book with Bibliography*, Monographien zur Indische Archäologie, Kunst und Philologie, Band 18, Mainz, Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2006, 226; Akira Shimada, *Early Buddhist Architecture in Context: The Great Stupa at Amaravati (ca. 300 BCE–300 CE)*, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2013, 38,62.

52 Vincent A. Smith, *Asoka, The Buddhist Emperor of India*, repr. New Delhi, Low Price Publications, 2002, 21 (cited by Dilip K. Chakrabarti, *Royal Messages by the Wayside: Historical Geography of the Asokan Edicts*, New Delhi, Aryan Books International, 2011, 3).

53 Giovanni Verardi, *Excavations at Gotihawa and Pipri, Kabilbastu District, Nepal*, Rome, Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente/

Università degli Studi di Napoli 'L'Orientale'/Lumbini International Research Institute, 2007.

54 For the inscription, see Sircar, *Aśokan Studies*, 72–82; K.R. Norman, 'Notes on the Ahraurā version of Aśoka's First Minor Rock Edict', in *Collected Papers*, vol. 2, Oxford, PTS, 1991, 250–68 (originally published in *Indo-Iranian Journal* 26, 1983, 277–92). For the site of Ahraura, see Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts*, 59–61. For a synoptical presentation of MRE I, see Sircar, *Aśokan Studies*, Appendix III, 132–8, MRE I (for the line under discussion, see pp. 137–8).

55 A.K. Narain, 'An independent and definitive evidence on the date of the historical Buddha', in A.K. Narain (ed.), *The Date of the Historical Śākyamuni Buddha*, BJK Institute Workshop Series 2, New Delhi, B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2003 53–4, counts 17 copies. When we add the Ratanpurwa version from Dist. Bhabua, Bihar, discovered in January 2009, the number becomes 18. See Kiran Kumar Thaplyal, *A New Aśokan Inscription from Ratanpurwa*, Varanasi, Jñāna-Pravāha, 2009 (Jñāna-Pravāha Monograph 1); Kiran Kumar Thaplyal, *Aśoka: The King and the Man*, Appendix V, 296–8 and pl. XXIV. See now Harry Falk, 'Remarks on the Minor Rock Edict of Aśoka at Ratanpurwa', *Jñāna-Pravāha Research Publication* 16, 2013, 29–48.

56 After Sircar, *Aśokan Studies*, 81.

57 For the wide range of interpretations of the figure '256', see Kumar Thaplyal, *Aśoka*, 158–63; Falk, 'Remarks', 41–3. The number itself is clear. In most versions it is given in words, but in the Erraguddi, Rajula-Mandagiri, Nittur and Panguraria edicts it is given in figures only. For Erraguddi, see Sircar, *Aśokan Studies*, 1–13; for Rajula-Mandagiri, which is about 32km from Erraguddi (both are in Dist. Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh), see ibid., 104–12; for Nittur (Dist. Bellary, Karnataka), *ibid*., 123–8; for Panguraria, *ibid*., 94–103. These are some of the earliest figures in Indian writing. For a thorough exposition of the evolution of modern understanding of Indian figures, see Falk, *Schrift im alten Indian*, 168–76.

58 Narain, 'Independent and definitive evidence', 59.

59 *Sarīra* is used in the singular in two of the concluding verses of the Pali Great Nirvāṇa Sūtra (*Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, *Dīgha Nikāya*, no. 16).

60 The different forms of the rapidly growing 'Western Buddhism' are developing their own traditions. In some lineages, relics remain central, while others seem to leave aside, if not reject, devotional practices, images and relics. These responses and adaptations, though interesting in their own right, lie beyond the scope of this essay.

61 For a translation of the Pali *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta*, see Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, Boston, Wisdom Publications, 1995, Sutta no. 16.

Chapter 2
Cetiya and *Thūpa*: The Textual Sources

Lance Cousins

Abstract

This chapter attempts to present an overview of the materials related to the *stūpa* (Pali *thūpa*) cult inherited by the Theriya school from its canonical literature, usually referred to as the Pali Canon. The dating of the canonical Pali texts is discussed, emphasizing that this is the only source which can give us a complete picture of the ideas of an ancient Buddhist school as handed down in its canonical literature. No other complete canon survives, even in translation. The material we have on the *thūpa* and *cetiya* (Sanskrit *caitya*) is presented in approximate chronological sequence, i.e. separating out the earlier texts, those of the middle period and the latest texts included in the Canon, as well as some material of comparable date.

Relics and shrines

The cult of relics remains widely practised in most traditional forms of Buddhism today, but it is probably in Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, along with the Kathmandu valley in Nepal, that we see the most continuity with ancient Indian practice. A verse that is very frequently chanted in Pali today pays respect to every kind of *cetiya* wherever found – corporeal relics, the tree under which the Buddha was enlightened and every kind of Buddha image – all of them, always. In this chapter *cetiya* (Sanskrit *caitya*) refers specifically to Buddhist shrines, although its meaning outside Buddhism and earlier is somewhat broader.

Three kinds of *cetiya* are distinguished in commentaries of the school of Buddhaghosa (4th or 5th century CE). The first is one containing corporeal relics of the Buddha (or *arahat* or emperor). The second is one containing or consisting of something used by the Buddha, while the third is something which refers to or is specifically directed towards the Buddha.[1] In the earliest period corporeal relics were perhaps placed in simple mounds of earth, but later these gradually developed into substantial monuments. In the Southern Buddhist countries today they are widely referred to by vernacular forms of *cetiya*.[2] In some countries honorifics can be used instead. In Sri Lanka *dāgäba* is frequently used.[3] In Burma (Myanmar) 'pagoda' is often used in English for a stupa, but the now-widespread English usage of 'stupa' seems to derive from the study of Sanskrit literature, perhaps influenced by the Anglo-Indian 'tope', used by the first archaeologists investigating these monuments.[4]

The second type of *cetiya* was most typically a tree, ultimately derived by seed or cutting from the tree at Bodhgayā, but it could also be such things as the Buddha's alms-bowl. The third kind of *cetiya* is the referential *cetiya*, i.e. anything which directs the mind towards the Buddha. In later times this is most typically a Buddha image, but earlier (and sometimes later) it could be such things as a representation of the Buddha's footprint or the seat on which he sat. These would probably have been in wood and later in stone and placed in a small chamber of some kind. However, in all of these cases they could contain relics as well. In that case they would count as the first type of *cetiya*.

In the 12th century Sāriputta refers to an alternative list where the third category is a *dhamma- cetiya*, i.e. one in which a text inscribed with words such as the formula of

conditioned origination has been deposited.[5] He, however, prefers the more usual list because, when an indicatory *cetiya* is referred to, a Buddha image would be included, but the alternative list does not cover that case.

In this chapter, then, the concern is not so much with relics as with the monuments used to enshrine them.

The dating of the canonical Pali texts

I wish to examine what I believe to be the oldest extant sources related to the cult of the stupa and its antecedents that are preserved in Indic languages. Those sources are for the most part located in the Pali Canon.[6] Relatively little early material is found elsewhere for this topic. Even within the Pali Canon we find almost no reference to *thūpa* or *cetiya* in their later Buddhist sense in anything which seems especially likely to belong to the earliest stratum of Buddhist texts. This for me supports the traditional view that large parts of the Canon go back to a time when this cult was not yet as highly developed or prominent as it later became. Given the Emperor Aśoka Moriya's enlargement of the stupa (*thuba*) of a former Buddha, this must represent a time no later than the 3rd century BCE.

Of particular importance in this context are certain passages in the *Vinaya-piṭaka*. Gregory Schopen has addressed these, taking a very different position from the one I shall put forward. Because of his many valuable contributions to the history of later Buddhist monasticism, his views have received a wide hearing. So they need to be addressed here. I would like therefore to offer one or two preliminary comments in relation to his arguments. Here, as frequently, he suggests that the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya* is not the later development that it has been widely believed to be and the Pali *Vinaya-piṭaka* is not older than the other extant *Vinaya*s.[7]

There seem to be two main bases to his position. The first is to attribute the relative simplicity of the Pali *Vinaya* to the geographical and cultural peculiarities of the island of Ceylon. Of course, most scholars have ascribed such features to their depicting an earlier historical situation. What does not seem to have been pointed out is that there is an inherent contradiction in Schopen's position. In order to reject the traditional early dating of the writing down of the Pali Canon, it is necessary to reject the late Sinhalese historical tradition which claims that the texts were first written down in Ceylon during the 1st century BCE.[8] However, if that tradition is rejected, there is no reason to suppose that the texts come from Ceylon at all. Indeed, we can go further. The one place in the whole of southern India that they are not likely to come from is the one place already speaking a form of Middle Indian. If the Pali Canon had indeed originated there, it would certainly have been written in Sinhala Prakrit; it is not. It is clear that it was either brought from elsewhere when Buddhism was introduced to the Sinhalese court in 3rd century BCE or was subsequently introduced from southern India. Some combination of the two seems likely.

The second underlying plank is, I believe, a kind of insensitivity to the historical development of the Indic languages. In Buddhist circles, at least, written Sanskrit appears not to have been used (except for secular purposes) prior to around the 2nd century CE. As far as we know, all Buddhist works before this used some form of Middle Indian dialect. The subsequent half-millennium saw a steadily increasing use of Sanskrit. Initially this was often in a form that amounts to being just a very superficially Sanskritized Middle Indian, but later on we meet an increasingly greater use of more sophisticated and cultured forms of Sanskrit, plainly influenced by the brahmanical literati. No doubt this process did not take place at a uniform rate nor at the same time in different localities. Even so, it provides us with a rough chronological framework.

It follows then that, when we meet relatively cultured forms of Sanskrit used in the so-called *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*, combined with a much extended corpus and clear signs of sophisticated editing by a large community of scholar monks, we can be reasonably certain that we are dealing with a recension which is relatively late in that form. This conclusion does not of course mean that the specific contents of particular parts of that work are necessarily always late. Indeed we may suspect that the work's creators have incorporated much from the recensions previously produced by other schools.

If this understanding is right, we have only one recension of the *Vinaya* preserved in the original Middle Indian language. Large parts of two are extant in Sanskrit translations, probably from a different dialect or dialects of Middle Indian.[9] Chinese and Tibetan translations, probably of Sanskrit translations of the Middle Indian originals of these, and several further *Vinaya* recensions are preserved. Nowadays there are even some translations into European languages of Chinese and Tibetan translations of Sanskrit translations of the Middle Indian originals. The Pali *Vinaya-piṭaka* is certainly not the only useful source, but it does, I believe, remain the best single source available at present. It would be a better one if we had good critical editions based upon reliable and representative manuscripts.

In an earlier paper Schopen goes rather further.[10] We 'know', it seems, that all recensions of the *Vinaya-piṭaka* are dated to the period between the beginning of the Christian era and 500 CE. In the case of the Pali *Vinaya-piṭaka* we are told that it is 'only knowable from Buddhaghosa's fifth century commentaries'. This is based upon the extraordinary presupposition that we do not know the contents of a text prior to the date of its earliest surviving manuscript. If this argument were applied generally, it would have remarkable consequences for the history of Indian literature and, indeed, of literature more broadly. Schopen applies it only selectively to the Pali texts.

He supports this with a further argument. According to him 'we know from archeological [*sic*] sources' that it was only in this period that large well-organized monasteries existed. I find this implausible in the light of some of the Buddhist monuments already being produced in the 2nd century BCE. Of course, wooden buildings on sites which were later rebuilt may leave very little record. In any case it is not clear to me how we can know the non-existence of something from an archaeological source.[11] That said, there is little doubt that both the earlier texts and the archaeological record provide evidence of a much simpler lifestyle for Buddhist monks in the earlier periods. This does

not mean that they could not have had a relatively complex organization – only that the monasteries were not, and probably did not wish to be, large-scale, wealthy institutions. It is this situation that both the Pali canonical texts and the archaeological record demonstrate very clearly.

I turn now to look at the oldest extant literary evidence for Buddhist usage of the words *thūpa* and *cetiya*. Since my aim is to present the material which was inherited in the Theriya school of Ceylon and South India, I shall pass over the extant parallels in Sanskrit.

Thūpa in the earlier canonical Pali texts

Texts which largely refer to the Buddha's lifetime naturally provide no evidence of the cult of the stupa.[12] Nor should we expect them to. It is in earlier but not the earliest sources that we might expect some beginnings. Possibly the earliest extant Pali use of forms derived from the word *thūpa* is in the *Vinaya*.[13] *Sekhiya* rule 30 prohibits the careless acceptance of alms food which is heaped up (*thūpi-kata*). Rather, monks should train themselves to accept alms food only to the extent that it evenly fills the bowl. A few rules later on we learn that carelessly pressing together the food from such a heaping (*thūpaka* or *thūpa*) and then eating it is equally prohibited.[14] It is, however, allowed to bring together a small remainder of the food, press it together and eat it. Here at least the basic meaning of 'mound' or 'heap' for *thūpa* seems assured, although most translators have followed Buddhaghosa in taking the sense as 'from the top'.[15]

I take the earlier Vedic sources as expressions of this same sense. The basic meaning is 'heap' or 'pile', either of earth, etc. or of hair, piled up in a bun or topknot on the head of a human being or animal. So it is applied to the mound between the horns of cattle, to the top of the head or to the hair piled up in a mound or bun.[16] Then by extension it can refer to the crown of a tree or a pinnacle on a building.[17]

CPD II interprets the verb *omadditvā* in this passage as meaning: 'to pick by squeezing (from) (with abl.)'. The problem with this is that such a sense does not appear to be found elsewhere and does not really fit the final occurrence in the passage (after *saṃkaḍḍhitvā*). *PṬC* has 'crush'. I am following Margaret Cone who gives (in *DP*) 'presses together', with several other passages showing the type of meaning that this verb usually has with food.

Although the Burmese sources, both for the *Vinaya-piṭaka* and for the later commentaries, subcommentaries and manuals, generally read: '*thūpaka-*', most Sinhalese sources seem to have '*thūpa-*'. Since even Sinhalese sources read *thūpaka* in the *Parivāra*, this seems the more likely of the two to be correct. However, it is not unlikely that both are standardizing an earlier tendency to vary between these two word forms. We should note that the *stūpākāraṃ* found in earlier Sarvāstivādin texts in Sanskrit from Central Asia is the natural equivalent of a Middle Indian form similar to *thūpaka* – in other words the *-ka* suffix is being interpreted to mean 'a sort of *stūpa*' i.e. 'like a *stūpa*'. It is only in the so-called Mūlasarvāstivādin sources (and in the *Mahāvyutpatti*) that we find the more stylish *stūpākṛtiṃ*.

The frame story given in the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya* effectively explains the rule as prohibiting magical attacks on those of other religious traditions. Most interpreters have seen this story as a later development. Schopen thinks otherwise; so it is perhaps worthwhile to discuss this a little more. First, we should note that it is inevitable that later Buddhist Sanskrit sources would assume that the word *stūpa* here refers to the familiar Buddhist monument. Any other use of the word is, it seems, rare. That is not true for Middle Indian, as for earlier brahmanical, literature.

Secondly, the kind of interpretation that Schopen is making seems alien to the context in the actual rules. In fact, the two rules – *sekhiya* 30 and *sekhiya* 35 clearly belong together, although Schopen excludes the former from consideration.[18] *Sekhiya* 30 is part of a section containing 10 rules which concern deportment of monks while on their alms round. The first six concern sloppy ways of waiting for alms in groups of houses, the remainder concern disrespectful ways of accepting alms: 27. 'as though desirous of throwing it away'; 28. not noticing that the food in the bowl is overflowing; 29. taking excessive amounts of *dal* to be carried separately by hand; and the case in question, where it is piled up in a mound over the level of the rim of the bowl. Clearly, the last two are types of greediness which are inappropriate to the almost sacred context of receiving alms food. Such behaviour, of course, would hardly inspire faith.

Sekhiya 35 is part of the next section, which contains 10 rules that concern the behaviour while actually eating. So prior to that rule we have: 31. eating respectfully; 32. not looking about so as to be unaware that the food in the bowl is overflowing; 33. not working downwards (*omasitvā*) here and there instead of eating uninterruptedly, i.e. not picking out choice morsels; 34. not eating excessive amounts of *dal*. Subsequent to *sekhiya* 35 there are five more training rules concerned with greediness: 36. concealing the tasty portions with rice out of desire for more; 37. asking for curry and rice for themselves when not ill; 38. looking at other people's bowls with indignation; 39. making very large mouthfuls of food; 40. making round (i.e. not elongated) mouthfuls of food.

The context is then clear. It is nothing to do with magical attacks. It is about awareness and absence of greediness. In fact, these rules are partly arranged in pairs: 27 corresponds to 31; 28 to 32; 29 to 34. Similarly, *sekhiya* 30 and *sekhiya* 35 are a pair and must be considered together. These two rules concern a particular style of eating mindfully and without greed.

Of course, for Schopen this leaves us with little more than a 'seemingly silly rule about monks playing with their food'.[19] For him this perhaps follows from the fact that: 'The vinaya texts that we know are little interested in any individual religious quest'.[20] For the monastic translators and interpreters of later times, however, it is not even 'seemingly' silly. This is so for most of the Chinese translations conveniently cited by Matsumura,[21] for Buddhaghosa and for modern practitioners. All see these rules as concerned with the manner of eating. It is nicely expressed by one modern Thai writer: 'It is a tradition for the bhikkhu that when he eats he should level off the rice in his bowl keeping it even.'[22] Monastic deportment is part of the exercise of awareness that is very much part of the individual religious quest.

The *sekhiya* rules are often considered to be a later addition to the main body of rules, so this material may not

be extremely early. This particular objection does not apply to the only other passage from the main body of the *Vinaya*.[23] The section concerned is *pācittiya* 52 from the rules for nuns (Vin II 308). However, it is held by some that a separate set of *Pātimokkha* rules for nuns is a later development; at all events it seems likely that initially the nuns followed the same rules as the monks. The context is the story associated with the rule which prohibits speaking against monks. The (or a) senior nun of those connected with the group of six has died; so the nuns carry her out, cremate her near the dwelling of a monk named Kappitaka, make a mound (*thūpa*), go there <periodically> and lament at the mound. The monk is disturbed by this behaviour, which is of course entirely inappropriate for members of the Buddhist *saṅgha*; so he breaks up the mound and scatters it.[24] The nuns are upset and plan to kill him, but he is warned and hides elsewhere.

Rather interestingly, what the nuns then do is to cover the monk's dwelling with stones and clods of earth in an attempt to kill him. Since this must have been intended as a kind of poetic justice, this probably tells us exactly how the nuns' mound was constructed. Note that this mound is for a senior nun, but there is no suggestion that she was an *arahat*; indeed her association with the following of the notorious group of six makes it very unlikely that the redactors of the *Vinaya* considered her to be any kind of holy person. Of course, she might have been thought to be so by her fellows.[25] Especially if she was not considered an *arahat* nun, it is questionable whether making a *thūpa* for her would have been acceptable in the early period.

By contrast, in a passage found in the *Udāna*, when a *thūpa* is made for a monk, he is described as *parinibbuta* in a stock passage which is probably intended to suggest that he is an *arahat*.[26] The context is one where the monk Bāhiya has just been killed by a cow with a young calf and his body is seen by the Buddha, who is leaving the city after his alms round. The Buddha then instructs the monks to lift the body (*sarīraka*) onto a frame, carry it out (from the city environs), cremate it and make a mound for it. 'Monks, your fellow *brahmacārin* has died.' This concluding statement strongly implies that this is intended as a general instruction, not restricted to *arahats* alone.[27]

There are no other occurrences of the word *thūpa* in the early verse texts of the Canon. For that matter, there are relatively few occurrences in the prose works, if we exclude the special case of the *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta*. One passage from the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, however, certainly belongs with the two just discussed.[28] This is the story of the death of Bhaddā, the Queen of King Muṇḍa, traditionally the great-grandson of Ajātasattu. The king is greatly distressed at her death and tries to preserve her body in an oil vessel made of iron, covered with a second iron vessel. Eventually, however, the preaching of a monk from the Kukkuṭārāma in Pataliputra relieves his distress and he orders his minister to have the queen's body cremated and to construct a mound for her.

Otherwise, there is one other unusual usage of *thūpa* in these texts. In two discourses of the *Dīgha-nikāya* and one of the *Majjhima-nikāya* we find the odd expression *bhinna-thūpa*.[29] It does not seem ever to be found in later Pali sources (other than commentarial exegesis of these three discourses). The context is the bereft state of the disciples of Mahāvīra after his death, leading to disputation and violence. This is attributed to having a *dhamma-vinaya* which is badly expounded and proclaimed, does not lead out (of the round of births), is not proclaimed by a Fully Awakened One, has its mound broken open and is without a refuge. Whether the meaning here is truly 'mound' as opposed to 'head' or 'summit' is far from sure. Probably we should translate rather more metaphorically 'with its capstone broken' and understand it to refer to the death of Mahāvīra.

There remain from the earlier material only two passages in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* which must be somehow related to the *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta*. The first tells us: 'Two are those worthy of a mound' and goes on to list them as a Buddha and a *cakkavattin* king.[30] The second (A II 245) increases the number to four by adding the Pacceka Buddha and the disciple of a Tathāgata. Since the notion of the Paccekabuddha or Paccekasambuddha is either a later development or at any rate becomes more prominent at a later date, we may suppose that the number of those worthy of a *thūpa* was originally two and only later increased to four. It is difficult to say whether at this date the term 'disciple' (*sāvaka*) is intended to refer specifically to an *arahat* disciple, to one of the four kinds of noble person (*ariyapuggala*) or to any follower.

An almost identical list of four is given in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*. But here an expanded commentary is added, giving the reason why they are so worthy.[31] This possibly suggests that it is later, which brings us to the difficult question of the date of the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*. Quite apart from the well-known problems connected with the relationship between the Pali version and other known versions, we can note here that an explicit statement is made at D II 167 that the distribution of the relics between 10 *thūpa*s represents an earlier situation.[32] This statement can only have been added at a time when there were more than 10 *thūpa*s. Traditionally, this would have to be after the division of the relics under Aśoka. Since a verse summary of this event, almost certainly based upon the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, is given in one of the latest canonical works, the *Buddhavaṃsa* (Bv XXVIII 4f.), we can be confident that this would not be later than the writing down of the orally preserved texts in the early 1st century BCE or thereabouts.[33] This traditional dating is now much strengthened by the recent discovery of written texts from the Afghanistan region, some dating to before the 1st century CE.[34]

All this suggests a date between the late 3rd and the early 1st century BCE. However, it is not in fact so simple. The *Mahāparinibbānasutta* is quite evidently an anthology of materials of disparate origin. A large number of what we might call *sutta* pieces have been collected together. Since it is easy to add a small piece at the end of a memorized passage, but more difficult to make alterations within that passage, I have some doubts as to how far the basic account would have been altered. More probably, we are dealing with materials which existed at an earlier time as part of smaller discourses. It is likely then that the material is in the main pre-Aśokan in date.

Cetiya in the earlier canonical Pali texts

A *cetiya* is in principle a place connected with 'mounds' or 'piles', probably specifically 'funeral piles'. Since the existence of charnel grounds for the decomposition of corpses is also well attested in ancient Indian literature, it seems likely that cremation would have been the norm only for high-status individuals. We might also expect a place for cremation to be somewhere where fuel would be available and probably somewhere fairly prominent. Perhaps also somewhere fairly windy for large fires?

Two usages in the texts seem to have no special connection with either Buddhist teaching or the Buddhist *saṅgha* particularly. The first of these is the common reference to a named *cetiya* as a location or the place at which someone is staying.[35] In some cases they are associated with a specific *yakkha*, of a similar name to the *cetiya*. They are usually either the setting for a discourse or connected with the life-story of the Buddha or both of these. This usage is much rarer in the later canonical works, perhaps because the word *cetiya* often comes to have a more specifically Buddhist connotation.

Strikingly, we do not find any passage of exactly this kind in the *Majjhima-nikāya*. We do, however, meet with an important passage which tells us something about this kind of *cetiya* in the *Bhayabheravasutta* (M I 20; cf. J V 255; VI 173).[36] Here the Buddha describes how he overcame the fear which arose when he tested himself by meditating on well-known special nights – the nights of the full and new moons and the points in between them – while staying in terrifying and awe-inspiring places such as *ārāmacetiyas*, *vanacetiyas* and *rukkhacetiyas*. We might render these as 'sacred orchards', 'sacred groves' and 'sacred trees'. Here too we can note a reference in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya* to well-constructed sacred orchards and sacred groves which are 'not worth the sixteenth part of a lotus pond delightful to men'. But 'Delightful is the place in which *arahats* dwell – whether in town or country, in lowland or highland.'[37] Also here we can mention a verse in the *Dhammapada* which refers to people going out of fear for refuge to hills and groves, to sacred orchards and trees.[38]

In an important passage at the beginning of the *Mahāparinibbāna-sutta* (found separately in two versions in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*) the Buddha emphasizes the importance for the Vajjis of maintaining the traditional cult for their *cetiya*s 'both within and without' and preserving past benefactions.[39] Very possibly, this preserves the attitude of the Buddha himself towards contemporary Indian religious practice.

A second and related usage is that of the *cetiyarukkha*, found only in one passage of the *Vinaya-piṭaka*.[40] The context is a major rule: *saṅghādisesa* 7, which prohibits building a large dwelling place (*vihāra*) on a site in a violent manner. The frame story makes it clear that the violence envisaged is against a tree, specifically a tree which is sacred (*cetiyarukkha*). This is defined as one which is honoured by a village or a town or a city or a region or a kingdom.[41] Cutting down such a tree leads to the accusation that the Sakyaputtiya monks are harming a one-sensed soul (*jīva*). The Buddha in condemning this indicates that 'people have the idea that there is a soul in a tree'.[42]

There remain a small number of cases, all in the *Vinaya*, where *cetiya* probably has a more specifically Buddhist meaning. All are likely to be of later date. So the rule against procuring (*saṅghādisesa* 5) specifies that it is not an offence for a monk to fetch a woman if he does so on some business for a *saṅgha*, for a *cetiya* or for a sick person.[43] Again, for *nissaggiya* rule 30 and *pācittiya* rule 12, which concern the reassigning of property already assigned (by a donor), we learn that it is an offence to reassign property assigned to a *cetiya* to another *cetiya* or to a *saṅgha* or to an individual, and similarly to reassign property assigned to an individual to a *cetiya* or to a *saṅgha* or to another individual.[44] Moreover, the first three exclusions to the rule which prohibits nuns from performing service for lay people are 'in the case of a drink of gruel (*yāgu*), at a meal for the *saṅgha* and at a *cetiyapūjā*' (Vin IV 301).[45] This must refer either to cooking food for offering at a *cetiya* by laypeople or to the provision of food to those attending such occasions.

A special case is the *Dhammacetiya-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* (M II 118–25).[46] This seems to represent a deliberate attempt to convert the popular usage of the word *cetiya* to a Buddhist sense. King Pasenadi makes a series of statements in praise of the Buddha. These are subsequently referred to by the Buddha as *dhammacetiya*s. The implication, I think, is that these teachings are just as sacred as any grove or tree. This kind of conversion of terminology is typical of some of the earliest Buddhist literature. Indeed, many scholars have thought that such use of what is later known as 'skill in means' is likely to stem from the Buddha himself;[47] so this particular discourse may well contain very old material and precede any Buddhist cultic use of *thūpa* or *cetiya*.

Thūpa and *cetiya* in other canonical Pali texts

Even in texts from most of the remainder of the Canon we still meet a mixture of senses for these words. So in the *Jātaka* we have: 'drinking which, they lie heaped together (*ekathūpā*)'.[48] Similarly, an anthill is a *vammīkathūpa*,[49] while a heavenly *vimāna* has five *thūpa*s, here perhaps pinnacles.[50] Again, in a verse found in both the *Jātaka* and the *Petavatthu* we meet a householder weeping over an earthen mound (*mattikathūpa*).[51] This suggests the earlier type of general funerary mound for valued individuals.

We are in a very different world when in the *Petavatthu* (Pv p. 63) we learn of the terrible rebirth resulting from trying to impede one's family from taking flowers and ointments to the *thūpa* of the Buddha and of the advantages of worshipping (*pūjā*) a *thūpa*.[52] By contrast, in the *Vimānavatthu* we learn of the advantages of making a five-fingered perfumed mark on the *thūpa* of the Buddha Kassapa.[53] Similarly, the advantages of placing garlands, perfume and paste on the Buddha's *thūpa* (Vv p. 55), of attempting to take just four blossoms from a wild creeper to the Buddha's *thūpa* (Vv p. 68), of placing four fallen blossoms on the *thūpa* of the Buddha Kassapa (Vv p. 88), of gaining faith at the *thūpa* of Sumedha Buddha by paying homage to the jewelled mound covered by a golden net (Vv p. 22) and of rearranging and placing at the Buddha's *thūpa* a disordered garland (Vv p. 135).

Apart from these two texts we have little more. In the whole *Abhidhamma-piṭaka* we have only a single reference: in

the *Kathāvatthu* the question is raised whether someone who has perfected right views would perform disrespectful acts towards a *Buddhathūpa* (Kv 472).[54] The *Parivāra* appendix to the *Vinaya-piṭaka* mentions as one type of *paṃsukūla* robe a robe from a *thūpa*.[55]

Cetiya in its specifically Buddhist sense is even rarer in this period. The *Khuddakapāṭha* in the probably late *Nidhikaṇḍa-sutta* has a brief mention of good actions performed towards a *cetiya*.[56] The *Kathāvatthu* in lists of good actions mentions paying homage to a *cetiya*, putting garlands, perfume or paste on a *cetiya*, and circumambulating a *cetiya*.[57] It also has one occurrence of *cetiya* in its older sense when it refers to the Buddha as living at *cetiya*s.[58] The relevant portions of both of these texts may date towards the end of this period.

The last texts added to the Canon and the Paracanonical works

The sources used by Buddhaghosa preserved traditions which indicate that the inclusion of three texts in the list of canonical works was not accepted by all at an earlier date.[59] This means that we cannot be sure that these works are as old as the period of the first writing down of the Canon. The three works in question are the *Cariyā-piṭaka*, the *Buddhavaṃsa* and the *Apadāna*. I therefore discuss them here, together with three Paracanonical texts which may be of similar date: *Milindapañha*, *Peṭakopadesa* and *Nettipakaraṇa*.

In fact, there is no mention of either *thūpa* or *cetiya* in the *Cariyā-piṭaka*, but this may itself be of some interest. It is perhaps a small piece of evidence in support of the notion that the traditions which gave rise to the early Mahāyāna (or more probably some strands within them) were hostile to or at least not interested in the stupa cult.

In the *Buddhavaṃsa*, which gives information concerning 24 former Buddhas, we learn that the Buddha Dīpaṅkara had his final enlightenment at Nandarama and in that same place there was a *Jinathūpa* 36 *yojana*s high.[60] In contrast, the next Buddha has a splendid (*citta*) *cetiya* only 7 *yojana*s high. Subsequent Buddhas have *thūpa*s of varying heights, but none are as high as that of Dīpaṅkara, and once we reach the three former Buddhas of this fortunate aeon (*bhaddake kappe*) the height has dwindled to a mere *gāvuta* for Kakusandha and a single *yojana* for Kassapa. In one more case it is referred to as a *cetiya*, in six more cases as a *Jinathūpa* and in seven cases as a fine *thūpa* (*thūpavara*). In eight cases (excluding Gotama) a distribution of the relics took place.

This brings us to the *Apadāna*, a work that has been relatively little studied over a long period, with the notable exception of the work of Sally Mellick Cutler and some of the publications of Heinz Bechert.[61] Since the *Apadāna* contains perhaps more information concerning the Buddhist stupa cult and construction than the rest of the Pali Canon combined, it is extremely important for present purposes. Unfortunately, it is particularly difficult to date. It is certainly later than the *Buddhavaṃsa*. It may or may not have been included in the Canon at the time that the texts as a whole were first systematically written down. We must note, however, that, even if it was not included, that does not prove that it did not exist at that time – only that it was not considered part of a canonical collection. However, it significantly precedes the commentaries of Buddhaghosa (probably 4th century), since Buddhaghosa records a difference between the reciters of the *Dīgha* and the reciters of the *Majjhima* as to whether it should be included in the Canon. Since there is no reason to suppose that Buddhaghosa knew any reciters, this must have been already included in the older commentaries which are his sources. Note, however, that the *Apadāna* contains no reference to any Buddha image. I would conclude that it most likely dates to the period from the 1st century BCE to the 1st century CE, but I am far from completely confident of that. In any case, for a detailed account of stupa practices, it is without doubt one of the oldest, if not the oldest, sources still extant in an Indic language.

The *Apadāna* seems almost never to use the terms *cetiya* and *thūpa* in any sense other than the standard meaning of Buddhist literature. Moreover, these two terms are completely interchangeable in usage. A major concern of this rather large work is to describe the beneficial results of various fortune-giving deeds over a considerable number of lives. This of course originates (or at any rate elevates) an important theme in popular Buddhist literature down to the present day.[62] With this concern and with a much enlarged cosmology, we are in a very different world from the oldest Pali texts.

Much information is provided as to the associated cultic practices. So we meet offerings of flowers of various kinds,[63] incense,[64] oil,[65] banners,[66] construction materials[67] and even jewellery,[68] not to mention general references to worship.[69] Other fortune-bringing actions include the repair of a ruined *cetiya*,[70] sweeping the surrounding area,[71] erecting a banner (*dhaja*),[72] giving praise and respect to a *sīhāsana* 'lion seat', worshipping the golden umbrella on a *thūpa* for relics,[73] painting,[74] singing praises to the Buddha at an *āsana*,[75] making a wish-granting tree and covering it with various kinds of cloth[76] and inviting *arahats* for a *saṅgha* meal at the *cetiya*.[77] There are a number of mentions of festivals held at or in connection with a *thūpa*.[78] The donation of various portions and accessories to the monument itself is also mentioned: a place for offerings (*āyāga*),[79] an umbrella,[80] railings (*vedi*(*kā*)),[81] a platform,[82] tiles (*iṭṭhakā*), columns (*agghiya*), the main chamber (*vimāna*),[83] the upper chamber (*hammiyā*), a walkway[84] and multiple encasements. In addition *thūpa*s are made out of ephemeral materials such as flowers or sand.[85] Two devout parents made a golden *thūpa* and enshrined a piece of the bodhi tree in that.[86] Sometimes worshipping a *thūpa* is compared to the worship of a living Sambuddha.[87] But it is made clear that this is a comparison, not something that is literally true. In one case someone is reborn as a dwarf because he persuaded those planning the construction of the *thūpa*/*cetiya* of Kassapa Buddha to limit the proposed size to a single *yojana* instead of the envisaged 7 *yojana*s.[88]

A particularly important role seems to be played by stories of the shrine of Padumuttara, a Buddha of the distant past. Bhaddā Kāpilānī describes how in a past life she had 700,000 vessels studded with the seven kinds of gem made and filled them with fragrant oil.[89] She lit lamps at the *thūpa* in order to worship that Buddha. She also constructed 700,000 *puṇṇakumbha* filled with gems for that worship. Between each eight of these a golden column was erected.

They blazed forth even more, like the sun in [the clear skies of] autumn. At the four entrances shone begemmed gateways (*toraṇa*). Delightful begemmed tablets (*phalakas*) were set up and shone. Well-constructed ornaments (?) (*avataṃsa*) enclosed them and shone all around. Banners were set up. Gems shone forth. 'That well-painted and well-constructed, beautiful begemmed *cetiya* blazed forth even more, [appearing] like the evening sun.'[90] She filled three terraces (*medhi*)[91] of the *thūpa*, one with yellow *haritāla*, one with red *manosilā* pigment and one with lampblack. Subsequently she gave *dāna* to the saṅgha as far as she was able throughout her life.

In a subsequent life she gave a fine golden tile at the *cetiya* of Kassapa.[92] Heaping up four kinds of incense she was freed from the defect of bad smell (due to a past action) and fully endowed in body. She had 7000 vessels made, with seven kinds of gemstone and filled with ghee, and put in wicks by the thousand. These were lit and she put them in seven rows in order to worship the Protector of the World. In a still later life she and her husband made *cetiya*s for 500 *paccekamunis*. Earlier in the *Apadāna*, her partner in various lives, Mahākassapa, made a well-constructed column 7 hands high;[93] also a main chamber (*vimāna*) 250 cubits high. The column was decorated with lines of palms (*tālapanti*). Again this was associated with the *cetiya* of Padumuttara. Also Padumuttara Buddha had a *cetiya* named Paduma.[94] At that time Mahākaccāna made a stone *āsana* and covered it with gold, and ceremoniously set up a jewelled umbrella.

Most elaborate of all, however, is the description of the building of the *thūpa* of Padumuttara.[95] After the Jina Padumuttara had attained *parinibbāna*, the people assembled and paid respects to the Tathāgata. They fashioned a well-constructed funeral pyre (*citaka*) and placed the body on it. After carrying out the rites for the body (*sarīrakicca*), they collected together the relics (*dhātu*). They (i.e. *deva*s and men) made a *Buddhathūpa*.

Turning to the Paracanonical literature, the *Peṭakopadesa* and the *Nettipakaraṇa* are anthologies analysing the *sutta*s according to their own method of exegesis. The former contains no reference to either *cetiya* or *thūpa*. This may be because it is the older of the two and is drawing on materials of a relatively early date.[96] The *Nettipakaraṇa* does not employ the word *cetiya* at all, but contains a number of references to *thūpa*s. Rather surprisingly at Nett 93 it cites a version of the canonical lists of acts that are never performed by an individual who has perfected right views (*diṭṭhisampanna*), a version which adds damaging a *thūpa* to the list. The remaining passages are all found in a series of citations of *sutta*s not found in the Pali Canon as we know it (at Nett 140ff.). They have very much the appearance of *avadāna* literature and, together with recent discoveries from the north-west, suggest that at one time rather more of this material was known in Pali than has been included in the *Apadāna* as we know it.[97] Most of them refer to the benefits of a gift made to the *thūpa* of a past Buddha. One refers to a *thūpa* made from earth.[98]

The setting of the *Milindapañha* (Mil) is a dialogue between Milinda (i.e. the Greco-Bactrian king Menander) and an *arahat* named Nāgasena. It contains no mention of *thūpa*, but several references to *cetiya*s. None of these are from the oldest section of Mil, but even the later sections pre-date the *aṭṭhakathā* sources of the commentaries of the School of Buddhaghosa.[99] A discussion of the reasons why miracles do or do not occur at a *cetiya* suggests that they only happen if an *arahat* or a *deva* or a devout male or female follower makes an act of will (*adhiṭṭhāna*).[100] Another passage uses the metaphor of the Buddha's supermarket (*sabbāpaṇa*) and includes *cetiya*s with corporeal relics and those with relics used by the Buddha among the goods.[101] The point is no doubt that worshipping at a referential *cetiya* which is simply assigned to or points towards the Buddha would not give sufficient reward. Still another simile compares the cock's going to rest at the proper time with the *yogin* going to meditate, after performing all the necessary duties, including sweeping the surround of the *cetiya*.[102] Finally, Mil concludes with a quotation of unknown origin which refers to a *cetiya* as something to be honoured.

Conclusions

If one asks what is the underlying concept of all this, I take it to be the comparison with an emperor – the *cakkavattin* who is a *dhammarāja*, 'one for whom *dhamma* is king'. His ashes would be placed in a room (*gabbha*) within a palace (*vimāna*) with an upper chamber (*hammiyā*), surmounted and surrounded by royal emblems such as parasols and banners. Similarly, the relics of a Buddha, who is equally a *dhammarāja*, would appropriately be placed in such a palace.

There is little evidence of any specifically Buddhist usages of *thūpa* and *cetiya* in the earlier Pali texts. At that time *thūpa* was normally used in the sense of 'mound' or 'heap'. Only in later canonical passages does it become more specifically a burial mound or barrow and eventually an elaborate construction. Similarly, *cetiya* in the early texts and even in the bulk of the rest of the Canon simply designates something sacred. It is mainly in the last texts that we see its specifically Buddhist use. Only gradually do we see an increase in and normalization of this form of Buddhist worship. By the time of the effective closure of the Pali Canon, the cult is in full swing and it is hard to see how the *Apadāna* could ever have been included in the Canon if there was any hostility to stupa worship in the Theravāda tradition.

Appendix 1: textual passages

1. Vin IV 308:

Tena kho pana samayena Chabbaggiyānaṃ bhikkhunīnaṃ mahatarā[103] *bhikkhunī kālaṅkatā hoti. Chabbaggiyā bhikkhuniyo taṃ bhikkhuniṃ nīharitvā, āyasmato Kappitakassa vihārassa avidūre jhāpetvā, thūpaṃ katvā gantvā tasmiṃ thūpe rodanti. Atha kho āyasmā Kappitako tena saddena ubbāḷho taṃ thūpaṃ bhinditvā pakiresi. Chabbaggiyā bhikkhuniyo: 'iminā Kappitakena amhākaṃ ayyāya thūpo bhinno, handa naṃ ghātemā' ti, mantesuṃ. … Atha kho Chabbaggiyā bhikkhuniyo yenāyasmato Kappitakassa vihāro ten' upasaṅkamiṃsu. upasaṅkamitvā āyasmato Kappitakassa vihāraṃ pāsāṇehi ca leḍḍūhi ca ottharāpetvā, 'mato Kappitako' ti pakkamiṃsu.*

Translated in Horner 1938–66, Part 3, 343.

2. D II 142*f*:

'Cattāro'me, Ānanda, thūpārahā. Katame cattāro? Tathāgato arahaṃ sammāsambuddho thūpāraho, paccekabuddho thūpāraho, tathāgata-sāvako thūpāraho, rājā cakkavattī thūpāraho ti. Katamañ c' Ānanda, atthavasaṃ paṭicca tathāgato arahaṃ sammāsambuddho thūpāraho? "Ayaṃ tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa thūpo" ti, Ānanda, bahujano cittaṃ pasādeti. Te tattha cittaṃ pasādetvā kāyassa bhedā paraṃ maraṇā sugatiṃ saggaṃ lokaṃ uppajjanti. Idaṃ kho, Ānanda, atthavasaṃ paṭicca tathāgato arahaṃ sammāsambuddho thūpāraho. 'Katamañ c' Ānanda, atthavasaṃ paṭicca paccekasambuddho thūpāraho? … Katamañ c' Ānanda, atthavasaṃ paṭicca tathāgata-sāvako thūpāraho? … Katamañ c' Ānanda, atthavasaṃ paṭicca rājā cakkavattī thūpāraho? "Ayaṃ tassa dhammikassa dhammarañño thūpo" ti, Ānanda, bahujano cittaṃ pasādeti. Te tattha cittaṃ pasādetvā kāyassa bhedā paraṃ maraṇā sugatiṃ saggaṃ lokaṃ uppajjanti. Idaṃ kho, Ānanda, atthavasaṃ paṭicca rājā cakkavattī thūpāraho. Ime kho, Ānanda cattāro thūpārahā' ti.

Translated in C.A.F. Rhys Davids and Rhys Davids 1971, Part 2, 156–7, and in Walshe 1987, 264–5. The commentary is translated: An 2003, 158–9.

3. Ap 579f. = Thī-a 69f.:

12. *sattayojanikaṃ thūpaṃ ubbiddhaṃ ratanāmayaṃ*
jalantaṃ sataraṃsī[104] *va sālarājaṃ va phullitaṃ.* ||
13. *sattasatasahassāni pātiyo*[105] *tattha kārayiṃ.*[106]
nalaggi[107] *viya jotante*[108] *rataneh' eva sattahi.* ||
14. *gandhatelena pūretvā dīpânujjalayiṃ*[109] *tahiṃ.*
pūjatthāya[110] *mahesissa sabbabhūtānukampino.* ||
15. *sattasatasahassāni puṇṇakumbhān' akārayiṃ.*[111]
rataneh' eva puṇṇāni pūjatthāya mahesino. ||
16. *majjhe aṭṭh'aṭṭhakumbhīnaṃ ussitā kañcanagghiyā.*[112]
atirocanti vaṇṇena sārade va divākaro. ||
17. *catudvāresu sobhanti toraṇā ratanāmayā*
ussitā phalakā rammā sobhanti ratanāmayā. ||
18. *virocanti parikkhittā*[113] *avaṭaṃsā sunimmitā*
ussitāni patākāni. ratanāni virocare. ||
19. *surattaṃ sukataṃ cittaṃ cetiyaṃ ratanāmayaṃ.*
atirocati vaṇṇena sasañjhā va[114] *divākaro* ||
20. *thūpassa medhiyo*[115] *tisso haritālena pūrayiṃ*[116]
ekaṃ manosilāy' ekaṃ añjanena ca ekikaṃ. ||

Translated in Pruitt 1998, 92–3.

4. Ap 582 = Thī-a 72:

42. *yattha yatthûpapajjāmi surūpā homi dānato*
Buddhassa apakārena duggandhā vadanena ca. ||
43. *puno Kassapavīrassa niṭṭhāyantamhi*[117] *cetiye*
sovaṇṇaṃ iṭṭhakaṃ varaṃ adāsiṃ muditā ahaṃ. ||
44. *cātujjātena gandhena nicayitvā tam iṭṭhakaṃ,*
muttā duggandhadosamhā sabbaṅgasamupāgatā. ||
45. *satta pātisahassāni rataneh' eva sattahi*
kāretvā ghatapūrāni vaṭṭinī[118] *ca sahassaso* ||
46. *pakkhipitvā padīpetvā ṭhāpayiṃ sattapantiyo*
pūjatthaṃ lokanāthassa vippasannena cetasā. ||

Translated in Pruitt 1988, 94–5.

5. Ap 33 = Th-a III 135:

4. *agghiyaṃ sukataṃ katvā satahatthaṃ samuggataṃ,*
diyaḍḍhaṃ hatthasahaṃ pi[119] *vimānaṃ nabham uggataṃ,* ||
5. *katvāna agghiyaṃ*[120] *tattha tālapantīhi cittitaṃ.*
sakaṃ cittaṃ pasādetvā cetiyaṃ pūjay' uttamaṃ. ||

6. Ap 84:

1. *Padumuttaranāthassa*[121] *Padumaṃ nāma cetiyaṃ.*
sīhāsanaṃ[122] *kārayitvā suvaṇṇenâbhilepayiṃ.* ||
2. *Ratanāmayachattañ ca paggayha vālavījaniṃ.*
Buddhassa abhiropesiṃ lokabandhussa tādino. ||
3. *yāvatā devatā bhummā sabbe sannipatuṃ tadā:*
'ratanāsanachattānaṃ[123] *vipākaṃ kathayissati* ||
4. *tañ ca sabbaṃ suṇissāma. kathayantassa satthuno*
bhiyyo hāsaṃ janeyyāma sammāsambuddhasāsane'. ||
5. *hemāsane nisīditvā sayambhū aggapuggalo*
bhikkhusaṅghaparibbūḷho imā gāthā abhāsatha: ||
6. *'yen' idaṃ āsanaṃ dinnaṃ sovaṇṇa-ratanāmayaṃ,*
tam ahaṃ kittayissāmi. suṇotha mama bhāsato.' ||

1. The Protector Supreme Lotus (*Padumuttara*) had a *cetiya* named Paduma (lotus). I had a lion seat constructed and covered it with gold. 2. And, lifting up a chowry, I fastened the umbrella, made with precious stones, of the Buddha, one who is special (*tādin*) and kin to all. 3. All the terrestrial *devatā* assembled at that time, thinking '[The Buddha] will speak of the result of the [gift of the] jewelled seat and the umbrella 4. and we will hear all that. As the Teacher is speaking, we will arouse further joy in the teaching of the Fully Completely Awakened One.' 5. Sitting on a golden seat, the self-developed supreme person, surrounded by the community of monks, uttered the following verses: 6. 'I will praise the one by whom this golden jewelled seat was made. Listen to me as I speak. …'

7. Ap 70off. = Th-a II 56ff.:

1. *Padumuttaro nāma Jino sabbadhammāna pāragū*
jalitvā aggikkhandho va Sambuddho parinibbuto. ||
2. *mahājanā samāgamma pūjayitvā Tathāgataṃ.*
citakaṃ katvāna sukataṃ sarīraṃ abhiropayuṃ. ||
3. *sarīraṃ kiccaṃ*[124] *katvāna dhātū*[125] *tattha samānayuṃ.*
sadevamānusā sabbe Buddhathūpaṃ akaṃsu te. ||
4. *paṭhamā kañcanamayā dutiyāpi*[126] *maṇīmayā*
tatiyā rūpiyamayā, catutthā phalikāmayā, ||
5. *tattha*[127] *pañcamī kācehi*[128] *lohitaṅkamayā āhu.*
chaṭṭhā masāragallassa sabbaratanamayûpari.[129] ||
6. *jaṅghā maṇimayā āsi. vedikā ratanamayā.*
sabbasovaṇṇayo[130] *thūpo uddhaṃ yojanam uggato.* ||
7. *devā tattha samāgantvā ekato mantayuṃ tadā:*
mayam pi thūpaṃ kassāma[131] *lokanāthassa tādino.* ||
8. *dhātu āveṇikā natthi. sarīraṃ ekapiṇḍitaṃ.*
imamhi Buddhathūpamhi kassāma kañcukaṃ mayaṃ. ||
9. *devā sattaratanehi aññaṃ vaḍḍhesuṃ yojanaṃ.*
thūpo dviyojan'-ubbidho timiraṃ vyapahanti so. ||
10. *nāgā tattha samāgantvā ekato mantayuṃ tadā*
manussā c'eva devā ca Buddhathūpaṃ akaṃsu te. ||
11. *mā no pamattā assumhā appamattā sadevatā*
mayaṃ pi thūpaṃ karissāma lokanāthassa tādino.//

1. The Jina named Supreme Lotus who had transcended all dhammas, a Fully Awakened One reached quiescence like a mass of fire after blazing. 2. When the populace had assembled

and worshipped the Tathāgata, they made a well-constructed bier and mounted the body on it. 3. After performing the duties connected with the body, they assembled the relics there. All, including both gods and men, constructed a *Buddhathūpa*. 4. The first level/terrace was made of gold, the second was made of gems, the third was made of silver, the fourth of crystal, 5. the fifth was made of rubies. The sixth was made of every kind of jewel on top of emerald (?) 6. The walkway was made of gems, the railing of jewels. The all-gold *thūpa* extended upwards a league. 7. The *deva*s assembled there and took counsel together at that time, [agreeing]: 'We will make a *thūpa* for the Protector of the World, the one who is special. 8. There is no separate relic. The body has been kept together. We will make an encasing of this *Buddhathūpa*.' 9. The *deva*s increased [the *thūpa*] another league with every kind of jewel. That two-league-high *thūpa* destroyed the darkness. 10. The *nāga*s assembled there and took counsel together at that time, [agreeing]: 'Men and gods have constructed a *Buddhathūpa*. 11. Let us not be heedless. Alert like the *deva*s, we too will make a *thūpa* for the Protector of the World, the one who is special.'

The text continues with successive passages in which the other deities of the four directions: *kumbhaṇḍa*s, *yakkha*s and *gandhabba*s do likewise. Each time the *thūpa* is enlarged by a league to a final figure of 7 leagues (including also *garuḷa*s with the previously mentioned human beings and *deva*s to make up the number seven. There is some textual corruption in the PTS edition, but the intention is clear.) This passage presents an interesting mythological account of the process of enlarging *thūpa*s, so familiar to us from the archaeology. The light or radiance emanating from the *thūpa* is continually stressed.

Appendix 2: chronological table

The chronology utilized here falls into four groups. It should be emphasized that this is most reliable as a relative chronology. The absolute dates given here are earlier than would be accepted by some scholars. There is no way of excluding the possibility that these texts or rather collections include some material added later but neither is it certain that this is actually the case.

Early period, ie. pre-Aśokan	The oldest part of the Vinaya (Vin III and IV) The first four Nikāyas (DN, MN, SN and AN) Suttanipāta Udāna Dhammapada (Dhp) (or later)
Period of the bulk of the rest of the Pali Canon, i.e. 3rd to 1st century BCE	Jātaka verses Petavatthu (Pv) Kathāvatthu (Kv) Parivāra (Vin V) Khuddakapāṭha (Kh) (or later)
Latest canonical texts, i.e. 1st century BCE to 2nd century CE	Buddhavaṃsa (Bv) Apadāna (Ap)
Paracanonical works, i.e. 1st to 3rd century CE	Milindapañha (Mil) Nettipakaraṇa (Nett)

Notes

1 Pj I 221f.; Ja IV 228; Dhp-a III 251; cf. Mil 341. The notion that the second of the three has priority over the first is also found: Ps IV 111; Mp II 6f.; Vibh-a 427 and later sources.

2 E.g. *chedi* (Thailand), *sāya* (Sri Lanka) or *zeidi* (Burma). In Sri Lanka the Sanskrit form *caitya* is also naturalized. See Gregory Schopen, 'An old inscription from Amarāvatī and the cult of the local monastic dead in Indian Buddhist monasteries', *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, 2, 1991, 322, n. 38 (= Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, Studies in the Buddhist traditions, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, 197 n. 38) for the idea that a shared preference for *cetiya* rather than *stūpa* links the Andhra region and Pali texts.

3 From *dhātugabbha*, 'relic chamber' or 'relic container'; this may have given rise to English *pagoda* through the Portuguese *pagode*, although this is disputed and *pagode* may come rather from Persian *butkada*, 'image house'.

4 From a Punjabi word deriving from *stūpa*.

5 Sp-ṭ I 172 (cited Ss 40).

6 The Pali Canon is the canonical collection of scriptures which is authoritative for the southern Buddhists of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. This is a largely fixed set of texts (apart from some recent additions in Burma [Myanmar]); the list is first known to us in the works of Buddhaghosa (4th or 5th century CE) and is cited by him from much earlier sources (no longer extant). It is written in the Pali language. This is essentially a literary form of the written language known to us from Indian inscriptions of the last centuries BCE and a little later – a type of *koine* influenced by various spoken dialects. No other written language appears to have been used at that time in the main part of India. In the form we have it from the Pali commentators it has undergone mild standardization of spelling and some Sanskritization.

7 See Gregory Schopen, 'The stūpa cult and the extant Pāli Vinaya', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 13, 1989, 83–100 (= Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 86–98). Several scholars responded to his arguments then: Oskar von Hinüber, 'Khandhakavatta: loss of text in the Pāli Vinayapiṭaka?', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15, 1990, 127–38; Richard Gombrich, 'Making mountains without molehills: the case of the missing stūpa', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15, 1990, 141–3; Charles Hallisey, 'Apropos the Pāli Vinaya as a historical document: a reply to Gregory Schopen', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15, 1990, 197–208.

8 The earlier Pali sources – *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* – mention the occurrence, but do not indicate either location or date. They may simply be referring to a process occurring across South Asia. An early date is, however, supported by the evidence emerging from manuscript discoveries in Afghanistan. See n. 35 below.

9 Short fragments of *Vinaya* works of various other schools are extant, but these do not concern us here. See Thomas Oberlies, 'Ein bibliographischer Überblick über die kanonischen Texte der Śrāvakayāna-Schulen des Buddhismus (ausgenommen der des Mahāvihāra-Theravāda)', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 47, 2003, 37–84; Ingo Strauch, 'The Bajaur collection of Kharoṣṭhī manuscripts: a preliminary survey', *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 25, 2009, 103–36.

10 Gregory Schopen, 'Deaths, funerals, and the division of property in a monastic code', in Donald S. Lopez (ed.), *Buddhism in Practice*, Princeton Readings in Religions, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995, 473–502, at 475.

11 Further arguments put forward include an attempt to show that even the forest lifestyle described already in the Pali *Vinaya-piṭaka* is not particularly ascetic. Much of what Schopen has to say is doubtless correct for later Indian monasticism and particularly that of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*. Unfortunately, for the Pali *Vinaya-piṭaka* he includes the citation of a passage describing the relatively luxurious forest dwelling of Udāyin (Vin III 119). This is evidence for the precise opposite: the Udāyin in question is a monk continually depicted as *ādikammika* in the breach of *Vinaya* rules and good behaviour. The passage is intentionally written to describe something which it wishes to criticize. This could either be because such practices existed or because the author(s) wished to guard against such developments.

12 I take Pali *thūpa* as derived from Vedic *stūpa*. Since the inscription of Asoka at Nigali-sagar has *thuba-*, some scholars have postulated an underlying form such as **stuba*: CDIAL 13702/3/5; cf. Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen: A Concise Etymological Dictionary*, 4 vols, Indogermanische Bibliothek II. Reihe, Wörterbücher, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1956–80; Manfred Mayrhofer, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindoarischen*, 3 vols, Indogermanische Bibliothek II. Reihe, Wörterbücher, Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1992–2001; H. Matsumura, 'A lexical note on the Vinaya literature: stūpa in the Śaikṣa rules', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens* 33, 1989, 45–91. However, the voicing of intervocalic consonants does occur occasionally and was probably already a feature of contemporary spoken language at the time of Aśoka. See K.R. Norman, 'Some aspects of the phonology of the Prakrit underlying the Aśokan inscriptions', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, 1970, 132–43, at 135 (= K.R. Norman, *Collected Papers*, 8 vols, Oxford, PTS, 1990–2007, vol. 1, 98); K.R. Norman, 'A note on silāvigaḍabhīcā in Aśoka's Rummindei inscription', in Tadeusz Skorupski and Ulrich Pagel (eds), *The Buddhist Forum III*, London, School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994, 227–37, at 232 (= Norman, *Collected Papers*, vol. 6, 38); Oskar von Hinüber, *Das ältere Mittelindisch im Überblick*, 2nd rev. edn, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 467, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Sprachen und Kulturen Südasiens 20, Vienna, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2001, §175. For AMg *thūbha*, see Richard Pischel, *A Grammar of the Prākrit Languages*, trans. Subhadra Jha, 2nd rev. edn, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, §§208 and 214.

13 Vin IV 190f.: *Tena kho pana samayena chabbaggiyā bhikkhū thūpikataṃ piṇḍapātaṃ paṭigaṇhanti … pe … samatitthikaṃ* (v.l. *samatittika- and next*) *piṇḍapātaṃ paṭiggahessāmī ti sikkhā karaṇīyā ti. Samatittiko piṇḍapāto paṭiggahetabbo. Yo anādariyaṃ paṭicca thūpikataṃ piṇḍapātaṃ paṭiganhāti, āpatti dukkaṭassa.* Oldenberg used only a small number of exclusively Burmese sources for this portion of his edition.

14 Vin IV 192: *Tena kho pana samayena Chabbaggiyā bhikkhū thūpakato omadditvā piṇḍapātaṃ bhuñjanti … pe … 'Na thūpakato (so Be, and following; Ee thūpato) omadditvā piṇḍapātaṃ bhuñjissāmī ti sikkhā karaṇīyā' ti. Na thūpakato omadditvā piṇḍapāto bhuñjitabbo. Yo anādariyaṃ paṭicca thūpakato omadditvā piṇḍapātaṃ bhuñjati āpatti dukkaṭassa. Anāpatti asañcicca, asatiyā, ajānantassa, gilānassa, parittake sese ekato saṃkaḍḍhitvā omadditvā bhuñjati, āpadāsu, ummattakassa, ādikammikassā ti.* Vin II 214: *Samatittiko piṇḍapāto paṭiggahetabbo … Na thūpakato omadditvā piṇḍapāto bhuñjitabbo.* Vin II 232:
paṭi, sāmante, saṅghāṭi, odane ca paṭiggahe,
sūpaṃ, uttaribhaṅgena, sabbesaṃ, samatitthi (Ee: samatitti) ca, ||
sakkaccaṃ, pattasaññī ca, sapadānañ ca, sūpakaṃ,
na thūpato, paṭicchāde, viññatt', ujjhānasaññinā, ||
In the *uddāna* at Vin II 232 we find: *thūpato*, but this must be *metri causa*; Vin II 214 has *thūpakato.* Oldenberg's reading must be taken from that *uddāna* but his manuscripts support an underlying *thūpakato.* (Two have *dhupakato* and one has *thupato* and *thutho.*) That is what we find consistently in Burmese sources: also Pāc-y (a subcommentary on Sp written in 1869) I 35: *thūpakato ti thūpam eva thūpakaṃ, tato thūpakato ti dassento āha 'matthakato' ti.* C^{e} 1967 (*Pācittiya* vol. 2) 198; C^{e} 1981 (*Pācittiya* vol. 1) 514; Vin II C^{e} 1983 (*Cullavagga* II) 352; Sp (C^{e} 1945) II 664: *thūpato.* But Vin V 30, 32 and 45 has always *thūpakato*, e.g. C^{e} 1977 (*Parivāra* vol. 1) 100, 110 and 144. At Vin V 32 the reading *thūpakato* is confirmed by the metre of the *uddāna.* Vin-vn-pṭ II 17: *omadditvā ti hatthena bhattaṃ avamadditvā.*

15 Norman now translates: 'I shall not eat alms food from the top, [but] having pressed it down' (William Pruitt and K.R. Norman, *The Pātimokkha*, Oxford, PTS, 2001, 97). My interpretation is close to that tentatively offered by André Bareau: '*nourriture formant un dôme au-dessus du bol, donc en excès?*' in 'La construction et le culte des stūpa d'après les Vinayapiṭaka', *Bulletin de L'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 50, 2, 1962, 229–74, at 274).

16 See the references conveniently collected by Matsumura, 'Lexical note', 57, n. 26.

17 This would see Vedic *stūpa* as related to Greek στύπος and Latin *stipes* 'stump' and sees the basic meaning as 'protuberance'. Alternatively, it is connected to Vedic *stúkā*, 'tuft of hair, etc.' There may have been some convergence here.

18 Gregory Schopen, 'The suppression of nuns and the ritual murder of their special dead in two Buddhist monastic texts', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24, 1996, 563–92, at 587, n. 25 (= Gregory Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters: Still More Papers on Monastic Buddhism in India*, Studies in the Buddhist traditions, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2004, 328).

19 Ibid., 582.

20 Schopen, 'Deaths, funerals, and the division of property', 475 (= Schopen, *Buddhist Monks and Business Matters*, 93).

21 Matsumura, 'Lexical note'.

22 Somdet Phra Mahā Samaṇa Chao Krom Phrayā Vajirañāṇavarorasa, *The Entrance to the Vinaya: Vinayamukha* I, Bangkok, Mahāmakuṭarājavidyālaya, 1969, vol. 1, 213.

23 For text and translation see Appendix 1, passage 1. This is not the oldest part of the *Vinaya* and could perhaps be included in the next section.

24 We should note that Kappitaka will have been living in a cemetery for meditational reasons. Otherwise it is a very unlikely place for a monk to live! This would be why the noise made by the nuns is disturbing – the text carefully avoids saying that it is annoying. The meditational context is confirmed by the parallel stories in the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*. See Jonathan A. Silk, 'Further remarks on the yogācāra bhikṣu', in Bhikkhu Pāsādika and Bhikkhu Tampalawela Dhammaratana (eds), *Dharmadūta: Mélanges offerts au Vénérable Thích Huyên-Vi à l'occasion de son soixante-dixième anniversaire*, Paris, Éditions You Feng, 1997, 233–50, at 244.

25 For parallel versions, see Ann Heirman, *'The Discipline in Four Parts': Rules for Nuns according to the Dharmaguptakavinaya*, 1st edn, 3 vols, Buddhist Tradition Series 47–9, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass Pub., 2002, 879–84; Schopen, 'Suppression of nuns'. See also Peter Skilling, 'Ideology and law: the three seals code on crimes related to relics, images and bodhi-trees', in Winai Phongsipan (ed.), *Sichamai-achan (Articles in Honour of Prof. Dr. Prasert Na Nagara and Prof. Visuddh Busyakul)*, Bangkok, Fuang Fa Printing, 2003 [2546], 287–307, at 297.

26 Ud p. 8: *Atha kho Bhagavā … sambahulehi bhikkhūhi saddhiṃ nagaramhā nikkhamitvā addasa Bāhiyaṃ Dārucīriyaṃ kālaṅkataṃ.* (so Ee; others: *kāla-.*) *Disvāna bhikkhū āmantesi: 'Gaṇhatha, bhikkhave, Bāhiyassa Dārucīriyassa sarīrakaṃ. mañcakaṃ āropetvā nīharitvā jhāpetha, thūpañ c'assa karotha. Sabrahmacārī vo, bhikkhave, kālaṅkato' ti. … te bhikkhū … Bāhiyassa Dārucīriyassa sarīrakaṃ mañcakaṃ āropetvā nīharitvā jhāpetvā thūpañ c'assa karitvā, yena Bhagavā ten' upasaṅkamiṃsu. … te bhikkhū Bhagavantaṃ etad avocum: 'Daḍḍhaṃ, bhante, Bāhiyassa Dārucīriyassa sarīraṃ, thūpo c'assa kato. … Parinibbuto, bhikkhave, Bāhiyo Dārucīriyo' ti.*

27 The story is also summarized at Ap 478:
thūpaṃ karotha. pūjetha. nibbuto so mahāmati.
khippābhiññānam es' aggo. sāvako me vacokaro. ||

28 A III 58: *Tena kho pana samayena Muṇḍassa raññho Bhaddā devī kālaṅkatā hoti piyā manāpā. So Bhaddāya deviyā kālakatāya piyāya manāpāya neva nhāyati na vilimpati. Na bhattaṃ bhuñjati. Na kammantaṃ payojeti. Rattindivaṃ Bhaddāya deviyā sarīre ajjhomucchito. Atha kho Muṇḍo rājā Piyakaṃ kosārakkhaṃ āmantesi: 'Tena hi, samma Piyaka, Bhaddāya deviyā sarīraṃ āyasāya teladoṇiyā pakkhipitvā aññissā āyasāya doṇiyā paṭikujjatha, yathā mayaṃ bhaddāya deviyā sarīraṃ cirataraṃ passeyyāmā' ti. … Piyako kosārakkho … Bhaddāya deviyā sarīraṃ āyasāya teladoṇiyā pakkhipitvā, aññissā āyasāya doṇiyā paṭikujji.* A III 62: *Atha kho Muṇḍo rājā Piyakaṃ kosārakkhaṃ āmantesi: 'Tena hi, samma Piyaka, Bhaddāya deviyā sarīraṃ jhāpetha thūpañ c'assā karotha. Ajjatagge dāni mayaṃ nhāyissāma c'eva vilimpissāma bhattaṃ ca bhuñjissāma kammante ca payojessāmā' ti.*

29 D III 117f. = III 210 = M II 244f.: *Ye pi niganṭhassa Nāthaputtassa sāvakā gihī odātavasanā, te pi* (vl.: *te tesu*) *niganṭhiyesu* (so Mss to E^{e}; E^{e}: *niganṭhesu*) *Nāthaputtiyesu nibbinnarūpā* (vl.: *nibbindarūpā*; E^{e}: *nibbiṇṇa-*) *virattarūpā paṭivānarūpā, yathā taṃ durakkhāte dhammavinaye duppavedite aniyyānike anupasamasaṃvattanike asammāsambuddhappavedite bhinnathūpe appaṭisaraṇe. … 'Niganṭho, bhante, Nāthaputto Pāvāyaṃ adhunā kālakato. tassa kālakiriyāya bhinnā niganṭhā dvedhikajātā … bhinnathūpe appaṭisaraṇe' ti.*

30 A I 77: *'Dve 'me, bhikkhave, thūpārahā. Katame dve? Tathāgato ca arahaṃ sammāsambuddho, rājā ca cakkavattī. Ime kho, bhikkhave, dve thūpārahā' ti.*

31 See Appendix 1, passage 2.

32 D II 167: *iti aṭṭha (Ee adds: assa) sarīrathūpā navamo tumbathūpo (so Be; Ee kumbha-) dasamo aṅgārathūpo. Evam etaṃ bhūtapubban ti.*

33 Bv XXVIII 4f.:
kumbhassa thūpaṃ kāresi brāhmaṇo Doṇasavhayo.

aṅgārathūpaṃ kāresuṃ Moriyā tuṭṭhamānasā ||
aṭṭha sārīrikā thūpā, navamo kumbhacetiyo.
aṅgārathūpo dasamo, tadā yeva patiṭṭhito ||

34 Mark Allon, 'Radiocarbon dating of Kharoṣṭhī fragments from the Schøyen and Senior manuscript collections', in Jens Braarvig *et al.* (eds), *Buddhist Manuscripts: Volume III*, Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection 4, Oslo, Hermes Publishing, 2006, 279–91; Harry Falk, 'The "split" collection of Kharoṣṭhī texts', *ARIRIAB* 14, 2011, 11–23. The latter (p. 19) provides some support for dating an *avadāna* text as early as the 2nd century BCE.

35 At Āḷavī: the Aggāḷavaka *Cetiya* – Vin II 172; III 145, 224; IV 15, 32, 34, 48; S I 185, 186, 187; A IV 217, 218; Sn p. 60. At Vesāli: the Gotamaka *Cetiya* – Vin I 288; III 195; D II 118; III 9; S V 260; A I 276; IV 309; Ud 62f. The Sārandada *Cetiya* – D II 76, 118; S V 260; A III 167; IV 16, 20, 309; Ud 62f. The Cāpāla *Cetiya* – D II 106, 113f., 118; S V 259, 260, 262; A IV 308ff., 311; Ud 62f.; 64; Kv 559. The Udena *Cetiya* – D II 117; III 9; S V 260; A IV 309; Ud 62f. The Sattamba *Cetiya* – D II 118; III 9; S V 260; A IV 309; Ud 62f. The Bahuputta *Cetiya* – D II 118; III 10; S V 260; A IV 309; Ud 62f. At Rājagaha: the Suppatiṭṭha *Cetiya* – Vin I 35. Among the Māgadhas: the Pāsāṇaka *Cetiya* – Sn pp. 194, 218 (cf. Nidd II). The Maṇimālika *Cetiya* – S I 208. At Pāvā: the Ajakalāpaka *Cetiya* – Ud 4. Between Rājagaha and Nāḷandā: the Bahuputta *Cetiya* – S II 219. At the city of the Bhogas: the Ānanda *Cetiya* – D II 123, 126; A II 167. At Kusinārā: the Makuṭabandhana *Cetiya* of the Mallas – D II 160. Similar references are found in Jain canonical works: e.g. the Hīramāṇa *Cetiya* – Utt IX 9 = *Suttāgame* II 988; Maṇḍikucchi Ceiya Utt XX 2 = *Suttāgame* II 1012; Rāy 678 = *Suttāgame* II 76. There is some textual variation in these and other Jain canonical sources between *ceia* and *ujjāṇa*.

36 *Tassa mayhaṃ, brāhmaṇa, etad ahosi – 'Yan nūnāhaṃ yā tā rattiyo abhiññātā abhilakkhitā – cātuddasī pañcadasī aṭṭhamī ca pakkhassa – tathārūpāsu rattīsu yāni tāni ārāmacetiyāni vanacetiyāni rukkhacetiyāni bhiṃsanakāni salomahaṃsāni tathārūpesu senāsanesu vihareyyaṃ. App eva nāma taṃ bhayabheravaṃ passeyyan' ti.*

37 S I 233:
ārāmacetyā vanacetyā pokkharaññā sunimmitā
manussarāmaṇeyyassa kalaṃ nāgghanti soḷasiṃ. ||
gāme vā yadi vāraññe ninne vā yadi vā thale
yattha arahanto viharanti taṃ bhūmi rāmaṇeyyakan || *ti.*

38 Dhp 188f. = Ja I 97 (pe in E^{e})
bahuṃ ve saraṇaṃ yanti pabbatāni vanāni ca
ārāmarukkhacetyāni manussā bhayatajjitā. ||
PDhp 216: *vatthūni rukkhacittāṇi*; Udāna-v 27.31: *ārāmāṃ vṛkṣacaityāṃś ca.*
Norman (Dhp Trsl.) has: 'parks and trees and shrines' but, given the other passages, we may suppose that *ārāmarukkhacetyāni* is for *ārāmacetyāni ca rukkhacetyāni ca.*

39 D II **75** (= A IV 19; cf. 16f.): *'Sutaṃ m' etaṃ, bhante – "Vajjī yāni tāni Vajjīnaṃ Vajjicetiyāni abbhantarāni c'eva bāhirāni ca, tāni sakkaronti garuṃ karonti mānenti pūjenti tesañ ca dinnapubbaṃ katapubbaṃ dhammikaṃ baliṃ no parihāpentī"' ti. 'Yāvakīvañ ca, Ānanda, Vajjī yāni tāni Vajjīnaṃ Vajjicetiyāni abbhantarāni c'eva bāhirāni ca, tāni sakkarissanti garukarissanti mānessanti pūjessanti, tesañ ca dinnapubbaṃ katapubbaṃ dhammikaṃ baliṃ no parihāpessanti, vuddhi yeva, Ānanda, Vajjīnaṃ pāṭikaṅkhā, no parihāni.*

40 Vin III 155f. (cf. V 6): *Atha kho āyasmā Channo vihāravatthuṃ sodhento aññataraṃ cetiyarukkhaṃ chedāpesi gāmapūjitaṃ nigamapūjitaṃ nagarapūjitaṃ janapadapūjitaṃ raṭṭhapūjitaṃ. Manussā ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācenti: 'Kathañ hi nāma samaṇā Sakyaputtiyā cetiyarukkhaṃ chedāpessanti gāmapūjitaṃ nigamapūjitaṃ nagarapūjitaṃ janapadapūjitaṃ raṭṭhapūjitaṃ. ekindriyaṃ samaṇā sakyaputtiyā jīvaṃ vihethentī' ti. Assosuṃ kho bhikkhū tesaṃ manussānaṃ ujjhāyantānaṃ khīyantānaṃ vipācentānaṃ. Ye te bhikkhū appicchā … pe … te ujjhāyanti khīyanti vipācenti: 'Kathañ hi nāma āyasmā Channo cetiyarukkhaṃ chedāpessati gāmapūjitaṃ … pe … raṭṭhapūjitan' ti. Atha kho te bhikkhū āyasmantaṃ Channaṃ anekapariyāyena vigarahitvā Bhagavato etam atthaṃ ārocesuṃ … vigarahi Buddho Bhagavā … pe … 'Kathañ hi nāma tvaṃ, moghapurisa, cetiyarukkhaṃ chedāpessasi gāmapūjitaṃ nigamapūjitaṃ nagarapūjitaṃ janapadapūjitaṃ raṭṭhapūjitaṃ; jīvasaññino hi, moghapurisa, manussā rukkhasmiṃ. N'etaṃ, moghapurisa, appasannānaṃ vā pasādāya … pe … evañ ca pana, bhikkhave, imaṃ sikkhāpadaṃ uddiseyyātha*: cf. Āyāra 461, 470: *rukkhaṃ vā ceiya-kaḍaṃ thūbhaṃ vā ceiyakaḍaṃ.*

41 Note that the last item could be an addition, since it does not follow the rule of 'waxing syllables', whereas the preceding items do.

42 See Lambert Schmithausen, *The Problem of the Sentience of Plants in Earliest Buddhism*, Studia Philologica Buddhica monograph series 6, Tokyo, International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1991, 26ff.

43 Vin III 143: *Anāpatti saṅghassa vā cetiyassa vā gilānassa vā karaṇīyena gacchati …*

44 Vin III 266 = IV 156: *Cetiyassa pariṇataṃ aññacetiyassa vā saṅghassa vā puggalassa vā pariṇāmeti. Āpatti dukkaṭassa. Puggalassa pariṇataṃ aññapuggalassa vā saṅghassa vā cetiyassa vā pariṇāmeti. Āpatti dukkaṭassa.*

45 Vin IV 301: *Anāpatti yāgupāne, saṅghabhatte, cetiyapūjāya …*

46 M II 124-5: *Atha kho Bhagavā acirapakkantassa rañño Pasenadissa Kosalassa bhikkhū āmantesi: 'Eso, bhikkhave, rājā Pasenadi Kosalo dhammacetiyāni bhāsitvā uṭṭhāyāsanā pakkanto. Uggaṇhatha, bhikkhave, dhammacetiyāni; pariyāpuṇātha, bhikkhave, dhammacetiyāni; dhāretha, bhikkhave, dhammacetiyāni. Atthasaṃhitāni, bhikkhave, dhammacetiyāni ādibrahmacariyakānī' ti.*

47 E.g. T.W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha, Part I*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists 2, London, PTS/Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, 206. More recently Richard Gombrich has developed this theme in some of his writings. See, for example, Richard F. Gombrich, *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings*, Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 17, London, Athlone, 1996, 17, and some of the articles referred to in the bibliography to that volume.

48 J V 17: *yaṃ ve pitvā ekathūpā sayanti …*

49 J IV 331: *vammīkathūpasmiṃ kipillikāni nippothayanto tuvaṃ pure carāsi.*

50 J VI 116f.: *pañcathūpaṃ dissat' idaṃ vimānaṃ mālāpiḷandhā sayanassa majjhe.* The commentary has: *tattha pañcathūpan ti pañcahi kūṭāgārehi samannāgataṃ.* Somadeva Vasudeva suggests: *pañca-* in the sense of 'spread out'.

51 J III 156 = Pv p. 7: *rudaṃ mattikathūpasmiṃ …*

52 Pv p. 63:
'ahaṃ Rājagahe ramme ramaṇīye Giribbaje
issaro dhanadhaññassa supahūtassa mārisa. ||
tassāyaṃ me bhariyā ca dhītā ca suṇisā ca me.
tā mālam uppalañ cāpi paccagghañ ca vilepanaṃ.
thūpaṃ harantiyo vāresiṃ. Taṃ pāpaṃ pakataṃ mayā. ||
chaḷāsītisahassāni mayaṃ paccattavedanā
thūpapūjaṃ vivaṇṇetvā paccāma niraye bhusaṃ. ||
ye ca kho thūpapūjāya vattante arahato mahe
ādīnavaṃ pakāsenti, vivecayetha (C^{e}: *vivecayatha*) *ne tato.* ||
imā ca passa āyantiyo māladhārī alaṅkatā
mālāvipākaṃ anubhontiyo samiddhā tā yasassiniyo. ||
tañ ca disvāna accheraṃ abbhutaṃ lomahaṃsanaṃ
namo karonti sappaññā. Vandanti taṃ mahāmuniṃ. ||
so hi nūna ito gantvā yoniṃ laddhāna mānusiṃ
thūpapūjaṃ karissāmi appamatto punappunan' ti. ||

53 Vv p. 43: *gandhapañcaṅgulikaṃ aham adāsiṃ Kassapassa Bhagavato thūpasmiṃ.*

54 Kv 472: *Diṭṭhisampanno puggalo satthari agāravo ti ? Āmantā. Diṭṭhisampanno puggalo Buddhathūpe ohaneyya, omutteyya, niṭṭhubheyya, Buddhathūpe apabyāmato* (C^{e}: *asabyākato*) *kareyyā ti ? na hevaṃ vattabbe … pe …*

55 Vin V 129. This could mean either a robe offered to a *cetiya* as robes are nowadays offered to Buddha images or, more probably, one made up from pieces of cloth previously used to decorate a *cetiya*. But the commentaries take *thūpa* here in the sense of mound and understand cloth discarded after being placed around an anthill for *balikamma.*

56 Khp p. 7:
yassa dānena sīlena saṃyamena damena ca
nidhī sunihito hoti itthiyā purisassa vā ||
cetiyamhi va saṅghe vā puggale atithīsu vā
mātari pitari vā pi atho jeṭṭhamhi bhātari, ||
eso nidhi sunihito ajeyyo anugāmiko.

57 Kv 478; 543; 617f. For the last, E^{e} has donating a *cetiya* in place of paying homage (probably a misprint).

58 Kv 559: *Nanu atthi Buddhavutthāni cetiyāni ārāmavihāragāmanigamanagarāni raṭṭhāni janapadānī ti ? Āmantā. Hañci atthi Buddhavutthāni cetiyāni ārāmavihāragāmanigamanagarāni raṭṭhāni janapadāni, tena vata re vattabbe: 'Buddho Bhagavā manussaloke aṭṭhāsī' ti. This would be in one of the latest parts of the Kathāvatthu.*

59 Sv 15 (the exact list varies in some editions).

60 Bv II 219: *Dīpaṅkaro Jino satthā Nandārāmamhi nibbuto.*
tatth' eva tassa Jinathūpo chattiṃs' ubbedhayojano ti.

61 Jonathan S. Walters, 'Stūpa, story, and empire: constructions of the Buddha biography in early post-Aśokan India', in J. Schober (ed.), *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, 160–92.

62 Compare for example the modern *ānisaṃsa* literature of Thailand.

63 Ap 72: *pupphadāmaṃ*, 'wreath of flowers' (normally to be placed upon the *thūpa* by people who ascend it but in this case taken up by an attendant *yakkha*); 111: *nānāpupphaṃ samokiriṃ*, 'I strewed various kinds of flower'; variously placing on the *thūpa*: – 119: a flower of the Pāṭali tree discarded on a highway; 170: *pupphacchadana*, 'covering of flowers'?; 171: *jātipuppha*, 'a jasmine flower'; 172: *ummāpuppha*, 'a flax flower'; 180: a *punnāga* in flower (this should be repeated after p. 267 but it is missing in E^{e}); 388: strewed golden *kiṅkhaṇi* flowers; cf. 438; 426: *nānāpupphaṃ samānetvā*.

64 Ap 172: *dhūpakkhandho ca thūpānuchavikaṃ*, (so read) 'a mass of incense fitting for the *thūpa*'.

65 Ap 571 and 579 both describe lighting a lamp with oil and tending it (at the *cetiya* of Kassapa).

66 Ap 72: *dhaja*; Ap 101: a *dhaja* is worshipped.

67 Ap 133: *cetiye phalikantare (vl) sudhāpiṇḍo mayā dinno*; 198: *sudhāpiṇḍaṃ adās' ahaṃ*.

68 Ap 513: a necklace (*mekhalikā*) was donated to pay for the construction of the *thūpa* of Lord Siddhattha; a second *mekhalā* was given afterwards.

69 Ap 59 has *thūpapūjaṃ* but the reading in B^{e} of *dhūpapūjaṃ* must be correct in view of the later mention of *gandhālepa*. Similarly with *gandhathūpaṃ* at Ap 135. The results of a number of the offerings mentioned here are subsequently described as the fruit of *thūpapūjā*.

70 Ap 198: the *thūpa* of Lord Phussa had been broken by elephants and a tree had grown up inside. This was set right (*visamaṃ samaṃ katvā*).

71 Ap 269: A *cetiya* of Lord Padumuttara was in jungle filled with dangerous and wild animals. No one could go to pay their respects. So it became overgrown. A woodsman (*vanakammika*) who saw it cleared it of grass, wood and creepers. He paid homage bent down either eight times or to the eight places. Various beneficial results that resulted when a *thūpa* was purified (*sodhita*) are subsequently listed. Compare also Ap 457, which describes the 20 qualities obtained as a result of clearing away *bodhi* leaves left in a *cetiya* surround:
ahaṃ pure bodhipattaṃ ujjhitaṃ cetiyaṅgaṇe
taṃ gahetvāna chaḍḍesiṃ. alabhiṃ vīsatī guṇe. ||

72 Ap 171: placing a *dhajatthambha* on the *cetiya* itself and subsequently constructing steps to mount the *cetiya* and place flowers on the pillar.

73 Ap 608: *dhātuthūpa*.

74 Ap 220: a painter dyes cloth-ware various colours at a *cetiya*. This must be for flags.

75 Ap 255:
pavanā nikkhamantena diṭṭhaṃ sīhāsanaṃ mayā
ekaṃsam añjaliṃ katvā thavissaṃ lokanāyakaṃ. ||
He departs after paying homage to the *āsana*.

76 Ap 90: *vicittadusse laṅghetvā kapparukkhaṃ ṭhapes' ahaṃ*.

77 Ap 59.

78 e.g. Ap 172: *mahāthūpamaho*.

79 Ap 89: the donor instigated discussion with craftsmen, provided funding (*mūla*) and had a place for offerings (*āyāga*) constructed. Pj II.412: *deyyadhammānaṃ adhiṭṭhānabhūto ti vuttaṃ hoti*. Ap-a: *āyataṃ dīghaṃ bhojanasālaṃ*. Cf. DN II 167. This is probably the same as Prakrit *āyaka*: see Mireille Bénisti, 'Les Stūpa aux Cinq Piliers', *Bulletin de L'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 58, 1971, 131–62, at 138ff. Epic Sanskrit *āyāga* refers to a 'sacrificial offering', but in Pali it seems to have extended to 'recipient' and then 'place of offering'. So what is probably meant is one (of four?) extrusions provided as a place to make offerings at a *cetiya*.

80 Ap 170: *chattātichattaṃ*, 'a double umbrella' or 'a series of umbrellas'.

81 Ap 172: a sandalwood *vedikā*. The previous line has: *thūpaṃ rattaṃ upaṭṭhenti dhātugehe varuttame*. The first *pāda* is corrupt, with different readings in each of E^{e}, C^{e}, B^{e} and S^{e}, but there seems to be a reference to a 'relic house' in the second *pāda*. Ap-a: *tass' upari candanasārena cetiyagharaṃ karitvā*.

82 Ap 221: 'a platform (*jagatī*) was constructed for me at the unsurpassed *thūpa* of the Buddha (Atthadassin)'.

83 *Vimāna* could refer to one of four domed chambers constructed around a *cetiya* as shrines. Or it may refer to the main chamber of the *cetiya*. The main dome of the *cetiya* does not seem to be referred to as the *aṇḍa* (egg) or *kumbha* (pot) in Pali sources.

84 *jaṅghā*; so *DP* suggests; cf. *jaṃghāvedī*, 'railing on the walkway' in the *Kriyāsaṃgraha*: Mireille Bénisti, 'Étude sur le stūpa dans l'Inde ancienne', *Bulletin de L'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 50, 1, 1960, 37–115, at 90; and Gustav Roth, 'Symbolism of the Buddhist stūpa according to the Tibetan version of the *Caitya-vibhāga-vinayodbhāva-sūtra*, the Sanskrit treatise *Stūpa-lakṣaṇakārikā-vivecana*, and a corresponding passage in Kuladatta's *Kriyāsaṃgraha*', in Anna L. Dallapiccola and Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallemant (eds), *The Stupa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance*, Beiträge zur Südasienforschung 55, Wiesbaden, Steiner, 1980, 183–209, at 194 and 196.

85 See Louis Gabaude, *Les Cetiya de sable au Laos et au Thaïlande*, Publications de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient 118, Paris, École française d'Extrême-Orient, diffusion A. Maisonneuve, 1979. Made with flowers: Ap 156; with sand (*puḷina* or *pulina*): Ap 180, 388, 426 (apparently at a time when there is no living Buddha or continuing *Buddhasāsana* and so dedicated to all the Buddhas); Ap 427: a Buddha now takes birth(?), *yam pakittemi sambuddhaṃ sikatāthūpasantike*; Ap 437ff. (the river nearby is full of very pure sand; it is collected together to make a *pulinacetiya* for former Buddhas; the *thūpa* is referred to as golden; it is used for recollection when *kilesa* arise).

86 Ap 439: *bodhipapaṭikaṃ gayha, soṇṇathūpam akārayuṃ* – morning and night they bow down in the presence of the Buddha (Sakyaputta) (here there is no *viya* or *va*, probably because of metrical constraints). On *uposatha* days they brought out (*vinīharuṃ*) the golden *thūpa* and spent the three watches (of the night) singing the praise of the Buddha (*Buddhassa vaṇṇaṃ kittentā*).

87 Ap 388: *sammukhā viya sambuddhaṃ thūpaṃ paricariṃ ahaṃ*. Note that this *cetiya* on a sandbank is made while Lord Atthadassin is still alive.

88 Ap 490. However, the intervening birth was in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven.

89 Ap 579f. See Appendix 1, passage 3.

90 I.e. the golden *cetiya* resembles the sun near the horizon.

91 So E^{e}; B^{e} has *vediyo*.

92 Ap 582. See Appendix 1, passage 4.

93 Ap 33. See Appendix 1, passage 5.

94 Ap 84. See Appendix 1, passage 6. This must be a *cetiya* made during the life-time of that Buddha. The same may be the case at Ap 146.

95 Ap 70ff. See Appendix 1, passage 7. This account is given again in a later *apadāna*, which is one of a group omitted in the manuscripts used for E^{e} but known to the commentator and included in the Asian editions.

96 I find Ñāṇamoli's arguments for the later date of the *Nettipakaraṇa* convincing despite Oskar von Hinüber's defence of Hardy's older view. See: Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Guide (Netti-ppakaraṇa), According to Kaccāna Thera*, London, Luzac for the PTS, 1962, xiii–xxvii and passim. An early date for the *Peṭakopadesa* seems much more probable in the light of the discovery of an early Chinese translation of one chapter of it. See Stefano Zacchetti, 'Some remarks on the Peṭaka passages in the Da zhidu lun and their relation to the Pāli Peṭakopadesa', *ARIRIAB*, 5, 2002, 67–85.

97 Heinz Bechert, *Bruchstücke buddhistischer Versammlungen aus zentral-asiatischen Sanskrithandschriften*, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Institut fur Orientforschung 51, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1961; Richard Salomon, *Two Gāndhārī Manuscripts of the Songs of Lake Anavatapta (Anavatapta-gāthā): British Library Kharoṣṭī Fragment 1 and Senior Scroll 14*, Gandharan Buddhist Texts 5, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 2009 (see my review of the last in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74, 3, 2011, 494–6).

98 Nett 140:
devaputtasarīravaṇṇā sabbe subhagasaṇṭhitī.
udakena paṃsuṃ temetvā, thūpaṃ vaḍḍhetha Kassapaṃ. ||
ayaṃ sugatte sugatassa thūpo mahesino dasabaladhammadhārino
yasmiṃ ime devamanujā pasannā kāraṃ karontā jarāmaraṇā pamuccare ti ||

99 Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pali Literature*, Indian Philology and South Asian Studies 2, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996, 85–6.

100 Mil 309.
101 Mil 341.
102 Mil 366.
103 Oldenberg reads *mahatarā*, following (or perhaps misreading) his two Burmese Mss. Burmese editions generally have *mahattarā*, whereas Sinhalese editions seem always to have *mahantatarā*. The meaning must be the same in each case – the nun is either senior in terms of ordination or very old. Compare: Vin III 121, 188: *tadahujātā pi dārikā, pag eva mahattarī.*
104 B^e: °*raṃsiṃ*.
105 S^e: *cātiyo*.
106 B^e: *kārayi*.
107 B^e: *naḷaggī*.
108 So S^e; B^e: *jotantī*.
109 B^e: °*nujjalayī*.
110 So C^e; B^e: *pūjanatthāya*.
111 B^e: *kārayi*.
112 B^e: °*agghiyo*.
113 So B^e; S^e: *parikkhāyo*.
114 S^e: *sasajjā va*; B^e: *sasañjho va*.
115 B^e: *vediyo*.
116 B^e: *pūrayi*.
117 B^e: *nidhāyantamhi*.
118 B^e: *vaṭṭīni*; C^e: *vaṭṭīyo*.
119 B^e: *diyaḍḍhahatthapatthaṭaṃ*.
120 B^e: *hammiyaṃ*.
121 So B^e.
122 B^e: *silāsanaṃ*.
123 B^e: *ratanāmaya-*.
124 C^e1961, B^e: *sarīrakiccaṃ*.
125 C^e1961, B^e: *dhātuṃ*.
126 C^e1961, B^e: *dutiyāsi*.
127 so S^e; C^e1961, B^e: *tathā*.
128 B^e: *pañcamiyā bhūmi*; C^e1961: … *nemī*.
129 E^e.
130 So C^e1961; B^e: °*soṇṇamayo*.
131 So B^e and C^e1961; E^e: *karissāma* here and below.

Chapter 3

The Buddhist Remains of Passani and Bimaran and Related Relic Deposits from South-eastern Afghanistan in the Masson Collection of the British Museum

Elizabeth Errington

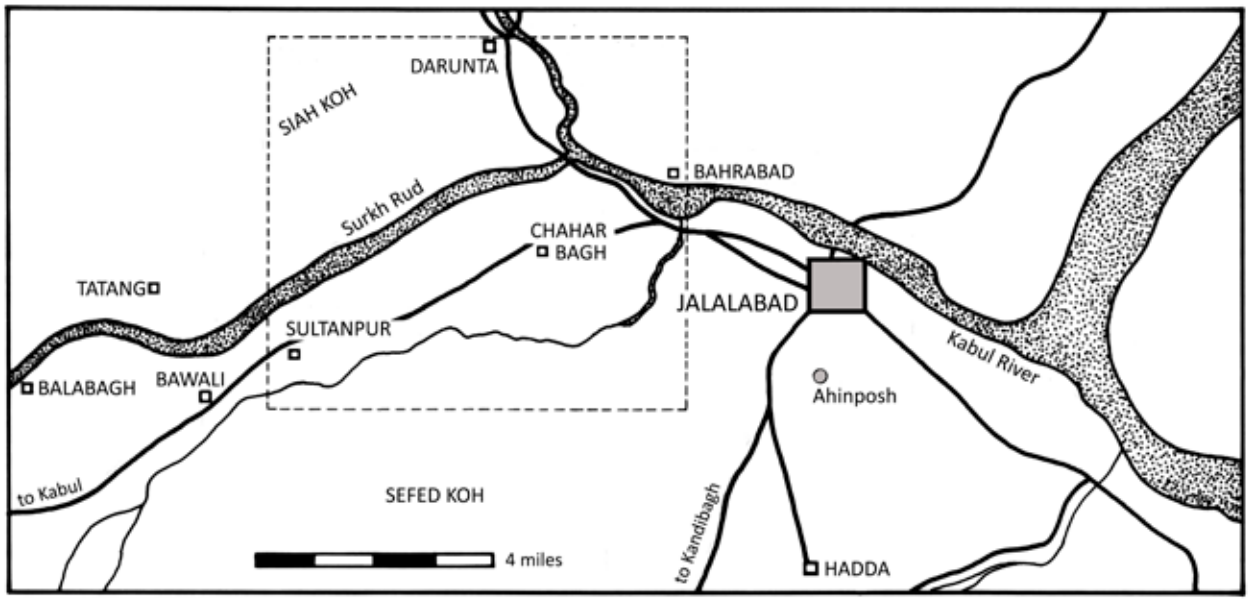
Abstract

In 1833–5 Charles Masson surveyed, recorded and excavated numerous Buddhist sites in the neighbourhood of Kabul and Jalalabad, many of which no longer survive. The Masson Project has made extensive use of the vast archive of Masson's manuscripts and drawings in the India Office collections of the British Library to throw light on the extant material from his excavations in the British Museum. This chapter concentrates on the remains of Passani, Bimaran and related sites in the Darunta district, west of Jalalabad. It compares burial practices, contents of reliquaries and architectural data to suggest a late 1st-century date for many of the key relic deposits of this region.

The Buddhist stupas and relic deposits of south-eastern Afghanistan investigated by Charles Masson in 1833–5 are well known from the publication of *Ariana Antiqua* in 1841.[1] This basic synopsis of Masson's research has now been supplemented by extensive use of the vast archive of his manuscripts and drawings in the India Office collections of the British Library and by studying the extant material from his excavations in the British Museum. Together they not only form a unique record of sites which have subsequently disappeared, but they make it possible to identify objects from specific sites and relic deposits, and to recreate the sacred landscape by distinguishing the different types of structures and their relationship to each other.

Masson concentrated his research on the Buddhist remains to the south of Kabul, at Wardak to the south-west; and sites to the west and south of Jalalabad, i.e. in the Darunta district, around the village of Chahar Bagh and at Hadda (**Fig. 21a**).[2] The last three areas are the best documented and were the most productive: of 39 excavated structures, 24 produced a variety of finds, ranging from bones and ashes to substantial relic deposits. Some of the findings will be discussed here.

The Darunta district (**Fig. 21b**) consists of a long, narrow plain bounded on one side by the Siah Koh (Black Hills) and on the other by the Surkh Rud (Red River), a tributary of the Kabul River. Most of the Buddhist remains were clustered around villages, e.g. Kotpur (three stupas: K1–3), Bimaran (five stupas: B1–5), Deh Rahman and Nandara (two stupas respectively: DR1–2, N1–2). In addition, there were numerous tumuli ranging in size from small insignificant mounds to substantial structures with a diameter of more than 21m.[3] Passani (so-called after a nomadic tribe using its caves in winter) is the exception, being a ridge of higher ground along the 'skirts' of the Siah Koh, without any permanent settlement. Masson records that it had two stupas (P1–2) and 14 'tumuli' (**Fig. 22**).[4] The Kyoto University survey of *c.* 1965 found only piles of debris, but even in 1834 all that remained of these structures except Passani Stupa 2 was a series of mounds of various sizes.[5] The most accessible was Passani Stupa 1, which was located on the east side of the road leading to Bimaran. Excavation showed that it had 'a succession of squares of slate' suggestive of relic cells in its centre, but no relic deposits.[6] Four small mounds possibly associated with it (Tumuli 1–4) lay to the south and west, while immediately to the north was a Muslim cemetery: 'the



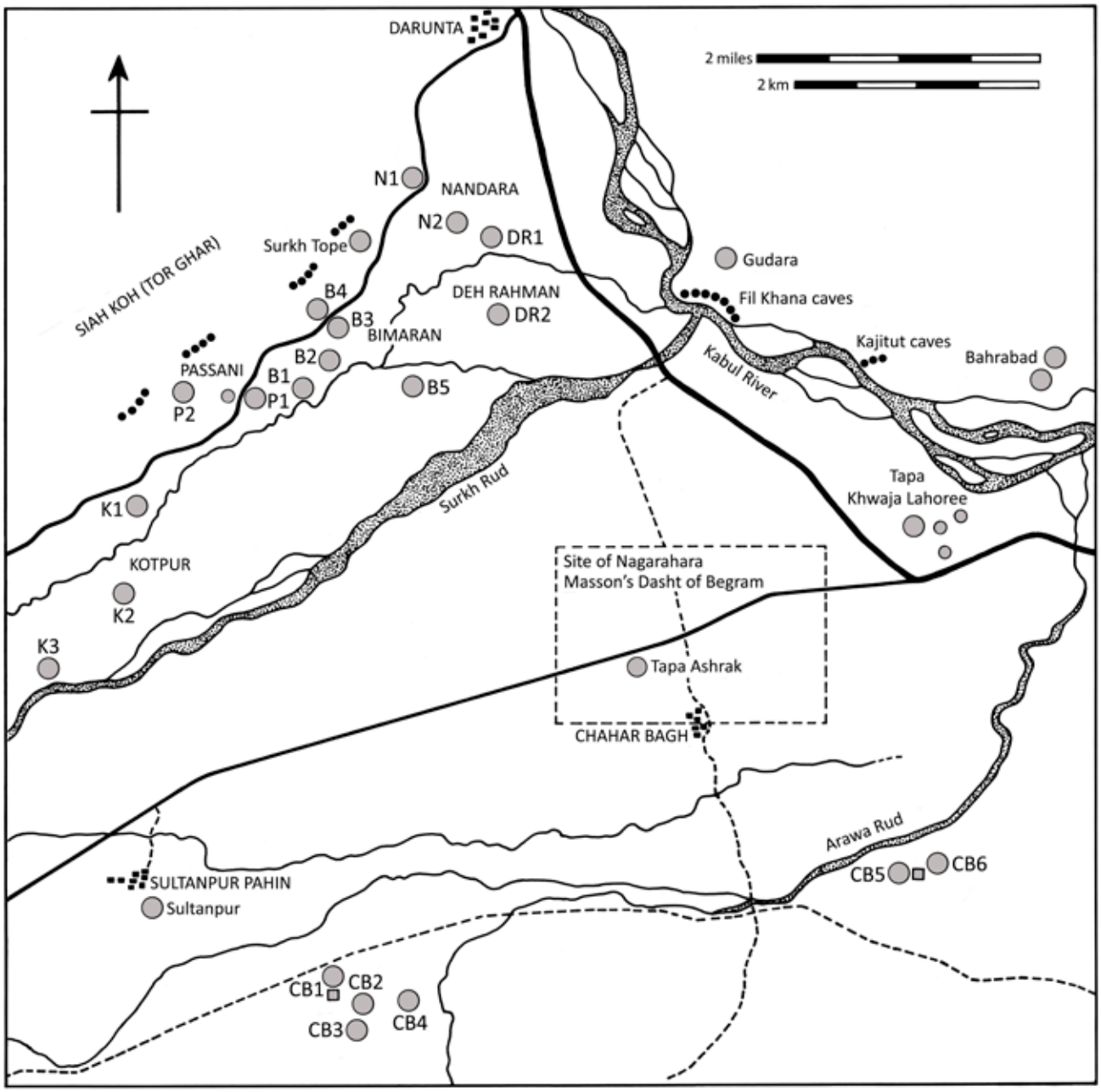


Figure 21a–b (a) Map of the Buddhist sites west and south of Jalalabad investigated by Charles Masson; (b) Map of Darunta and Chahar Bagh

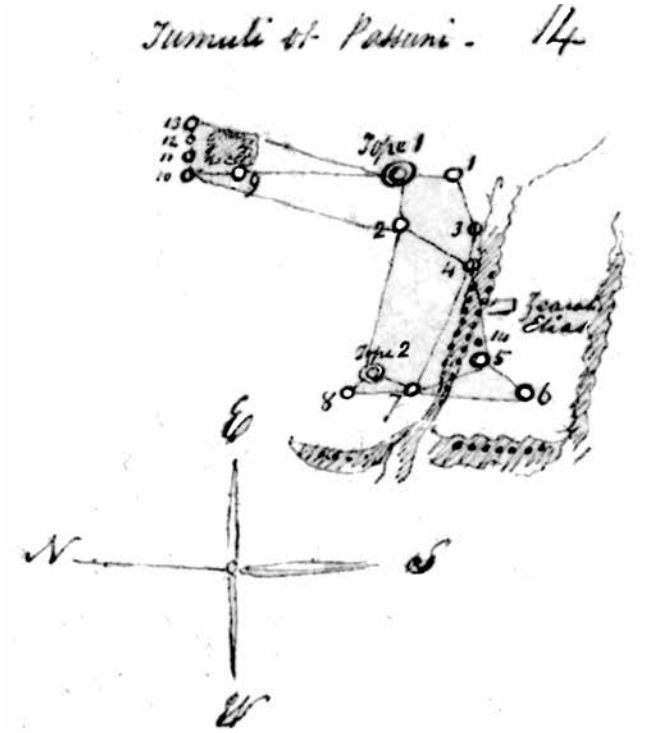


Figure 22 Masson's sketch map of Passani (British Library, India Office Collections, MSS Eur. E164, f. 150a; courtesy of British Library)

stones used to construct its graves have all been supplied by the topes and tumuli'. The close proximity of the later cemetery to Tumuli 9–13 suggests moreover that it may have occupied the site of earlier Buddhist structures. Masson says that further to the west,

> leading up to the near hills, is a wide ravine, whose banks on either side are honeycombed with caves. On the high lands stretching from the banks are situated some important tumuli [nos 5–7], and amongst those to the right is a dilapidated tope [Passani Stupa 2]. Above the caves the ravine contracts and its confined breadth is crossed by a perpendicular wall of yellow rock. … From the summit of this mass of yellow rock a dark khol or glen ascends up the superior hill. In the lower eminences of the hills at this point are also many caves, and their crests are crowned with a variety of stone walls and parapets. They are indications of ancient places of sepulture, proved by the bones, ashes, and frequently earthen jars containing similar contents, abundantly found within their limits. The old inhabitants of these countries particularly affected lofty and retired spots for their cemeteries, and the eminences selected they girt with parapet walls, filling up the intervals between them and the rock with carefully sifted and cleansed earth from the plain below. … The ashes, &c. to be found in all of them are, however, decisive as to their character.[7]

Masson's map shows 'Tumuli' 5, 6 and 14 with ravines to the south and west, and separated from the other Passani sites by a cave-filled ravine to the north. 'Tumuli' 7–8 form a cluster with Stupa 2 on the north side of the same ravine. Analysis of Masson's record of 'Tumuli' 5–7 reveals that they were actually the remains of large stupas, which together enabled him 'accurately to determine their original outline'.[8] He calculated that the stupa drum measured *c.* 33.53m in circumference, i.e. 10.67m in diameter. Far from revealing their form as 'primitive', his sketch and plan (**Fig. 23**) show a square base, *c.* 17.07m in length by 2.44m in

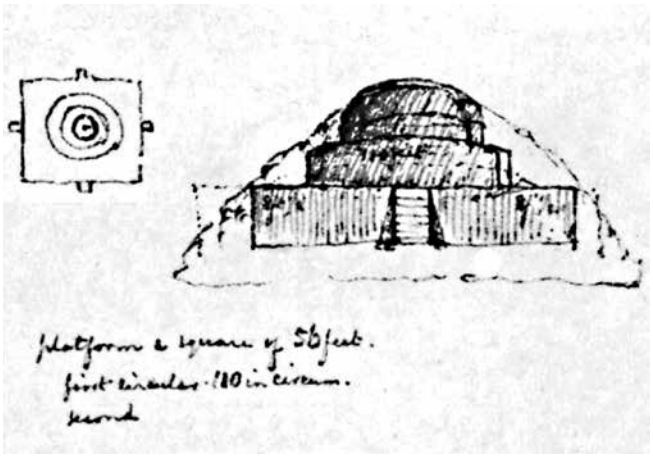


Figure 23 Masson's stupa reconstruction based on Passani stupa 'Tumuli' 5–7 (British Library, India Office Collections, MSS Eur. F 63, section 2, f. 50v; courtesy of British Library)

height, with a flight of steps leading up to the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* on all four sides,[9] a characteristic of later stupas such as Shah-ji-ki-Dheri and Tahkal Bala Stupa B near Peshawar (a Kushan coin of Vasishka in the relic deposit of the latter stupa dates it to the second half of the 3rd century CE or later).[10]

The excavation of Passani Stupa 'Tumulus' 5 exposed an earlier stupa encased within the subsequently enlarged structure. There was no evidence of a relic cell, the only finds being the beak of a mynah (?) bird in the core of the original stupa,[11] some corroded coins near the surface and, in the upper central core of the enlargement, a small speckled marble.[12] The Kyoto University survey recorded a diameter of *c.* 15m by 6m in height.[13]

Masson's sketch of Stupa 'Tumulus' 6 shows that it occupied a prominent position on the escarpment, with a vantage point that afforded a panoramic view of the stupas and villages on the plain below (**Fig. 24**). This seems to be an example of the practice noted by Julia Shaw, of siting religious monuments so as to be visually tied together as part of a wider sacred landscape.[14] Although the site was not excavated by Masson, the Kyoto University survey collected fragments of stucco sculpture from it and noted that a large pit had subsequently been dug from the top on the south side, which had exposed a corner of the relic chamber.[15]

In the debris of the biggest monument, Stupa 'Tumulus' 7, the Kyoto University survey in 1965 found numerous lime and stucco fragments of Buddha statues, lions and elephants, some bearing traces of red pigment, and pieces of rough stucco, containing sand and pebbles, perhaps from a later refacing.[16] Masson uncovered in its core a large stone covered with layers of birch bark. Beneath this was a chamber in which lay a 'regularly extended' entire skeleton, minus the skull.[17] He says 'I was at a loss to decide whether these bones had been burnt, from their state of preservation and their integrity; the roof of the apartment was indeed smoked'. If this was actually the case, it suggests that cremation took place *in situ* and the chamber was sealed with the stone before the process was completed, so that the resulting lack of oxygen extinguished the fire, leaving the skeleton largely intact. But this is mere speculation. Masson's published sketch of the location of this find (**Fig. 25**) shows

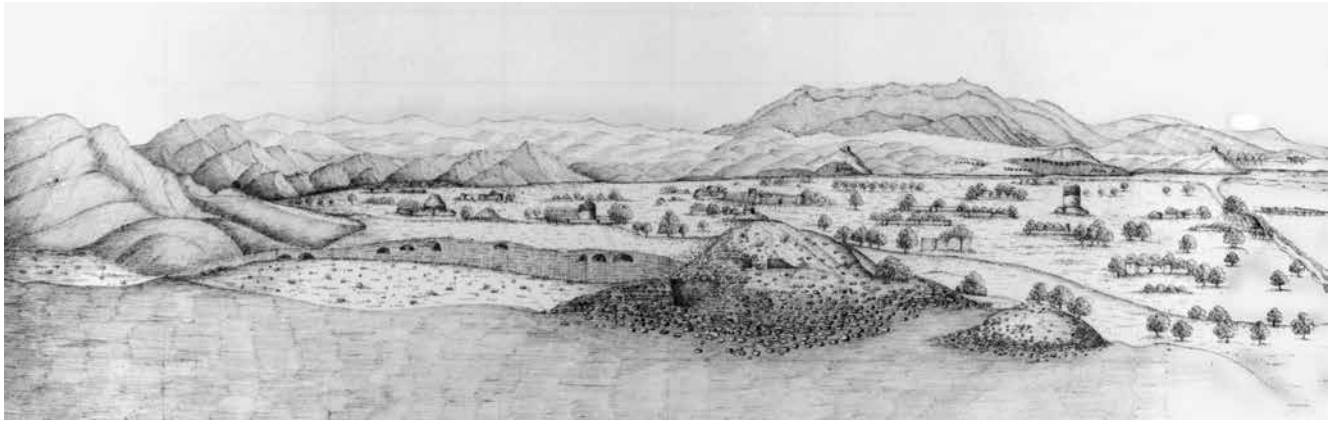


Figure 24 Masson's sketch of Passani stupa 'Tumulus' 6 from the west, overlooking (left–right) the stupas Deh Rahman 2 and Bimaran 4, 3, 2, 1, 5 and the tumulus Koti Khel on the Darunta plain, with Gudara, Bahrabad and the Buddhist caves of Fil Khana visible in the distance (British Library, India Office Collections, MSS Eur. G40, f. 71, courtesy of British Library)

the chamber positioned in the centre of the mound at the base of the dome, as is to be expected if the burial was contemporary with the erection of the stupa.[18] However, the extant mound in *c.* 1965 (which then measured 13m in diameter) still exhibited the same profile as Masson's section drawing, with the depression in its centre (presumably from his excavation) not appearing to penetrate to any great depth, and possibly not to the base of the dome.[19] So it is feasible that it was a secondary burial, not necessarily associated with the original construction, although its location and the covering of birch bark suggest that it was connected to the Buddhist cult of the monument.

In the 1860s, a similar find was made by Henry Bellew at the Sahri Bahlol stupa of Dhamami in the Peshawar Valley. Here the Buddhist context is more certain. In the centre of the stupa core, at a depth of 10.36m, was an extended human

Figure 25 Masson's section drawings of Passani stupa 'tumulus' 7 showing the location of the skeleton chamber, and extant mound viewed from the north-east in 1965 (British Library, India Office Collections, MSS Eur. F 63, section 2, f. 49v, courtesy of British Library; Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, Topes, pl. V; photo courtesy of Kyoto University, neg. 65.77-23)

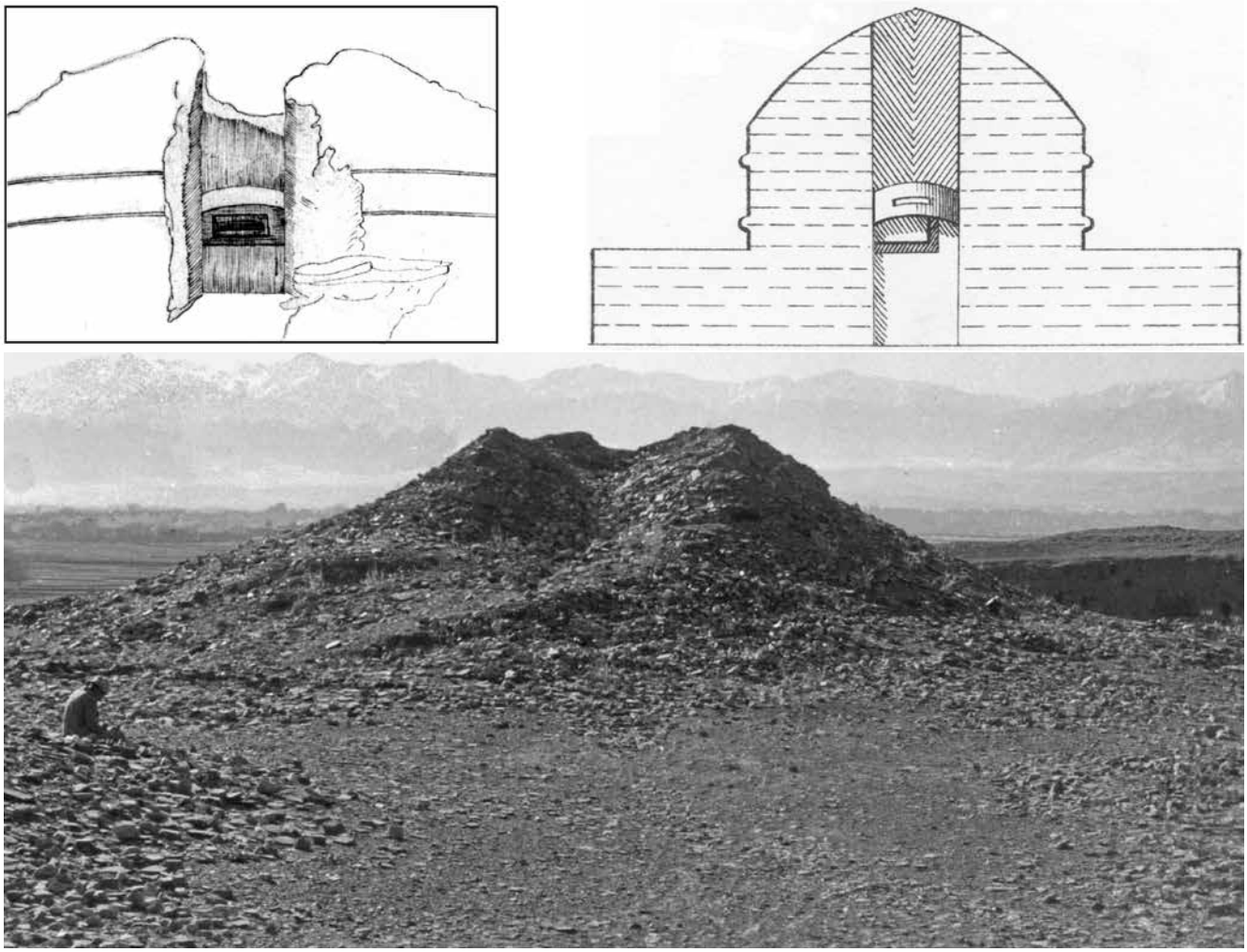


Figure 26 Steatite and gold reliquaries from Passani Tumulus 2, *c.* 1st century CE (British Museum, 1880.98, 1880.3498. 1880.3499, 1880.3530, 1880.3531)

skeleton, aligned north to south, and embedded in a hard layer of clay.[20] A metre below this was an oblong cavity, again orientated north to south, lined with loose stones. It contained ashes, charcoal and fragments of a human skeleton, mixed up with various animal and bird bones, including 'crow, horse, rat, common fowl, kite, sand-grouse and owl'. Also included was a small, broken bodhisattva statue,[21] which had lost both its hands and feet prior to burial. The inclusion of the statue fits in with Buddhist practice at sites such as Sanchi, where damaged images of the Buddha were similarly deposited in stupas 12 and 14.[22] The presence of an entire skeleton immediately above it is less easily explained. However, it seems to have probably been a Buddhist burial associated with the veneration of the stupa itself, as it was found at such a great depth within a structure which Bellew describes as 'firm and compact' and composed throughout 'of great slabs of rock … placed one above the other in intervening layers of clay and lime' which proved difficult to penetrate.[23]

That Masson was right in his suggestion that the Passani area was extensively used as a burial ground is demonstrated by his further excavation results. Of the six 'small' tumuli he investigated, only no. 4 and no. 8 produced nothing. Tumulus 1 contained human bones, while no. 3 and no. 9 each produced a funeral jar containing ashes.[24] As Richard Salomon notes, monastic cemeteries are well attested in Gandhara, and the remains of deceased monks seem to have usually been interred in uninscribed clay jars,[25] or those inscribed merely in impermanent ink, as Masson found was the case on the jar he found in Hadda Stupa 13.[26]

Only Tumulus 2 differs from the other remains in this area, in that it contained a substantial relic deposit, dated by worn Kushan Soter Megas coins. These have previously been assigned to Wima Takto (*c.* 90–113 CE), but analysis by Joe Cribb suggests that the earliest in the series were probably issued by Kujula Kadphises (*c.* 40–90 CE).[27] It has also always been generally assumed that Passani Tumulus 2 was a stupa, but this is by no means certain from the excavation record. Masson describes it as a small mound, built compactly, but with no visible structures and no interior 'cupola', i.e. no encased earlier stupa or relic cell. Always the smallest of the mounds, by 1965 only a pile of stones remained. So no structural evidence survives to indicate whether it was a stupa or not. Only its proximity to other Buddhist structures and the reliquary contents suggest that it too was Buddhist.

It was the only 'tumulus' in the Darunta district that produced a relic deposit containing objects in addition to bones and ashes (**Figs 26, 31**). It was also unusual in another respect, in that deposited in its centre was an intact human skull complete with teeth.[28] Immediately beneath this was a large steatite casket in pristine condition, divided internally

Figure 27 Meditation cave at Hadda (photo courtesy of Piers Baker)

into five compartments.[29] It contained ashes and 'the usual fragments of bone', together with small silver and tiny gold reliquaries, a 'twist' of birch bark inscribed in Kharoshthi (which unfortunately crumbled into small fragments), and crystal, gold and 'burnt coral' beads, including a double crescent one of malachite and a *śrīvatsa*-shaped one of gold (see **Table 1**).[30]

Possibly related finds of interred skulls were made elsewhere in the Darunta district. In many of the 12 tumuli positioned in two straight lines adjacent to Bimaran Stupa 4 were large inverted earthen jars 'containing skulls, bones and ashes'.[31] Masson also notes – in slight contradiction – that, at the foot of the mound of Nandara Stupa 2,

> by the slight removal of the soil, human skulls are found, deposited in apartments formed by arranged stones. No other bones are lodged with them. Similar objects are to be found at Sultanpur Bála, two or three miles south of Darunta [village], and there it occasionally happens that the grave-diggers in their labours fall upon a skull, the modern Mohammedan place of burial being on the site of an ancient Golgotha. The Surkh Rúd, also south of the town, has sometimes, in washing away the banks, exposed deposits of skulls. … I may also point out, that in the numerous topes and tumuli [apart from Passani Tumulus 2], in which I have met with large quantities of human bones, I have never detected skulls amongst them.[32]

The reference to deposits of skulls at Sultanpur Bála and along the banks of the Surkh Rud finds an echo in a report by Masson's contemporary Alexander Burnes. While travelling through the Khyber Pass en route to Kabul in August 1837, he was shown 'many small mounds built to mark the spots where [the Afghans] had planted the heads of the Sikhs who they had decapitated' after the Afghan victory at the battle of Jamrud earlier the same year.[33] A related custom is reported by Lady Sale, in the journal she kept of events leading up to the British withdrawal from Kabul and almost total annihilation by the Afghans in December 1841 to January 1842:

> It is supposed that some very influential person was in the fort [stormed by the British on 6 November 1841], and has been killed. A body, richly dressed, was found, but the head was carried away. This they do when they cannot take the body, as the head then receives Mussulman burial, which the Afghans are very particular in observing.[34]

It is probable, therefore, that the examples cited by Masson may represent two quite different traditions: one a practice still current in the early 19th century; the other – where skulls were found in jars together with bones – possibly dating to the Buddhist period.

According to Chinese pilgrims, skull relics of the Buddha were enshrined at Hadda and at the nearby city of Nagarahara (to the north-west of Hadda, between Jalalabad and Chahar Bagh: see **Fig. 21b**). When Faxian (in about 401 CE) and Xuanzang (in 632 CE) visited Hadda, both saw a piece of the Buddha's skull bone, yellowish-white in colour, which was placed in an open shrine and the focus of daily ritual.[35]

According to Faxian, it was a flat bone, i.e. one of the cranial bones, which Xuanzang says was 30cm in circumference, with distinct hair pores. It seems to have provided a lucrative income in the 7th century, one gold coin being charged to see the skull bone and five gold coins for making an impression to be used for predictions of individual states of blessedness.[36] Xuanzang also mentions the existence at Hadda of a 'leaf-shaped' cranial bone of the Buddha, placed in a casket within a sealed stupa. At the time of Faxian's visit, a tooth relic of the Buddha was still worshipped in an open shrine at Nagarahara, but only the foundations of the structure survived by 632 CE.[37]

The *Visuddhimagga* (Path of Purity) of Buddhaghosa (*c.* 400 CE) advocates meditation on death and decay as an exercise to promote the understanding of emptiness and insight into the absence of a self,[38] a practice which is clearly illustrated by the wall painting of two monks flanking a skeleton in the meditation cave at Hadda (**Fig. 27**).[39]

These 5th- to 7th-century textual references are relatively late, but skulls and skeletons also feature in earlier Gandharan reliefs. In discussing representations of the story of the Buddha and the skull-tapper, Maurizio Taddei notes that:

according to both the literary texts and the figurative monuments, it seemed perfectly natural that unburnt human skulls were available for the contest of the Buddha and Vaṅgīsa and that, as a consequence, the practice of inhumation or exposing the corpses was quite widespread; the fact that the skull of an *arhat* was also easily available is even more interesting because this suggests that those practices of disposal of the corpses were also accepted for the most venerable members of the *saṃgha*.[40]

In his introduction to the countries of Lampa (Laghman), Nagarahara and Gandhara, Xuanzang lists three – not necessarily Buddhist – methods for disposing of bodies: cremation, burial in water and inhumation.[41] What is unusual about the Passani Tumulus 2 and Bimaran tumuli deposits is that the reliquary and earthenware jars presumably contained burnt human (not animal) bones and ashes. However, the skulls – if part of the same body – seem to have undergone a different ritual, because, as Taddei points out, there is very little chance that a skull would survive the cremation process intact. The fact that the Passani skull also still had its teeth provides a further indication that it was unlikely to have been burnt: according to the bone specialist Jo Appleby, little survives of the crown of a tooth after cremation because, as the enamel heats up, it actually explodes.[42] So either the skulls were deliberately excluded from the funeral pyre or – as seems more likely – they belonged to different bodies and a later burial tradition.

Although the skull found in Passani Tumulus 2 was perhaps not part of the relic deposit, the size and location of the mound suggest that it may have been erected for a venerable member of the monastic community who merited his own stupa in the vicinity of the principal monument, Passani Stupa 1. Moreover, if the skulls found in apartments along the base of Nandara Stupa 2 were an integral part of the Buddhist cult of the monument, their location is significant. In Gandhara, the platform on which the domed stupa was positioned seems to have marked a symbolic transition between temporal life and the spiritual, with its ultimate goal of *nirvāṇa*. Understood in this light, it makes perfect sense that the subject matter of the reliefs and motifs used to decorate the stair risers and sides of the platform should be musicians, mythical divinities and *Jātaka* stories: ascending to the *pradakṣiṇāpatha* above symbolized the renunciation of all worldly pleasures in favour of following the righteous path that would ultimately lead to *nirvāṇa*. So in a Buddhist context, the burial of skulls within the precinct of the stupa could be seen as acknowledgement of the spiritual progress achieved by the *arhat*.

All the other human bones that Masson found with relic deposits seem to have been cremated. Although he says that the deposits generally contained a fragment or two of bone,[43] there are no samples of human remains now in the collection.

As at Dhamami, there are, however, animal remains, notably teeth, which were found with human bones in the mass of an earlier stupa encased within a later enlargement of Hadda Stupa 11.[44] Another tooth was found in Chahar Bagh Stupa 5, apparently also within an earlier stupa, in a reliquary containing human bones and a bronze coin of Wima Kadphises (*c.* 113–27 CE).[45] Masson tentatively identifies them as camel teeth, while they are said in *Ariana*

Figure 28a–b (a) Donkey teeth from Hadda Stupa 11 and Chahar Bagh Stupa 5, *c.* 2nd century CE; (b) Bird talon from Hadda Stupa 10, *c.* 5th century CE (British Museum, 1880.4115, 1880.3883.r (inset))

Antiqua to belong to ass, goat and a species of deer. The two groups appear to have been amalgamated, and the teeth now in the collection all appear to belong to a donkey (**Fig. 28a**). Other animal remains include the already mentioned beak of a mynah (?) bird in the core stupa of Passani Stupa 'Tumulus' 5,[46] and another under a huge stone 1.83m below the 'summit' of Kotpur Stupa 1 (**Fig. 33b**).[47] Masson says that 'This was not an accidental deposit; a similar one having occurred in a tope at Chahàr-Bàgh', but he does not record any such find when discussing that particular site and it seems that he may be muddling this instance with the animal tooth from Chahar Bagh Stupa 5. There is, however, a bird's talon with the material from Hadda Stupa 10.[48] It is stained green, like some of the large shell beads from the same site,[49] and has been deliberately thinned down and shaped at one end (**Fig. 28b**). Bones of animals have also been found in relic deposits in India (e.g. in a stupa at Kottampalugubodu monastery 3, Nagarjunakonda), and it has been suggested that their consecration was considered a sacred act because the Buddha had assumed animal forms in his previous births.[50]

Its skull and uncertain architectural context aside, the Passani Tumulus 2 deposit is closely related to a number of the neighbouring Darunta stupas, both in content and date, although the location of the relic deposits and the internal structure of the stupas may differ. The group includes two stupas at Kotpur (nos 1–2), four at Bimaran (nos 2–5) and one at Deh Rahman (no. 1). Hadda Stupa 3 is also included, not for what Masson says was its 'striking resemblance' externally to Bimaran Stupa 5,[51] but for its identical range of coins and for its finds which relate to other deposits in the

Figure 29 Coins from relic deposits: 1–3. Kujula Kadphises (*c.* 40–90 CE), official mint (British Museum, 1880.3740.a–c); 4–10. Kujula, contemporary imitations (British Museum, 1880.3740.d–j); 11. Gondophares (*c.* 32–70 CE. British Museum, 1880.3740.k); 12. Mujatria in name of Azes (*c.* 80–90 CE. British Museum, 1838,EIC.90); 13. Soter Megas early issues (*c.* 90–113 CE. British Museum, 1880.3740.l–m); 14. Hermaeus (*c.* 90–70 BCE), life-time issue, reverse (British Museum, IOC.152); 15. Worn coin of Kharahostes, (*c.* 1st century CE), obverse (British Museum, 1847.0421.21); 16–17. Mujatria, son of Kharahostes, obverse (British Museum, 1894.0506.1892, 1880.3885.m)

group. More specifically, its coins survive in the British Museum, and hold the key to refining the chronology of the Buddhist sites of the Jalalabad region.[52]

The nine structures all contained bronze coins of the 1st to early 2nd century CE. There are three principal coin groups (**Fig. 29**):

1. Kujula Kadphises, Kushan king *c.* 40–90 CE. Type: bust of king/Heracles (found in the deposits of Kotpur 2, Bimaran 5, Deh Rahman 1, Hadda 3);
2. Mujatria, son of Kharahostes, satrap in the Jalalabad region (*c.* 80–90 CE), issued in the name of the Indo-Scythian king Azes. Type: horse rider/highly stylized Tyche with cornucopia (found in the deposits of Kotpur I, Bimaran 2 and 5, Hadda 3);[53]
3. Soter Megas issues of Kujula Kadphises and Wima Takto, Kushan king *c.* 90–113 CE. Type: bust of Mithra/horse rider (found in the deposits of Bimaran 3 and 4, Passani Tumulus 2).

In addition, Masson found a coin of the Indo-Parthian king Gondophares (*c.* 32–60 CE) in both the Bimaran 5 and Hadda 3 deposits. A coin of this type from Hadda 3 survives in the collection (**Fig. 29.11**).[54] He also records finding in Hadda 3 a 'defaced but recognizable' square coin of the Indo-Greek king Hermaeus (*c.* 90–70 BCE, i.e. a life-time issue, type: head of Mithra/horse walking to right, see **Fig. 29.14**). In Deh Rahman 1 there were a number of 'minute copper coins, much corroded, and so cemented together as to form one mass', but one or two were identifiable as Kujula issues, while Passani Tumulus 2 produced a coin that 'represented a novel type, but apparently of the Azes family'.[55]

Work on the relic deposit coins that survive in the British Museum has revealed some interesting refinements to this numismatic record. Firstly, it is clear that what Masson identified as a 'Hermaeus' life-time issue was probably a coin of the Indo-Scythian satrap Kharahostes or his son Mujatria (type: king on horseback/lion to right), on which only the horse was probably visible (**Fig. 29.15**). This is suggested not only by the similar horse depicted on the two coin types, but also by the fact that defaced coins of Mujatria[56] survive in

the collection (**Fig. 29.16–17**). The best example shows a horse (but not the rider) just visible walking to right, while the reverse is so defaced as to be unidentifiable; another is completely worn but is the right size, weight and fabric.[57] These coins can probably also be identified as the 'minute' coins found in Deh Rahman 1, and perhaps even as the coin of the 'Azes family' found in Passani Tumulus 2. Proof that these coin types were deposited together comes from the neighbouring Darunta site of Tope-i-kutchera, which contained three coins, identifiable from their illustration as one of Mujatria issued in the name of Azes and a Hermaeus imitation of Kujula Kadphises.[58] Masson also records a coin of Kharahostes and one of Mujatria in his 1835 account of the coins from Begram.[59]

Kharahostes is mentioned on the Mathura lion capital as *Yuvaraja* (young king) and as either the father-in-law or son-in-law of Rajavula, satrap of Mathura in the 1st century CE.[60] There is also a coin issued in the Mathura region by Kharahostes which seems to belong after the issues of Rajavula, indicating that this (and the lion capital) Kharahostes was the son-in-law of Rajavula.[61] An earlier 1st-century Indo-Scythian satrap of the same name, or his son Mujatria, seem to be the issuer of square horse-rider/lion coins found at Begram and probably in the Hadda Stupa 3 deposit. This earlier Kharahostes was also the owner of the silver vessel subsequently re-used as a reliquary by the Apraca prince Indravarma (*c.* 17–27 CE).[62] There is a further numismatic link with the Apracas in that the design of Mujatria's coins in the name of Azes (**Fig. 29.12**) derives from a coin type of Aspavarma (*c.* 60–90 CE), son of Indravarma, which he issued as stratega (commander) to the Apraca raja Indravasu (*c.* 32–60 CE).[63] He subsequently issued coins under the Indo-Parthians.

Masson remarks in connection with the Mujatria coins in the name of Azes that the few he had 'met with' ('about twelve specimens' in three years, all from relic deposits) were uniformly in 'excellent preservation'.[64] This paucity noted by Masson refutes Wilson's remark that the coins 'are very numerous in all the collections, and have been found in most of the topes in considerable quantity'.[65] The 10 Masson coins of this type in the collection are almost all in mint condition and match the quantity recorded from the deposits of Hadda 3 and Bimaran 2 and 5. They were not found at Kabul or Begram, only in stupas of the Jalalabad region, yet the small sample collected by Masson displays a wide range of different dies.[66] This suggests that it was a large coinage produced by a mint located further to the east in Bajaur, or near Peshawar, with only stray coins migrating westwards, perhaps with Buddhist pilgrims since they ended up in stupa deposits.

The greatest number of coins in the relic deposits of Hadda 3 and Bimaran 5, however, are worn Kujula Kadphises coins, some of which survive in the collection (**Fig. 29.1–10**).[67] According to Joe Cribb's recent detailed analysis,[68] the coinage falls into two categories, namely a small number issued by the official mint, mixed with a greater number of unofficial, but concurrent, imitations.

The Soter Megas coins in the relic deposits of Bimaran 3–4 and Passani Tumulus 2 are not mixed with other issues. The 27 examples found by Masson's contemporary, Martin Honigberger, in Bimaran Stupa 3 are said to have been worn, but each exhibited a different die, suggesting that they had been in general circulation for some time prior to burial.[69] Although only two examples of the coins of this type survive in the Masson collection – either from Bimaran Stupa 4 or Passani Tumulus 2 – they are also worn and exhibit different dies, but of early issues (**Fig. 29.13**). As already noted (p. 35 above) this coinage is generally assigned to Wima Takto (*c.* 90–113 CE), but recent analysis suggests that it may have been introduced during the reign of his predecessor, Kujula.[70]

So it appears that the Kujula Kadphises coins with Heracles reverse and Soter Megas issues are not greatly separated in date, although the fact that they do not appear together in the relic deposits indicates some time lapse between the two coinages. Elsewhere in the new territories that Kujula and Wima Takto conquered, they introduced their own coinages that imitated the existing currency of the region. These might be initially issued in the name of the ruler whose coins they copied (as with the Kujula Hermaeus coins), or in their own names. The Mujatria coins in the name of Azes are part of this trend. As their pristine condition indicates that they are the latest coins in the deposits, they may be dated to the end of the 1st century CE.

One last coin to be considered is a broken, gilded silver obol in the name of Heraus, which was found alongside the bronze issues of Kujula Kadphises in Kotpur Stupa 2 (see **Table 1**) and has been convincingly identified as a Bactrian issue of the same king.[71] Another 'Heraus' obol from Tillya Tepe burial 1 was identified by Evgeny Zeymal and provided 'very good evidence that the burials should be dated to the Early Kushan period and that they most probably belonged to the Yueh-chi – Kushan nobility'.[72]

There are additional links between the six royal burials at Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan and the Buddhist relic deposits in the Darunta region (**Table 1**).[73] To begin with the most spectacular object, the gold reliquary from Bimaran Stupa 2 (**Fig. 30**), this fits firmly into the repoussé tradition of the gold work from the Tillya Tepe burials, especially in its use of garnet and turquoise inlays. Masson records finding 10 small turquoise crosses in the deposit which were originally inlaid in the repoussé quatrefoils that alternate with the inlaid garnets around the rim and the base of the Bimaran casket (**Table 1**). Originally there would have been a total of 26 cross-shaped inlays (14 around the base and 12 around the rim) and the same number of garnets. Only five inlays now survive and have been restored. Three of the garnets are also missing, only one being found loose in the deposit,[74] which suggests that the reliquary was damaged prior to burial. Most of the small gold ornaments from the deposit are also damaged, unlike their Tillya Tepe counterparts (**Table 1**). This deposit contained four of the Azes-type Mujatria coins in mint condition.[75]

As can been seen in **Table 1**, there is also a link between the form of the silver reliquary from Bimaran Stupa 4 and a similar container from Tillya Tepe burial 5. The same burial had an amber (?) lion bead, but of slightly different form from the green jasper example from Bimaran 4. The malachite butterfly bead and gold bead in the shape of a

Table 1 Links between relic deposits in the Darunta region and burials elsewhere

Relic deposit	BM reg. no.	Object		Comparable objects
Bimaran Stupa 2	1880.3690.a-i		Gold, die-stamped bracteates, with a conical centre and two loops	Tillya Tepe burials 2, 3, 4 (pp. 234, 236-7, 249, nos 2.26, 3.4, 4.20, pls 125, 3 respectively).[76]
	1880.3691.a-i 1880.3695.a-e 1880.3851.a		Gold, hollow tabular beads, pierced horizontally.	Tillya Tepe burial 3 (pp. 237, 240, nos 3.13, 3.38).
	1880.3695.f-g 1880.3885.g 18808.4104.d		Gold, small, hollow, domed beads with a flat base, pierced horizontally.	Tillya Tepe burial 3 (p. 240, no. 3.38).
	1880.3696.g-h		Hollow, domed, gold buttons, with two loops.	Tillya Tepe burial 4 (p. 249, no.4.19).
	1880.3696.i		Triangular gold spacer with three rows of loops.	Tillya Tepe burial 1 (p. 227, no.1.9, pl. 22).
	1880.3851.b 1880.3855.b 1880.4110.n		Cross-shaped turquoise (?) inlays from gold reliquary.	Tillya Tepe burial 2 (p. 231, no. 2.7, pls 44-7: same inlay technique, also combined with garnets)
	1880.3893.k		Heart-shaped turquoise inlay	Tillya Tepe burials 1, 5, 6 (pp. 228, 252, 254-5, nos 1.20, 5.2, 6.4, pls 35; 33, 48).
Bimaran Stupa 4	1880.3496		Restored silver reliquary.	Tillya Tepe burial 5 (p. 253, no. 5.14).
	1880.3538		Green jasper bead in the shape of a lion.	Tillya Tepe burial 5 (p. 253, no. 5.7, pl. 73).
Passani Tumulus 2	1880.3694.a		Gold bead in the shape of a śrīvasta.	Taxila, Sirkap palace stratum II (p. 629, no. 77, pl. 191.a).[77]
	1880.4101.a		Malachite butterfly bead.	Tillya Tepe burials 3, 6 (pp. 241-2, 258, nos 3.32-3, 6.37-8); Taxila, Sirkap (pp.187, 629, nos 9, 76, pl.194.d).
Kotpur Stupa 2	1880.3735		Gilded silver 'Heraus' obol of Kujula Kadphises.	Tillya Tepe burial 1.[78]

Figure 30 Steatite and gold reliquaries from the relic deposit of Bimaran Stupa no. 2, *c.* 1st century CE (British Museum, 1880.27, 1900,0209.1)

śrīvatsa from Passani Tumulus 2 have a wider distribution, examples being excavated in the Indo-Scythian and Indo-Parthian levels of Sirkap at Taxila and elsewhere.[79]

Although the Bimaran 2 steatite reliquary container had its inner partitions removed so that it could hold the gold reliquary, it and the Passani 2 compartmentalized reliquary (**Fig. 31**) belong to a group of containers seemingly all from south of the Hindu Kush, in the borderlands of eastern Afghanistan and north-west Pakistan. However, their form can be traced back to Ai Khanum in northern Afghanistan, where a number of partitioned schist caskets were principally found in sanctuaries, suggesting that there they also served a religious function.[80] If the Azes era is calculated as 46 BCE, the steatite reliquary, which is inscribed in year 201 of the Yona era, year 27 of the Apraca raja Vijayamitra and year 73 of Azes, provides a date of *c.* 27 CE for use of this type of casket as a Buddhist reliquary.[81] The latest date is supplied by the reliquary container from Qul-i Nadir (Parwan province), which contained four small gold and four larger silver reliquaries, wrapped in silk, as well as pearls, semi-precious stones, bone and vegetal fragments.[82] Although it did not contain coins, its four domed silver

Figure 31 Steatite reliquary from Passani Tumulus 2, *c.* 1st century CE, showing its separate components (British Museum, 1880.98)

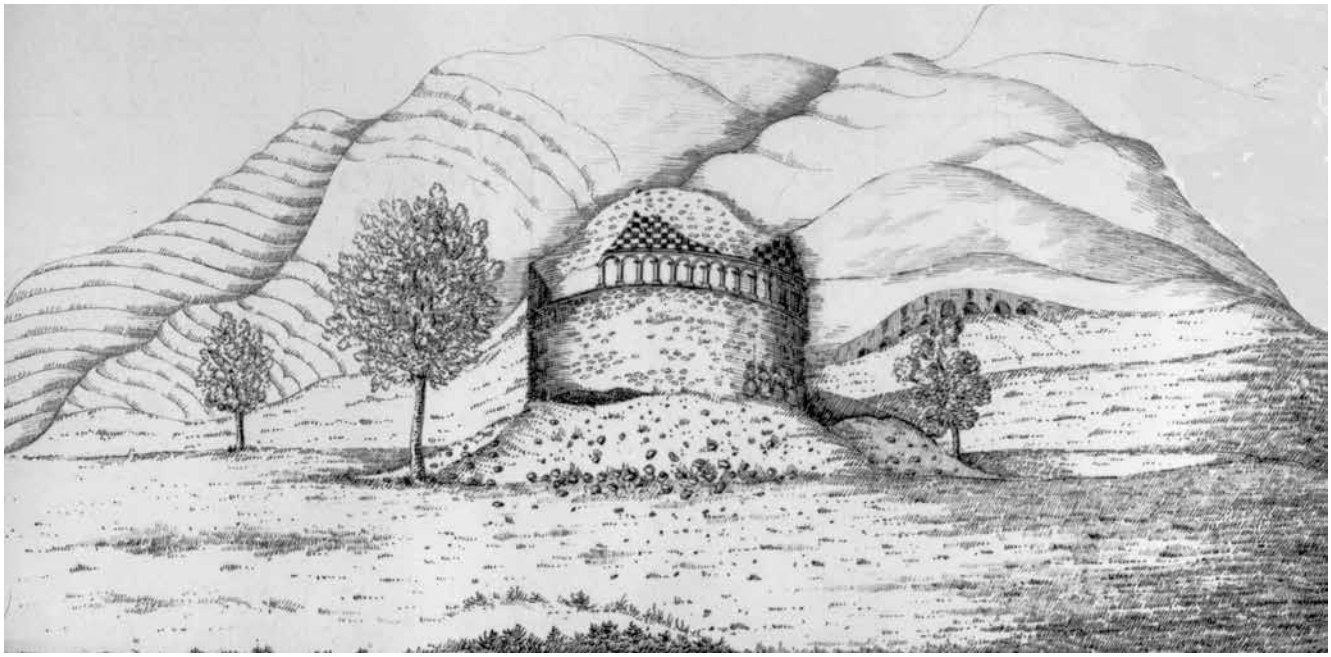


Figure 32 Masson's drawing of Bimaran Stupa no. 2 (British Library, India Office Collections, MSS Eur. F63, section 2, f. 31; courtesy of British Library)

reliquaries are the same as one from Shevaki Stupa 1, near Kabul, which was found with a Kushan coin of Wima Kadphises (*c.* 113–27 CE).[83] The Bimaran 2 and Passani 2 steatite caskets fit within this time-frame, with the notable distinction that, of all the examples in the group, only the Passani reliquary container was found intact. The others all lack the lid of the small upper compartment that forms the lid knob of the main body, indicating that they were already damaged prior to burial. As already noted, the Bimaran 2 steatite reliquary was moreover adapted for re-use as a container for its gold reliquary. This fits in with standard practice in India, where stone dishes used in everyday life – for cosmetics, spices etc. – 'seem to have been pressed into Buddhist service because they were durable, well-made and ready to hand'.[84]

In addition to the gold casket, the Bimaran deposit contained 'a small quantity of fine mould', 30 small gold ornaments, a broken bronze signet ring, 18 beads of crystal, agate and amethyst (Masson uses its alternative name, i.e. [purple] sapphire), and a number of 'burnt pearls' and 'burnt coral' beads.[85] So, unlike Passani 2, Bimaran 2 did not contain any human remains. Instead, the deposit seems to belong to the category of *uddesika dhātu*, or relics of commemoration, which Michael Willis notes 'includes images of the Buddha and, by extension, artistic representations of events in his life. … Such images are manifestations of the Buddha inside the stupa, i.e. a visualization or extension of the sacred relic.'[86]

This explains the presence of the gold casket with its duplicated depictions of the Buddha, Indra, Brahma and probably Maitreya. It also makes sense of the reference in the inscription on the outer steatite container of the donation being 'offered with the relics [i.e. images in commemoration] of the Lord in honour of all buddhas'.[87]

A similar range of semi-precious stone beads was found in the deposits of Passani 2 (12 crystal beads and 'sundry burnt coral beads &c.') and Bimaran 4 (17 cornelian, crystal and agate beads and 'sundry beads &c. of burnt coral &c.').[88] Masson's repeated references to burnt coral and burnt pearls are misleading, for there is no evidence of anything burnt

Figure 33a–b Masson's sketch and section drawing of Kotpur Stupa 1 (British Library, India Office Collections, MSS Eur. F63, f. 25; courtesy of British Library; Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, Topes, pl. 2)

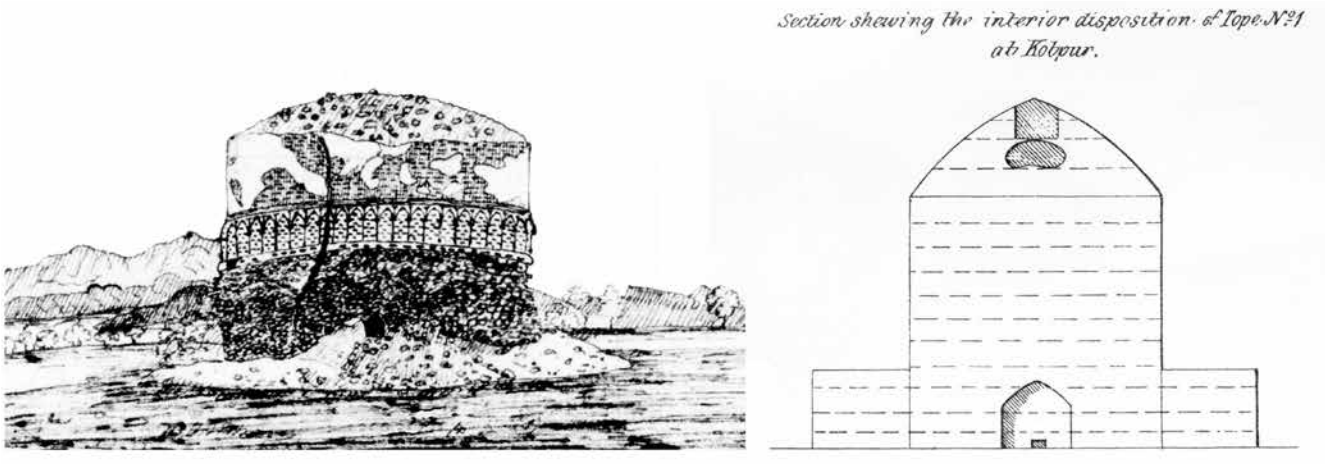


Figure 34 Bimaran Stupa no. 3 from west in 1965 (photo courtesy of Kyoto University, neg. 65.1154)

among the surviving relic deposit beads. Rather, the surface of the beads – actually probably of bone rather than coral – has degraded, while many of the pearls have lost much of their iridescence.

In the *Visuddhimagga*, although talking about meditation, Buddhaghosa provides some insight into how items of this kind were perceived, when he says that the human body does not contain the 'least trace of anything that is actually pure, in the sense in which pearls, jewels, lapis lazuli, aloe wood, saffron, camphor, or aromatic powders are pure'.[89] The objects were not part of the relic, but rather appropriate things to place with the relic. Moreover, despite Masson's recorded 'burnt' beads and pearls, the material evidence makes it clear that objects were added only after the body was cremated. Or, in the case of Bimaran 2, it appears unlikely to have ever contained cremated human remains.

Conclusion

Analysis of the surviving archaeological record shows a wide variation in the internal arrangement and location of the relic deposits even when the artefacts and the outer appearance of the stupas resemble each other so closely that they must be contemporary. Not enough of the structure of Passani 2 and Bimaran 4 survived, but this point is clearly demonstrated by the architectural replication apparent in the facades of Kotpur Stupa 1[90] and Bimaran Stupas 2 and 3 (**Figs 32–4**). All three stupas have a decorative frieze of arched pilasters encircling the dome. However, excavation revealed different histories. The relic deposit of Bimaran 2 was placed within a small square cell of schist positioned in the centre of the stupa dome, at its juncture with the basement.[91] There was no evidence of any earlier structure within the stupa core, or of any later enlargement.

Within the later enlarged structure of Kotpur 1 was an earlier stupa containing a relic cell and a deposit which included two coins of the same Mujatria type as Bimaran 2 (**Fig. 33**). In passing, it should be noted that the same internal configuration was found in Kotpur Stupa 2, only with coins of Kujula Kadphises.[92] In contrast, the original stupa of Bimaran 5 contained a series of deposits without coins, while the subsequent enlargement seems to have had five deposits, all with coins of Kujula, and one at least including a worn coin of Gondophares and four of the same Mujatria coins as Bimaran 2 in mint condition.[93]

Finally, Bimaran 3 had two deposits (**Figs 34–5**), although the contents of the two are very similar both to each other and to the finds from Bimaran 2, suggesting that they were not greatly separated in time.[94] The earlier deposit was located in a square schist cell at the base of the small original stupa encased within a subsequent enlargement. It contained earth, ashes and small precious objects: a fragment of 'calcined' coral, a heart-shaped turquoise inlay with its gold frame, a cockerel, 13mm long, made from punched and soldered gold foil, a garnet lens on a gold plaque with four attachment rings, a pierced gold tube, a gold button, small folded or rolled strips of gold foil, pearls, a heart-shaped gem, dull whitish beads of 'calcined coral (?)' and a miniature gold stupa, which in turn contained ashes, a turquoise heart, two small annealed cylindrical gold ornaments with attachment rings, a small garnet lens, seven 'calcined' pearls, two pieces of folded gold foil, and coral beads. A second deposit was located higher up the dome within the core of the subsequent enlargement. This comprised a square schist cell filled with pulverized earth of a whitish colour, a resinous substance and ashes mixed with bone fragments, thin pieces of gold foil, small whitened dull beads of 'calcined coral (?)', a gold globule, 12 'burnt' pearls, a gold ball with an attached heart-shape which was originally inlaid, a heart-shaped amethyst attached to a square gold link and 27 'Soter Megas' coins.

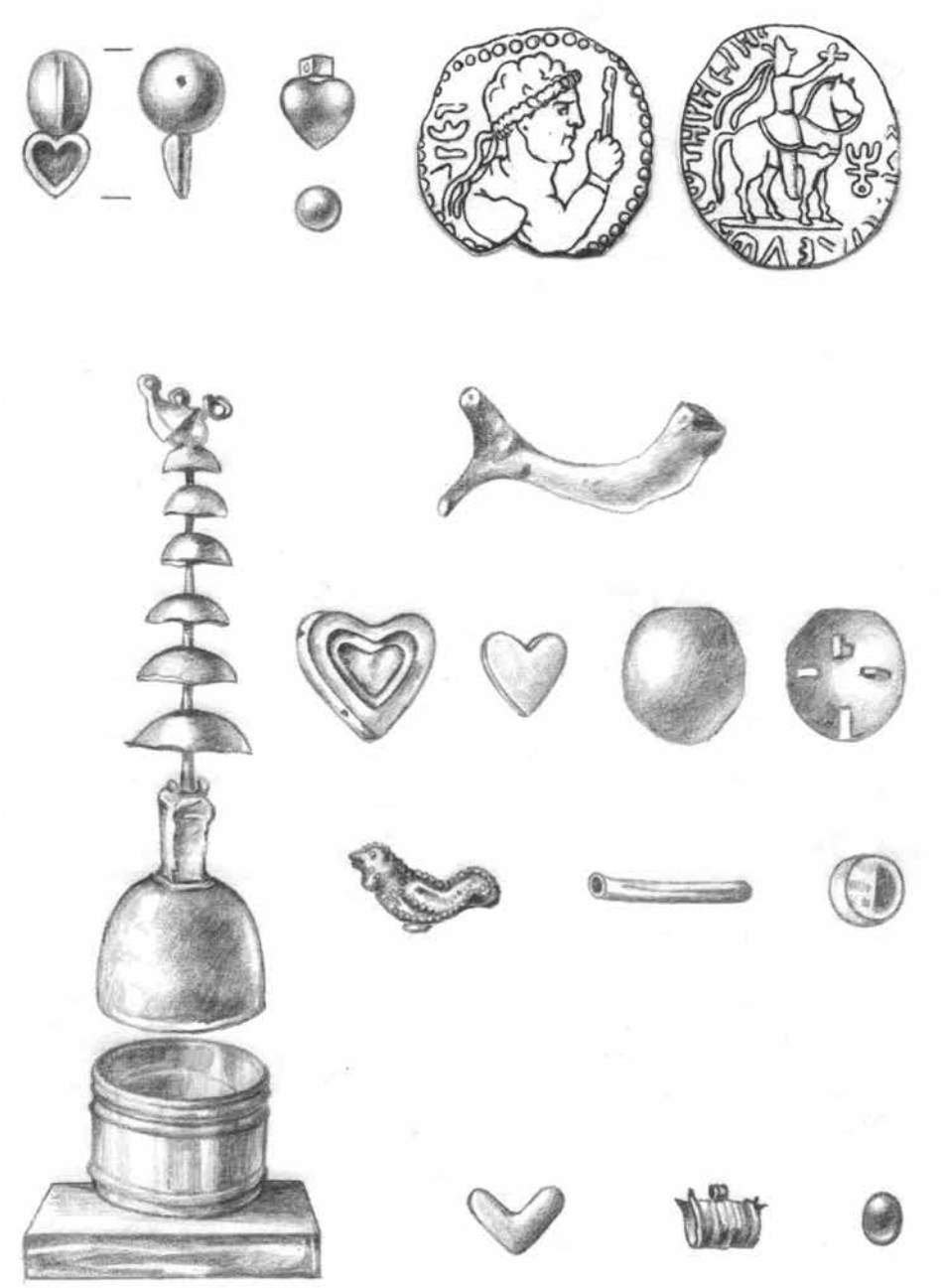


Figure 35 Objects from the two relic deposits of Bimaran Stupa no. 3, *c.* 1st century CE. Top deposit: gold ball with an attached heart-shape which was originally inlaid, heart-shaped amethyst attached to a square gold link, gold globule, 'Soter Megas' coin. Bottom deposit: fragment of 'calcined' coral, heart-shaped turquoise inlay and gold frame, garnet lens on a gold plaque with four attachment rings, gold cockerel, pierced gold tube, gold button, miniature gold stupa, which contained turquoise heart, cylindrical gold ornament with attachment ring, garnet lens (E. Errington, after E. Jacquet, 'Sur les découvertes archéologiques faites par M. Honigberger dans l'Afghanistan', *Journal Asiatique* 3ème sér. 3, 1836, pl. 11.1–9, 12, pl. 12.16–19; *Journal Asiatique*, 3ème sér. 5, 1838, 169–77, pl. 8.4)

From this brief survey of a few of the Darunta stupas, it is notable that the Bimaran 2 deposit was found in a relic cell in the core of a stupa where there was no evidence of an earlier or later structure. This suggests that the stupa was purpose-built to house these particular relics. Yet the deposit itself has affinities with those found in the original stupas at Kotpur 1 and 2, as well as in the later enlargements of Bimaran 3 and 5. Its steatite and gold reliquaries also appear to have sustained injury prior to burial, but both they and their contents exhibit a consistent date of the 1st century CE. So either the relics were rescued from an earlier structure and buried afresh, or they were perhaps exhibited in an open shrine and only interred after they had been damaged. This would fit with Karel van Kooij's contention (in this volume) that 'as a rule, costly reliquaries were exhibited' and when one came to be enclosed in a stupa afterwards it 'was placed on a platform in the centre of the relic chamber of a stupa under construction, and was shown to the devotees, who then had the opportunity to see the relic and worship it'.

Notes

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30 British Library India Office Collections, Masson Manuscripts, MSS Eur. F526/1.b, Sketches of excavated relic deposits from Darunta district, Chahar Bagh and Hadda 1834, f. 1; Masson, MSS Eur. E161/VII, f. 18; Masson, 'Memoir on topes', p. 51; British Museum Collection Online, 1880.4101.a and 1880.3694.a. E. Errington, *The Charles Masson Archive: British Library, British Museum and Other Documents Relating to the 1832–1838 Masson Collection from Afghanistan*, London, British Museum, 2017, 42, fig. 86 (online at http://www.britishmuseum.org/pdf/Masson%20archive%20Vol.%202.pdf).
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66 See British Museum Collection Online, 1838,EIC.90, 1960,0407.1, IOC.202–204, IOLC.887–890.
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76 All references to Tillya Tepe burials in this table (except that comparable to Kotpur 2) cite Sarianidi, *Bactrian Gold*.

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93 Masson, 'Memoir on topes', 76–7; Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, Topes pl. 3.

94 Jacquet, 'Notice sur les découvertes archéologiques faites par Mr. Honigberger', 169–77; Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, Topes pl. 3.

Chapter 4
The Bimaran Casket: The Problem of Its Date and Significance[1]

Joe Cribb

Abstract
The gold reliquary with images of the Buddha and associated gods found by Charles Masson in 1834 in Bimaran Stupa no. 2, in Darunta district, west of Jalalabad, has since been used by scholars as a tool for understanding the chronology and influences of Gandharan art and the origins of the Buddha image. The scholarly discussion of the significance of the Bimaran gold reliquary is reviewed in this chapter as a historical process and as a discourse on the relative values of archaeological, numismatic and art-historical evidence. The transformation of application of this evidence since 1992 has created a new understanding of the value of the reliquary in addressing the key questions concerning the early history of the Buddha image, and has moved towards clarification of the significance of the reliquary itself.

> The majority of authors think that the beginning of the 1st century AD seems the most likely answer to the question of the foundation of the Greco-Buddhist school [of art]. Most theories on this question are based on a single piece of evidence, the Bimaran reliquary.
>
> Henri Deydier 1950[2]

The Bimaran gold reliquary has been the object of speculation and controversy since 1834 when it was discovered in a Buddhist stupa, Bimaran no. 2 (**Figs 36–7**), in Darunta district to the west of Jalalabad, Afghanistan, by the British explorer known as Charles Masson (his real name was James Lewis).[3] In a recent study of Buddhist reliquaries from Pakistan and Afghanistan it has been described as 'one of the most important relic deposits for the chronology of Buddhist art in Afghanistan'.[4] The reliquary, now displayed in the British Museum, is an exquisite treasure, a small, round, bejewelled golden box, its body bearing two images of the Buddha and two each of three other figures, each placed between the pillars of an arcade, decorated above and below by a row of precious stones and

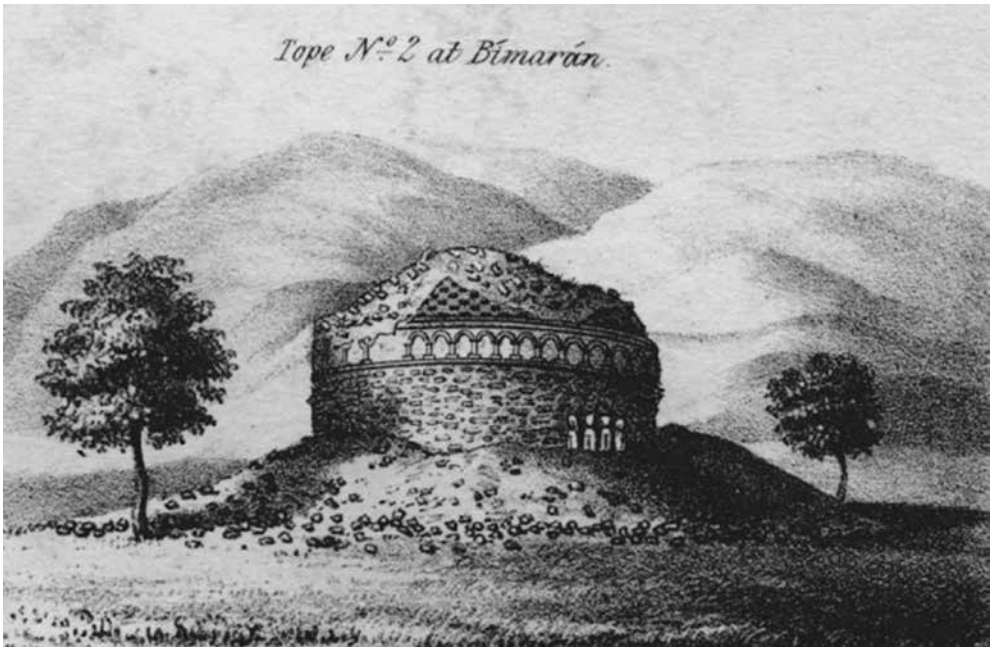

Figure 36 Drawing of Bimaran Stupa no. 2 by Charles Masson (from Wilson, *Ariana Antiqua*, Topes, pl. III), 1834 (published 1841)

Figure 37 Bimaran Stupa no. 2 relic deposit, as exhibited at the British Museum, 2002

with a lotus flower on its base (**Fig. 38a–c**). It appears to have originally had a lid, but this is absent.

The importance of the Bimaran reliquary to the study of Buddhist art is the apparently early position of the Buddha images on it in the development of Gandharan art, based on the dating of the reliquary in relation to the coins which were found with it. The coins, struck in the name of Azes, appear to place the reliquary in the earliest phase of representations of the Buddha in human form: 'perhaps the earliest standing example [of a Buddha image]'.[5] In the absence of any externally datable Gandharan Buddha images before those appearing on coins struck towards the end of the reign of the Kushan king Kanishka I (*c.* CE 127–50), the Bimaran reliquary images, through their association with coins in the name of Azes, have therefore offered the possibility of a datable marker for the pre-Kanishkan development of Gandharan Buddhist art. The Western features of the design, such as the pilasters and the treatment of drapery on the figures, have also positioned the reliquary within the debate on the Greek or Roman influence on the Buddhist art of the Gandhara region. The discourse about the reliquary and its broader significance has accordingly invoked or discarded the attribution and dating of these coins and their relationship with the reliquary. The controversy over its date and the sources of its style have in the past overshadowed the significance of its archaeological context, its function as a Buddhist reliquary and the meaning of its iconography, and it is only in the last few decades that a more holistic approach has been made to these issues. The date of its production, however, still has a bearing on these issues, as it allows the reliquary to be set in its appropriate comparative context.

This paper is an attempt at a structured approach to the methodologies which can be used to understand the context of the reliquary and its function and broader significance. The aim is to develop a more inclusive analysis of the relevant evidence and attempt to place that within a broader context of the development of Buddhist reliquary practice in greater Gandhara. This context is based on numismatic, epigraphic and archaeological evidence, particularly that resulting from the work being done at the British Museum, led by Elizabeth Errington, on the finds made in Afghanistan by Charles Masson during the 1830s.[6]

Figure 38a–c Bimaran gold reliquary. (a) Side with early Buddha image; (b) Side with later Buddha image; (c) Base (see also Fig. 42, fourth figure) (British Museum, 1900.0209.1)

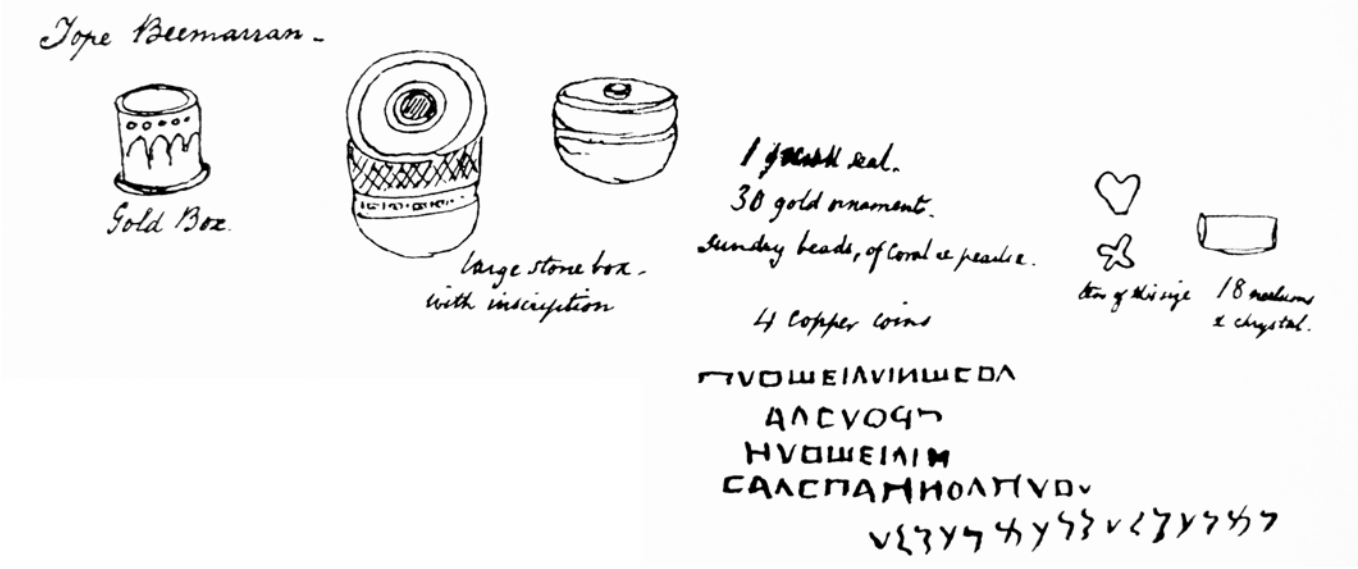

Figure 39 Sketch of Bimaran Stupa no. 2 relic deposit by Charles Masson (British Library, India Office Collections, Eur. F526/1.a, f. 1; courtesy of British Library; Errington 'Rediscovering the collections of Charles Masson', 231), 1834

Discovering the Bimaran casket

The discovery of the Bimaran gold reliquary by Charles Masson in 1834 was described by him as part of a report on the Buddhist monuments he investigated in the region to the west of Jalalabad. As well as recounting the process of discovery and what he found in Bimaran 2, and providing a sketch of the stupa and its relic deposit (**Fig. 39**),[7] Masson discussed the purpose and attribution of the coins, which he originally believed had been placed in the stupa to mark it as a monument to the king who issued them.[8] It was Wilson, however, who identified the figures as including two images of the Buddha, in his note on Masson's commentary, in his description of the illustration of the reliquary and in a footnote.[9]

Nevertheless, Masson's observations on the coins found with the reliquary were much more relevant to our understanding of the context of the reliquary, as he already recognized that they were issued by rulers subsequent to Azes (as summarized by Wilson): 'They are evidently of a later and more barbarous period than most of the preceding, and are probably the coins, not of Azes, although his name appears upon them, but of some of his successors.'[10] Masson himself wrote of them that 'Fig 111 is the type of a variety of the Azes coin, which we are able to appropriate to a successor of the great king above [i.e. Azes].'[11] Masson's opinion on the coins was disregarded by scholarly debate until MacDowall suggested that the coins found with the reliquary 'have been misidentified and are not coins of Azes I but late (possibly posthumous) coins of Azes II'.[12] Recent publications of the type classify them as imitation-Azes coins.[13]

Early scholarship on the Bimaran casket

I will discuss elsewhere the controversy of the date of the Bimaran reliquary,[14] but it is useful here to summarize how many different contexts have been suggested for the reliquary and on what grounds (see **Table 2**), reflecting a wide range of views on the attribution and chronological relevance of the associated coins. Scholars who focus on the importance of the reliquary as evidence of the early development of Buddhist art have tended to place emphasis on the context suggested by the coins, whatever their attribution. Those who have rejected the relevance of the coins have tended to argue for positioning the Buddha images on the reliquary at a period after the introduction of Buddhist art in Gandhara.

The first contribution to understanding the context of the gold reliquary, other than speculation about its date, was Cunningham's reading of the inscription on the stone container within which the gold reliquary was found, which he showed was a direct reference to the purpose of their role as the resting place for relics of the Buddha and as 'clear and decisive proof of the prevalence of the Buddhist religion in the Kabul valley nearly one century before the Christian era'. His dating of this context was based on his attribution of the coins to Azes, whom he dated at about 90 BCE.[15]

Apart from Wilson's identification of the images on the reliquary, Foucher offered the first insight into the meaning of the designs. He compared them with the imagery on the Kanishka reliquary (**Fig. 40**), excavated at Shah-ji-ki-Dheri, identifying the figures in attendance on the Buddha on both as the Hindu gods Indra and Brahma. He suggested that the Bimaran reliquary imagery was inspired by the narrative of the Buddha's descent from heaven accompanied by these gods, referring presumably to his descent from the *Tuṣita* or *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven.[16]

Although there continued to be much debate about the chronology of the reliquary with the intention of positioning it within the development of Buddhist art in Gandhara, there was little added to an understanding of its significance and that of its imagery until 1945, when Buchthal, arguing for a late date for the reliquary, raised the possibility that it was not of the same date as its deposition: 'The possibility that a container several hundred years older was re-used when the reliquary was buried in the stupa should not be altogether excluded.'[17] Although his arguments were aimed at positioning the reliquary stylistically, he unwittingly pointed to an aspect of Buddhist relic practice which had not yet been considered in relation to the Bimaran relic deposit. Marshall, the excavator of Taxila, likewise argued for the

Table 2 Evidential basis for academic opinion in dating the Bimaran gold reliquary (C = coins; S = style; A = archaeology; E = epigraphy)[18]

	Author	Publication date	Suggested date span												
			100–51 BCE	50–26 BCE	25–1 BCE	1–25 CE	26–50	51–75	76–100	101–25	126–50	151–75	176–200	201–25	226–50
1	Cunningham	1854	C												
2	Goblet d'Alviella	1897		C	C										
3	Foucher	1922		C/S	C/S	C/S	C/S								
4	Marshall	1922				S/A									
5	Coomaraswamy	1927						S	S	S					
6	Bachhofer	1929		S											
7	Hargreaves	1930		C	C										
8	Rowland	1936								S	S	S	S	S	S
9	Tarn	1938		S	S	S	S								
10	Bachhofer	1941				C/S/A	C/S/A								
11	Le May	1943				C/S/E	C/S/E								
12	Buchthal	1944								E/S	E/S	E/S	E/S	E/S	E/S
13	Rowland	1946												S	S
14	Marshall	1947								S/A	S/A	S/A	S/A		
15	Van Lohuizen de Leeuw	1949							S	S					
16	Ingholt	1957													S
17	Bussagli	1968						S	S	S	S				
18	Allchin	1968					C	C							
19	Dobbins	1968					C/A/S	C/A/S							
20	Huntington	1985		C	C										
21	Narain	1985		C	C										
22	Cribb	1985								C/S	C/S				
23	Czuma	1986							S	S					
24	Fussman	1987				C/A	C/A								
25	Fussman	1987				C/A	C/A								
26	MacDowall	1987					C	C							
27	Nehru	1989					C/A/S								
28	Dobbins	1989					C	C							
29	MacDowall	1990					C	C							
30	Kreitman	1992					C/A/S/E	C/A/S/E							
31	Zwalf	1996					C	C							
32	Carter	1997				S/A/E	S/A/E	S/A/E	S/A/E						
33	Errington	2012						C/A/S	C/A/S	C/A/S					
34	Baums	2012				C/A	C/A								

Figure 40 The Kanishka reliquary, *c.* 150 CE, found at Shah-ji-ki-Dheri (from the electrotype in the British Museum, 1880.270)

Figure 41 Heavenly palace, tiers 3, 4 and 5, Sanchi main stupa eastern gate (from Bachhofer, *Early Indian Sculpture*, pl. 59), 1st century BCE

late dating of the Bimaran reliquary by citing Buddhist relic practice. He suggested that it was:

> a case of re-burial of relics, of which I have come across not a few examples in the course of my excavations on Buddhist sites. The coins belonged to the original stupa, and were sedulously preserved, when the relics were transferred to a new and more important edifice, and enshrined in a more sumptuous casket.[19]

The late dating of the reliquary was also the motivation in the following year for Rowland to link the gold reliquary's imagery with depictions of heavenly scenes in Western, particularly Christian, sarcophagi imagery.[20] Like Foucher he suggested that the design on the reliquary represented an image of the Buddha in a heavenly palace. He referred to the representation of the palaces of the gods in the form of a pillared hall on the east gate of the Sanchi stupa (**Fig. 41**) as an Indian example of this kind of imagery.[21] He also recognized the Buddha's companions as Indra and Brahma and accordingly suggested that in the Bimaran reliquary design 'we may identify the three central figures of the Bimaran reliquary as a representation of the descent of Śākyamuni from the *Tuṣita* Heaven'.[22]

In Huntington's study of Indian art, she used the coins to suggest a late 1st century BCE date for the reliquary and attempted to give the imagery a context within the development of Mahāyāna ideology. She suggested that the two Buddha figures between Indra and Brahma might represent two different Buddhas and that the other two figures on the reliquary could represent bodhisattvas.[23]

More recent discourse on the Bimaran casket

The display in 1992 of the Bimaran reliquary at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, as part of an exhibition exploring the meeting of cultures in ancient Afghanistan, marked a new beginning for research on this object. The key shift in research was a return to an exploration of the archaeology of its discovery, by examining the reliquary in relation to the stone container, their contents, the associated coins, the stupa in which they were found and its geographical location.

In the catalogue of the Cambridge exhibition Kreitman described and discussed the reliquary and its associated coins and stone container.[24] He presented a detailed description of each part of the deposit, apart from the accompanying ornaments, which had not yet been identified by Elizabeth Errington (see this volume, pp. 40, 42). His analysis marked a departure from earlier accounts of the reliquary because he looked at it as part of a broader picture; starting from its archaeological context he also engaged with the related architectural, epigraphic and numismatic evidence. He compared the stone container and its inscription with similar examples from Gandhara and concluded that they dated to the mid-1st century CE. For the Bimaran reliquary coins he accepted the date of *c.* 60 CE which I had proposed elsewhere in the same volume, in agreement with the dating proposed by MacDowall in 1987.[25]

On the basis of the epigraphic and numismatic context Kreitman dated the gold reliquary to the period 20–60 CE. He reinforced his view of the chronology of the reliquary by associating it with artistic parallels at Taxila and Butkara, particularly referencing the linkage of the Buddha figures with gold figurines from Taxila by Dobbins and with relief carvings from Butkara by Carter.[26] He also pointed to the similarity of the architectural motifs on the reliquary to

Figure 42 Fourth figures (a and b) on the Bimaran gold reliquary

those on the stupa in which it was found and those standing close to it at Bimaran, Nandara and Kotpur, accepting Fabrègue's dating of similar motifs at Taxila and Butkara to the mid-1st century CE.[27] In addition, Kreitman used my observation on the similarity of some of the features of the Bimaran reliquary's Buddha images to those appearing on the coins of Kanishka I[28] to argue that these images pre-dated Kanishka I.[29]

The early date that Kreitman proposed for the deposit based on the stylistic connections of the stone container and the gold reliquary was, he argued, given precision by the associated coins, 'providing the *terminus ante quem* for the deposit … a terminus … further suggested by the pristine condition and debased silver, rather than copper, content of the coins, which were probably more or less new at the time of the deposit'.[30] He saw this outcome as giving the reliquary an important position in the development of Gandharan art, 'for it affirms a pre-Kanishka evolution for its Buddha prototype, perhaps the earliest standing example of which is rendered with such delicacy and refinement on the magnificent gold casket from Bimaran'.[31]

Kreitman's observations reiterated the earlier views of Buchthal and Marshall that the reliquary had probably been used previously, and that the Bimaran Stupa no. 2 deposit represented its re-use. He supported this proposition with reference to the loss of the reliquary's lid and suggested that it and the stone container could have seen earlier use as 'cult objects'.[32] He did not attempt an explanation of the composition, but observed that the fourth figure (**Fig. 42**) could represent a bodhisattva.[33]

The Bimaran reliquary was also discussed at the conference organized to coincide with the Cambridge exhibition. Carter presented there a paper building on Kreitman's reappraisal of the evidence for the dating and context of the reliquary.[34] She observed the growing consensus around a 1st century CE date for the reliquary and presented the object in the same context as Kreitman. For the first time, however, she drew attention to the relationship between the reliquary's gold working with jewelled ornaments found in the Tillya Tepe tombs, which she dated to the 1st century CE. She even suggested that the reliquary and the Tillya Tepe ornaments could have come from the same workshop: 'The school of artisans that produced well-crafted gold personal ornaments and items of luxury for a barbarian aristocracy in Bactria at the beginning of the Common Era, could have easily produced the Bimaran reliquary for a Buddhist clientele.'[35] Carter also pointed to parallels in the use of figures between pilasters already used in Parthian and Greek Bactrian architecture, countering Rowland's hypothesis that such representations could only come from 2nd- to 3rd-century Mediterranean prototypes.[36] In addition, she introduced a new piece of contextual evidence, linking the Kharoshthi inscriptions on the stone container to two other epigraphs mentioning the donor *Śivarakṣita* (Sanskrit *Śivarakṣita*), both of which appear to be of the 1st century CE.[37]

Carter assessed 'the position of the casket within the evolution of Gandharan art, and specifically to representations of the Buddha' on the basis of the chronology she had derived from its art-historical connections. She concluded that 'The Bimaran Reliquary illustrates two of the earliest Buddha representations extant' and therefore is of importance in understanding the origins and early development of the Buddha image in Gandharan art.[38]

Finally, Carter discussed the significance of the reliquary's iconography and its bearing on the overall meaning of the object. She characterized the positioning of the figures of Buddha, Indra and Brahma under an arcade, composed of arched niches, separated by pilasters, as a

representation placing them in a 'palatial building', and, like the arcades on stupas, 'the arcades … are visual metaphors for heaven seen as a palace balcony'.[39] She followed Rowland (and Foucher, but without reference to it) in explaining this setting as representing the Buddha's descent from heaven, making it clear that it would be 'the descent of the Buddha from his temporary sojourn in the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven … accompanied by the Hindu gods Indra and Brahma'.[40] She identified the reliquary as being in the form of a miniature stupa, depicting 'the Heavenly Palace of the Devas from whence the Buddha descends to earth accompanied by Brahma and Indra'.[41]

The most recent commentary on the Bimaran reliquary is contained in Errington's account of the Gandharan Buddhist relic deposits preserved in the British Museum.[42] Errington discussed the reliquary in the context of the work she had done on reassembling its associated finds and on Masson's reports of its find spot and the other stupas in the Darunta region where Bimaran is located. By placing the reliquary in this context and locating it among the other known Gandharan reliquaries, she created a clearer perspective of the various aspects which have been used to date the reliquary and to extract a broader significance for it in relation to Gandharan art and Buddhist relic practice.

Errington doubted the link, proposed by Carter, between the inscription on the stone container and the two other inscriptions in Kharoshthi which feature the same name as the container's donor *Śivarakṣita*.[43] Instead she linked the stone container with three other examples of similar shape and internal structure: one from the stupa called Passani Tumulus 2 in the Darunta region, one from a stupa at Qul-i Nadir, near Begram, and a third, without provenance but naming the rulers of the kingdom of Apraca, which appears to have been found in the Bajaur region. She argued that their Afghan and north-western Pakistan origins suggested that they were not connected to the other *Śivarakṣita* inscriptions from further east, from Shahdaur and Taxila.

In addition to a detailed description of the gold reliquary, Errington pointed to the architectural parallels of its pillared arcade with eagles in Gandharan-style reliefs from Butkara, Kohat (near Peshawar) and Taxila. The Butkara parallel is from a datable 1st-century context.[44] She also discussed the meaning of the imagery. The representation of the Buddha flanked by Indra and Brahma was identified by her as representing the Buddha's descent from the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven, as also suggested by Foucher, Rowland and Carter. To identify the youthful figure whose image separated the two sets of images of the Buddha with Indra and Brahma, she compared his appearance, particularly his hairstyle, with those of later bodhisattva figures in Gandharan style. She concluded that it was most likely that he represented Siddhartha as bodhisattva, or that a generalized image of the bodhisattva type was intended, as had been suggested by Huntington and Kreitman.[45]

Errington's detailed work on the Masson finds in the British Museum enabled her to reintroduce into the discussion of the deposit the small objects – gold ornaments, crystal, agate, amethyst and other beads, pearls and a broken bronze seal ring – which were originally found in the stone container with the gold reliquary. This allowed her to compare the small gold ornaments in the find with those found in the 1st-century CE tombs at Tillya Tepe.[46] The strong association with material from the Tillya Tepe tombs also suggested to her that the reliquary images belonged within the same metalwork tradition of repoussé and chased gold figures and jewel inlay techniques as that exhibited by the objects from these tombs.[47]

Figure 43 Copper tetradrachm of Kanishka I, *c.* 150 CE: obverse showing the king sacrificing at a small altar, reverse showing the Buddha facing frontally, raising his right hand before his chest in *abhayamudrā* and with his cloak draped over his left hand (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, T227–1918; courtesy of Fitzwilliam Museum)

In line with most other recent commentators on the reliquary, Errington dated the reliquary to the 1st century CE, paying close attention to the justification of that date, because the reliquary and its associated finds are 'one of the most important relic deposits for the chronology of Buddhist art in Afghanistan'.[48] She identified the Bimaran reliquary coins as 'posthumous Azes billon coins', repeating Masson's report that the coins were 'in excellent preservation'.[49] She dated them to the period *c.* 60–90 CE and noted that they are generally 'considered to provide the earliest evidence for the dating of the emergence of the first Buddha images. For if the coins and reliquary are contemporary they indicate that a fully developed image existed by the end of the 1st century CE.'[50] She warned, however, that there were circumstances which could separate the reliquary chronologically from the other finds, so that the coins would only provide a *terminus post quem* if, for example, 'the missing lid [of the gold reliquary] and the imperfect state of the steatite one suggest that they and the associated finds could have originally been placed in an open shrine (and by extension added to at any time) and suffered damage before their final interment in the stupa'.[51] She indicated that the coins of Kanishka I (**Fig. 43**) provide a better 'benchmark', showing that the Buddha image was already established by the middle of the 2nd century CE.

The recent studies of the reliquary by Kreitman, Carter and Errington show the value of an approach taking account of the information derived from the reliquary and its associated objects and from their immediate and broader context. The images on the reliquary continue to play an important role in understanding the development of Gandharan art, but also continue to present problems in determining their place in terms of chronology. The historical analysis of the Buddha images has moved beyond the initial opinions based on a decontextualization of the reliquary, by focusing either on the simplistic deduction of their chronology based on the date of the Bimaran reliquary

coins, without a full examination of their attribution and date, or on the stylistic features of the reliquary by comparing them with a limited range of parallels.

Although I am unlikely to achieve any more concrete outcomes than Kreitman, Carter and Errington, I would now like to attempt to achieve some clarity by placing the discourse on the reliquary and its context around the evidence which positions it as a tool in the study of the development of Gandharan art and Buddhist relic practice.

The Bimaran casket's archaeology

The evidence for the contemporaneity of the deposited objects and the stupa rests primarily on the testimony of Charles Masson, as presented in his memoir on his excavations published by Wilson.[52] His account of the excavation of Bimaran Stupa no. 2 ('Tope no. 2 of Bimaran'), in which the reliquary was found, is brief. As reflects the state of archaeology in the 1830s, Masson's activities were limited and his report focused on the generalities of the structure and on briefly describing the finds. He had been preceded in his excavation by Martin Honigberger, who had dug a hole into the stupa but had not reached the relic chamber. Masson reported that he had dug on to reach the centre of the stupa and opened the relic chamber, where he found the gold reliquary within a stone container which also contained 'a small metallic plate, – apparently belonging to a seal, and engraved with a seated figure, – thirty small circular ornaments of gold, sundry beads of burnt coral, numerous burnt pearls, and eighteen beads of nilam (sapphire), agate, crystal, &c.' He illustrated and described the stone container and its inscriptions, and the gold reliquary.[53] He wrote that the reliquary was lidless and had two rows of twelve 'lals or rubies of Badakshan'. He described the design on the sides of the reliquary as 'eight figures in separate compartments, formed by a series of flat columns supporting finely turned arches, the spaces between them filled by eagles hovering with extended wings'. The identification of two of the figures as the Buddha was added by Wilson in a footnote.[54] The four coins were placed outside the steatite container.

Masson's description of the stupa was supported by a map of its location and an engraving based on his drawing of the stupa, with four figures standing in front of it to indicate scale.[55] He wrote of it as being a single structure without any indication of secondary additions, as he had found in some other stupas in the area, where an earlier small stupa had been built over to make a larger structure. He then described the discovery of the relic chamber, 'a small apartment formed as usual by squares of slate' at the centre of the stupa 'on the line where the cylindrical mass of the structure rested on its basement'.[56] He compared the structure of the stupa to the one he had previously excavated, Bimaran Stupa no. 1, observing that it had 'much affinity … the same kind of structure and the same epoch'. Stupa no. 1, however, had no relic deposit in its central chamber and the construction covered a smaller, earlier, stupa.

Masson's description therefore suggests that the relic chamber and its contents were an intact deposit from the time when the stupa was erected. He reported no evidence of alterations to the external (except Honigberger's attempt at penetration) or internal structure of the stupa suggestive of a secondary deposit in the structure.

If the report by Masson is taken at face value, then the answer to the question of contemporaneity is that the container and reliquary and the associated coins and objects were all deposited together within the stupa as it was being built. This would enable us to say that the contents of the stupa were all made before the stupa was built over them. The coins would provide the only datable items, giving a *terminus post quem* for dating the relic deposit. However, Masson's methodology for excavation and the limited detail of his reporting mean that the face-value information is not very reliable. His report does not contain enough information to exclude the possibility that the relic chamber was re-opened in antiquity.

Bimaran Stupa no. 2

Masson observed that the stupa was similar to Bimaran Stupa no. 1. Unfortunately, that stupa had no relic deposit, so his comparison was between their external structure and architectural decoration (a band of pilasters around the stupa) and therefore had no bearing on the chronology of Bimaran Stupa no. 2. It can, however, also be compared with other stupas containing datable material and having a similar structure. The other neighbouring stupas in Darunta district have a similar external structure, but are classified by Errington into four categories according to their internal structure (trace of earlier stupa built over, presence of relic chamber, etc.).[57] Bimaran no. 2 is a category 3 stupa in her scheme (stupas without evidence of earlier stupa and with relic chamber). All coin finds in stupas of categories 1 and 2 are of similar date to those from Bimaran no. 2, as are the groups of coins found in other category 3 stupas in Darunta district.[58]

The stone casket

The stone container (**Fig. 44**) has a partitioned interior, but the partitions have been carved away and only vestiges remain.[59] The partitions would have created five separate spaces within the container, a central circular space surrounded by four equal quarter-spaces. This feature links it closely with five other examples.[60] One of these was found near Bimaran, excavated by Masson from the Passani stupa Tumulus no. 2. A second example, dated to the year 73 of Azes,[61] is without provenance, but is thought to come from the Bajaur region in Pakistan because the inscription on it mentions the kingdom of Apraca, which is also mentioned on the Shinkot reliquary found in Bajaur.[62] A third example came from a stupa at Qul-i-Nadir (east of Begram) and a fourth in the British Museum is documented as coming from Buner, but appears to derive from elsewhere in Pakistan, either Swat or Bajaur.[63] A fifth example is in a private collection. All the partitioned containers (except one which has no surviving lid[64]) also share another feature with the Bimaran example: a small lidded compartment in the knob at the top of the lid. Two of these containers[65] still retain the lids of their knob compartments, but those for the Bimaran container and two others are missing.[66]

The outsides of the lids of these partitioned containers also have similar decorations of patterns of linear grooves cut into the surface, creating a continuous pattern around

their circumference. On four the main feature is a cross-hatched pattern between more complex patterns;[67] the other piece has a repeating leaf-shaped motif in place of the cross-hatching.[68]

The close relationship between the Bimaran stone container and that from Passani, in its shape, partitioned bowl, knob compartment and linear decoration, appears to suggest local production in the Darunta region. Two of the partitioned-bowl containers are without provenance, but appear to come from north-western Pakistan. The fifth piece with a provenance comes from Afghanistan, but further west. The similarity of these pieces does, however, suggest that they may have been produced in the same workshop. Errington in this volume (p. 41) suggests that they represent a local production 'in the borderlands of eastern Afghanistan and north-western Pakistan'.

The surviving stone containers used as Buddhist reliquaries have been catalogued recently[69] and a clear picture emerges that there are a wide variety of shapes and sizes of stone containers used in this way. Those with provenances come mostly from Taxila, Swat and Afghanistan in the territories between the Khyber Pass and Kabul. The catalogue shows that the evidence is partly dependent upon the extent of excavation, hence the clusters from Taxila and Swat, where the most extensive excavations have taken place.

Stone reliquaries with the lidded-pot shape and linear ornament of the container from Bimaran Stupa no. 2 are numerous: five have been found from the Darunta region,[70] two from the Kabul region,[71] two from Bajaur (attributed on the basis of their association with the Apraca kingdom referred to on the Shinkot reliquary),[72] five from Gandhara,[73] twelve from Taxila[74] and six from Swat.[75] The cross-hatched pattern on the side of the Bimaran no. 2 container is also found on three stone reliquaries from Darunta,[76] one from Gandhara,[77] one from Bajaur,[78] five from Taxila[79] and three from Swat.[80]

The shape, decorative technique and ornamentation of the Bimaran no. 2 stone container therefore all reflect production techniques for stone containers found in all parts of the greater Gandhara region. The partitioning of containers has not been reported at Taxila or Swat, but was part of the repertoire of the toilet-tray makers at the Sirkap site of Taxila.[81] The container could, therefore, have been made in the various workshops which supplied stone containers across greater Gandhara. The only feature linking it closely to the region where it was found is the lidded compartment in its knob, associated with the partitioning, a stylistic feature which has only been reported from western central Afghanistan and perhaps the Bajaur region of north-western Pakistan.

The examples from the range of stone containers used in relic deposits which can be dated by inscriptions are mostly of the 1st century CE, dated in the Azes era, which began in 47 or 46 BCE.[82] The recorded dates on stone reliquaries exhibiting features like those of the Bimaran no. 2 stone container show a range through the 1st century into the early decades of the 2nd (see **Table 2**).

The archaeological evidence from Taxila and Swat also confirms that such stone containers were in use for relic deposits during this period. The Soter Megas coins contained in the Passani stupa Tumulus no. 2 reliquary again confirm the same date range for such reliquaries. Soter Megas coins were issued at Begram *c.* CE 85–113, i.e. in the final years of Kujula Kadphises and through the reign of his successor Wima Takto.[83]

Figure 44 Bimaran Stupa no. 2 stone container, 1st to early 2nd century CE (British Museum, 1880.27)

The content of the inscription on the Bimaran Stupa no. 2 stone reliquary indicates a similar period for the stone container because it includes the dedicatory formula *sarvabudha*[*ṇa*] *puyae*, meaning 'in honour of all the buddhas' (see **Table 2**). This formula is found in reliquary inscriptions over the same range of dates as the use of stone relic containers. Its usage reinforces the date range for the Bimaran stone container suggested by its shape and ornamentation, placing it during the 1st century CE or the early decades of the 2nd century CE.

Carter and Errington discussed the other instances of the name *Śivarakṣita* in Kharoshthi inscriptions and their possible relationship with the donor named on the Bimaran no. 2 stone container (**Figs 45–7**). One inscription gives the named *Śivarakṣita* a different patronymic, son of *Damarakṣita*, so any relationship is ruled out.[84] The other two are on a seal ring with the image of Balarama, holding club and plough, found in Taxila,[85] and in a dedicatory inscription on a rock at Shahdaur, Manshera district.[86] Neither inscription mentions *Śivarakṣita*'s patronymic, so they could represent the man of this name on the Bimaran container. Carter was open to this,[87] but Errington was less so, on the grounds that matching the two individuals required a migration for the donor, as in her view the container had to have been made in eastern Afghanistan or Bajaur.[88] There is, however, a close relationship between the inscription on the Bimaran no. 2 container's bowl and those on both the Taxila seal and the Shahdaur rock, as all three are written in a closely similar form of Kharoshthi. One cannot rule out the possibility that these three inscriptions refer to different people with the

Table 3 Dated stone reliquaries

Azes era date or [equivalent]	CE date (Azes year 1 = 47/46 BCE)	Baums number[89]	Jongeward number[90]	shape of stone container	inscribed in honour of all the buddhas
50 or 60	3/4 or 13/14	6	—	lidded bowl	all buddhas
60	13/14	7	157	pyxis	all buddhas
63	16/17	8	54	lidded bowl	—
73	26/27	13	334	lidded bowl	—
77	30/31	17	131	lidded bowl	all buddhas
[78]	31/32	19	55	lidded bowl	—
83	36/37	21	176	pyxis	—
98?	51/52	23	98	lidded bowl	all buddhas
126	79/80	28	386	square box	—
139	92/93	31	—	lidded box	—
147	100/101	32	384	square box	—
156	109/110	33	56	lidded bowl	all buddhas
157	110/111	34	—	lidded bowl	—
157	110/111	35	201	stupa	—
[175]	128/129	36	199	stupa	all buddhas

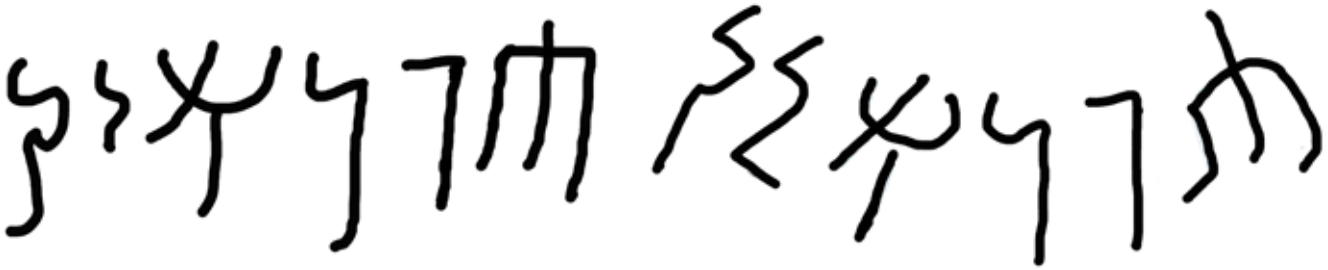

Figure 45 The name *Śivarakṣita* on the Bimaran Stupa no. 2 stone container: (left) on the side; (right) on the lid, 1st to early 2nd century CE

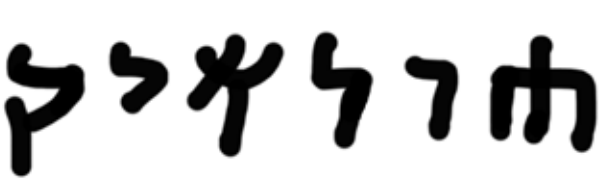

Figure 46 The name *Śivarakṣita* on a seal found at Taxila (from Konow, *Kharoshthi Inscriptions*, pl. XX, fig. 11), 1st century CE

Figure 47 The name *Śivarakṣita* on the Shahdaur inscription (from Konow, *Kharoshthi Inscriptions*, pl. III, fig. 2), 1st century CE

same name; however, the handwriting is so similar that it could be argued that the same scribe, or scribes with the same training, wrote all three inscriptions, with a square form for the first letter *Śi* and a short version of the fifth letter *ta* common to all three inscriptions. The inscription on the Bimaran container lid is in marked contrast and written by a different hand, with rounded *Śi* and a full length *ta*; likewise the name of *Śivarakṣita*, son of *Damarakṣita*, is also in a different hand. Apart from the geographical separation of the find spots of these three objects with the name of *Śivarakṣita*, it is difficult to separate their inscriptions on stylistic grounds, especially in terms of their likely date in the late 1st century CE.

The Shahdaur inscription of *Śivarakṣita* is very fragmentary, but appears to relate to a donation of money by *Śivarakṣita*, who is identified as a man of wealth, and it seems to mention the Buddha '*Gotama*' (line 5). It has a date in the Azes era, which appears to start with the digit for 100. The most likely identification of the next digit is 20, with space for at least two digits after this. The traces also suggest that these digits could be 20s. If the date is 12x, then the most likely date for the inscription is after 75 CE; if the inscription is as late as 16x, then the date could be as late as *c.* 115 CE. This date range is not incompatible with the date ranges emerging from the other forms of evidence for the *Śivarakṣita* on the Bimaran stone container.

The form, decoration and inscription content of the Bimaran no. 2 stone container all suggest that it was made in the 1st or early 2nd century CE. Its production should, however, precede its use as a reliquary, as the lid of the compartment in its knob was missing when the container was found, and the addition of its dedicatory inscriptions was likely to have been made at the time of its use as a receptacle for a relic of the Buddha. In the Taxila excavations the finds include a stone container similar in shape and decoration to the Bimaran container, but without the Bimaran container's larger knob on top of the lid and the small container in the knob,[91] along with various other types

of stone containers, like those used as reliquaries, in domestic contexts.[92] Such stone containers were probably made for domestic use, as luxury items in a period when containers were normally made from pottery, but it is possible that on occasion some may have been intended as reliquaries from the outset. This type of lidded partitioned stone container has a long history in the region, dating back to the period of Greek rule in Bactria (2nd century BCE): examples of the type were found in the excavations at the Greek city of Ai Khanum in northern Bactria. These examples were primarily located in one of the city's sanctuaries, so it is possible that such containers were originally made for use in a religious context and were perhaps 'ancêtres directs des reliquaires bouddhiques'.[93]

The stone container's contents

As mentioned above, Masson described the contents of the stone container and gold reliquary in the relic deposit in Bimaran Stupa no. 2 as 'a small metallic plate, – apparently belonging to a seal, and engraved with a seated figure, – thirty small circular ornaments of gold, sundry beads of burnt coral, numerous burnt pearls, and eighteen beads of nilam (sapphire), agate, crystal, &c.'[94] His sketch of the deposit in his papers in the British Library India Office Collection has the following labels: 'Tope Beemarran: gold box, large stone box with inscription, 1 seal, 30 gold ornaments, sundry beads, of coral & pearls, 4 copper coins, ten of this size [under the drawing of a cross shape], 18 neelums & chrystal [*sic*]'.[95] The surviving crosses are turquoise inlays, which, together with a garnet, appear to have fallen off the gold reliquary, so will be discussed below in the section relating to it.

Errington has painstakingly reconstructed the contents of the container and reliquary from Masson's verbal and diagrammatic descriptions, and by working through Masson collections in the British Museum and British Library. Her results can now be seen in her chapter in this volume (p. 40) and in the online record of the collection.[96]

Errington's analysis of the gold ornaments and beads links them to the finds from the burials at Tillya Tepe.[97] The Tillya Tepe burials can be dated to the 1st century CE or later by their inclusion of a Roman gold coin of the Emperor Tiberius, minted at his Lugdunum mint (Lyon, France) providing a *terminus post quem* of CE 16. Zeymal has also pointed to another object linking the burials with the second half of the 1st century, a worn coin of Kujula Kadphises, a silver obol of the 'Heraus' type, providing a later *terminus post quem* of *c.* CE 50.[98]

Although the Taxila Sirkap excavations provide no exact parallels to the gold pieces found in the Bimaran relic deposit, they do furnish evidence of extensive gold jewellery production using similar techniques. The stocks of gold ornaments and the forms used to make them were found at Sirkap in the same location which is datable to the late Indo-Parthian period. Some of the jewellery pieces were found in a context containing silver Indo-Parthian coins[99] of the second half of the 1st century. An example of one of these coins is of a type found elsewhere at Taxila Sirkap in a hoard with coins of Kujula Kadphises[100] and a silver dish with the name of the Apraca general Aspavarma,[101] whose coins circulated during the reign of Kujula Kadphises. The bronze forms were found in a room in the same building. Other rooms close by yielded finds of coins of the reign of Kujula Kadphises and the Indo-Parthian king Sasan, both ruling in the late 1st century CE.[102] A gold ornament closely resembling some of the Sirkap jewellery, was found in the Passani stupa Tumulus no. 2, which is in the same region as the Bimaran Stupa no. 2.

The fragmentary bronze signet ring (BM 1880.3855.a) found in the Bimaran Stupa 2 relic deposit has parallels from Begram and Taxila. The ring has a female figure with a long scarf. An almost identical piece is among the Begram finds collected by Masson (BM 1880.3702.d) and a very similar example was found at Taxila Sirkap by Marshall.[103]

The ornaments found with the Bimaran reliquary therefore all appear to have been available for deposit at the same period as that suggested by the stone container in which they were deposited. This linkage confirms the chronological evidence of the stone container that it and its contents were made in the second half of the 1st century or soon after.

Coins

The coins found with the Bimaran no. 2 relic deposit (**Figs 48–51**) have been identified in the past on the basis of their Kharoshthi inscription naming the Indo-Scythian king Azes. This has led to a range of attributions and datings. What is now clear is that, although the coins have the name Azes in their inscription, they were part of the satrapal local regal coinages which were issued after the reign of the second king called Azes. The attributions of these coins used in the past, to Azes I (*c.* 46–1 BCE) and Azes II (*c.* CE 1–50) are therefore no longer relevant to their dating and that of the Bimaran Stupa 2 relic deposit.

The clearest evidences of the attribution of the Bimaran reliquary coins to a period after Azes II are:

1. The complete blundering of the obverse Greek inscription;
2. The inclusion of an additional title, *dhramika*, to the reverse Kharoshthi inscription used by Azes II, probably borrowed from its use on some coins of the Indo-Parthian king Abdagases;[104]
3. The style of Kharoshthi used, which is different to that used on Azes II's own coins, but similar to that used on Indo-Parthian and early Kushan coins;
4. The obverse design showing the mounted king in Iranian jacket and trousers, as worn by Indo-Scythian (Azilises and Jihonika) and Indo-Parthian (Gondophares, Abdagases and Sasan) kings on their coins and by Kujula Kadphises on his, rather than the heavy armour worn by the figure of Azes I or II;
5. The reverse design featuring the standing figure of the Greek goddess Tyche, not used on any other issues of Azes II.

All these features place the coins in the period after the end of Azes II's regular coinage, during the time of the Indo-Parthian incursion into Gandhara and the Kushan incursion into Taxila and Swat and the survival of Indo-Scythian rule under local satraps or minor kings in peripheral regions. Masson had already observed in 1835

Figure 48 Base silver tetradrachm of satrap Mujatria, in name of King Azes II, found with Bimaran reliquary (British Museum IOC.204), 1st to early 2nd century CE

Figure 49 Base silver tetradrachm of satrap Mujatria, in name of King Azes II, found with Bimaran reliquary (British Museum 1960.0407.1), 1st to early 2nd century CE

Figure 50 Base silver tetradrachm of satrap Mujatria, in name of King Azes II, found with Bimaran reliquary (British Museum IOC.202), 1st to early 2nd century CE

Figure 51 Base silver tetradrachm of satrap Mujatria, in name of King Azes II, found with Bimaran reliquary (British Museum 1903.1106.7), 1st to early 2nd century CE

that the coins were not issues of Azes himself: 'The great diversity in the devices of these coins, as well as the circumstances of style and execution, seem to prove that they refer to the numerous race of princes, of whom the first [i.e. Azes] was of such importance that his name was continued by his descendants.'[105]

My recent study of these coins identifies them as issues of a local satrap called Mujatria, son of Kharahostes, son of Arta, and places them in the late 1st century CE. They have also been attributed to the same ruler by Michael Mitchiner,[106] Robert Senior[107] and Christine Fröhlich,[108] but with a mis-reading of his name as Hajatria. Mujatria and his father were both local satraps of the region around the ancient city of Nagarahara, in the vicinity of modern Jalalabad. The Bimaran-type coins of Mujatria were current until the Soter Megas coinage began to replace the local Indo-Parthian and imitation Indo-Scythian coinages in Gandhara and Taxila before the end of the reign of Wima Takto, *c.* 90–113 CE.[109]

The Bimaran gold casket

Imagery

Careful and detailed descriptions of the Bimaran reliquary have already been published by Zwalf[110] and Kreitman,[111] so the design of the reliquary will only be discussed here in relation to interpreting the scene depicted.

Neither Zwalf nor Kreitman attempt an identification of the main scene depicted twice on the reliquary, but since Foucher it has been understood as representing the Buddha's descent from heaven attended by the Indian gods Indra and Brahma. By implication Foucher was identifying the scene as the Buddha's descent from the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven, where he had gone to teach his deceased mother the Dharma. He descended accompanied by the gods to continue his teaching. Rowland, in contrast, identified the scene as representing the *Tuṣita* heaven, where the bodhisattva Siddartha had resided before he descended to be born and start his earthly mission. Carter and Errington both followed Foucher's explanation, pointing to parallels in Gandharan sculptural reliefs.

The pillared arcade which was the focus of Rowland's discussion of the imagery reinforces the idea that a scene in heaven is intended, but there are problems with both the proposed identifications of the heaven intended. The location of the scene in the *Tuṣita* heaven offers an explanation of the third figure venerating the Buddha, as chapter 2 of the *Lalitavistara* describes the future Buddha being given homage by Indra, Brahma and Maheśvara and other gods,[112] suggesting that the third figure is the god Maheśvara, Śiva, but there is a problem with this explanation. The Buddha would still be in the form of a bodhisattva when he was in the *Tuṣita* heaven. The depiction of the Buddha in his enlightened form in such a context does not conform to representations of bodhisattvas in the *Tuṣita* heaven, as discussed by Christian Luczanits.[113] There are also problems with locating the scene in the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven, as in Gandharan representations of the descent from the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven the descending staircase always appears and the Buddha is only accompanied by Indra and Brahma. The third venerating figure on the reliquary does not appear in the usual Gandharan representation of the *Trāyastriṃśa* descent scene, so is more difficult to explain.

This enigmatic figure wears similar robes and ornaments (bracelets and armlets) to the figure of Indra, so has a princely status. But he lacks Indra's turban, wearing his hair tied in a bun, like the Buddha's, but with his hair falling free. Like the Buddha and the two gods the figure has a halo, so belongs with them in the world of the gods. Early accounts describe the figure as an attendant, but more recent ones identify it as a bodhisattva.[114] Opinion on the identity of the bodhisattva is divided and both Śākyamuni and Maitreya have been suggested because they are the only bodhisattvas regularly shown bareheaded in Gandharan art. The arguments for Śākyamuni, i.e. the Buddha before enlightenment, are based on the figure's lack of the signifying iconography carried by other bodhisattvas; those for Maitreya focus on the fact that he is the only bodhisattva routinely depicted in early Gandharan art.

There is insufficient evidence from the object itself to decide which bodhisattva is depicted, or even if a specific one is intended.[115] If the scene represents the descent from the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven, the inclusion of Śākyamuni before his enlightenment is implausible, as the Buddha is unlikely to be the object of his own veneration. There is, however, another aspect which points away from Maitreya: the absence of a moustache. In early Gandharan art Maitreya is normally depicted with the same style of moustache as that worn by the Buddha images on the reliquary. All that can be certain is that the figure is depicted as a heavenly being making the *añjalimudrā* gesture of veneration, presumably towards the Buddha. Perhaps the figure is not a bodhisattva but merely a representation of one of the other gods who joined Indra and Brahma in veneration of the Buddha.

Imagery: chronology

The identification of the pillared arcade as a heavenly palace by Rowland was used by him to argue for Roman influence and a dating of the reliquary to the 3rd to 4th century CE. Although his identification of the scene as taking place in heaven seems correct, the chronological implications of this are misplaced. The form of pillars are undoubtedly a reflection of Hellenistic architecture, but the representation of heaven as a pillared hall with arches had already been used in Buddhist art in India, as in the depiction of the seven levels of heaven as a multistorey palace with arched pillars on the eastern gateway of the stupa at Sanchi.[116] The right side of the gate shows a tiered palace, each storey supported by a row of pillars and the first, third and fifth rows of pillars supporting arches of the same shape as those featured on the Bimaran reliquary. The arches are part of the architecture represented in many 1st-century BCE Indian reliefs. The pilasters supporting the Indian arches are the only non-Indian component of the arcade and reflect the local architectural style, which has its origins in the Hellenistic world, whether from the Mediterranean or from Iran. The pierced motif in the centre of the pilasters is commonly seen in Gandharan reliefs, but the capital forms on the reliquary are simpler (two flat panels) than the common Gandharan capital types, which seem to be an adaptation of the Hellenistic Corinthian capital.

Rowland's citing of parallels between the Bimaran reliquary and late Roman Christian sarcophagi is therefore an unnecessary association as he also observed that the pillared-arcade-type sarcophagi were already being made in eastern Roman art during the 2nd century CE. If there is a connection between these pillared arcades and those appearing in Gandhara then the direction of influence is more likely to be from East to West.

Apart from the Bimaran reliquary, pillared arcades appear in many Gandharan sculptures, with examples reported from Taxila Dharmarajika, Gandhara and Swat, as detailed by Errington[117] and Carter.[118] These share the Bimaran reliquary's spread-winged bird motif between the arches (in the spandrels). Kreitman also refers to an example from Taxila Kalawan shrine A1, which shows a standing Buddha in a pillared arcade, with the same shaped arch and the pilasters with the same oblong piercing as those on the Bimaran reliquary.[119] Birds are also placed between the arches, but in pairs. A second example, with the same pillared arcade with birds, from the same site shows a seated Buddha, flanked by standing figures.[120] Shrine A1, the context in which these two reliefs were found, also yielded an inscription from the reign of Kujula Kadphises, dated year 134 in the Azes era, i.e. *c.* 87–88 CE.[121]

In addition, the pillared arcade was a feature of stupa decoration used on Bimaran Stupa no. 2 and others stupas in the same region, appearing on the following stupas: Kotpur no. 1, Bimaran no. 3, Surkh Tope, Nandara no. 1, Gudara and Bar Rabat, as well as further afield in central Afghanistan: Shevaki, Guldara, Korrindar and Topdara.[122] Of these stupas, Kotpur no. 1 and Surkh Tope have coins of the same period as those found in Bimaran no. 2, Bimaran no. 3 has coins of the Soter Megas type, Shevaki has coins of Wima Kadphises and Guldara has coins of Wima Kadphises and Huviska. The other stupas of the type either yielded no coins or were not excavated. Because the pillared arcade decorations were on the exterior of these stupas, it cannot be discounted that the decorations were added and therefore not contemporary with the deposits contained inside them.

Another feature of the imagery on the reliquary is that the modelling of the faces of the Buddhas suggests that two artists were involved in its production, or two different sculptural models were used as prototypes for them. One Buddha has the broad face, large moustache, large eyes and large ushnisha which can be associated with early Gandharan representations of the Buddha, while the other has a narrower face, with smaller moustache, eyes and ushnisha, reflecting the style of later Gandharan Buddha images.[123] The Buddha images are also distinguished by the treatment of the ends of his scarf – pointed in the broad-faced one and rounded in the narrow faced-one – and the same differentiation is observed in the scarf of the fourth figure. This feature can only have a bearing on the chronology of the Bimaran reliquary once the chronology of the stylistic development of the Buddha image is better understood.

Condition

The reliquary as it was found by Masson showed several signs suggesting that it had been damaged before its deposit in the Bimaran Stupa no. 2. The most obvious feature was

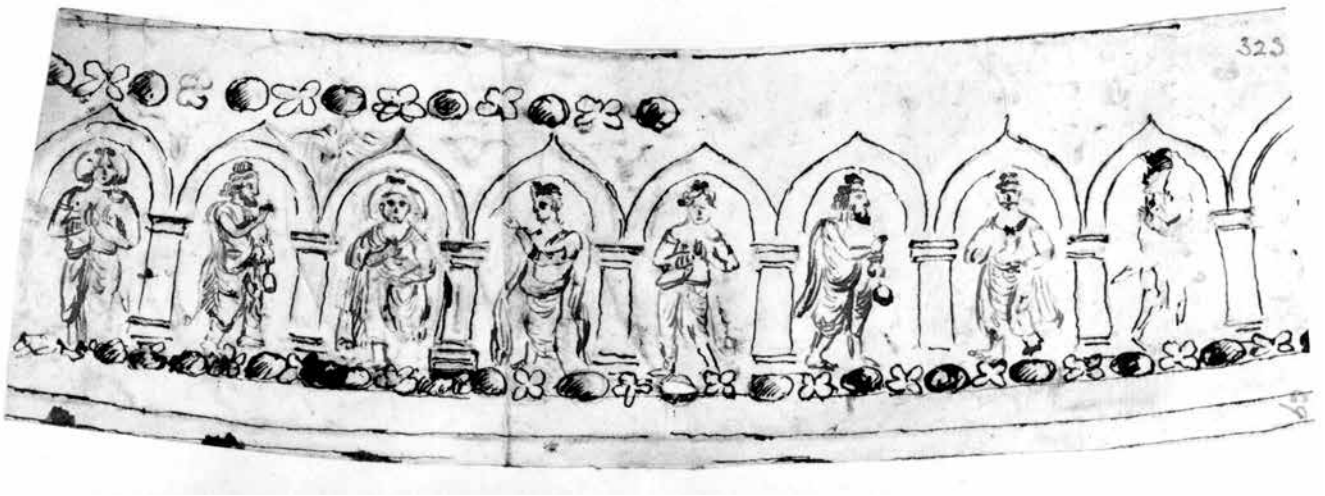

Figure 52 Sketch of Bimaran gold reliquary by Charles Masson (British Library, India Office Collection, MSS Eur. F63, sec. 2, f. 69; courtesy of British Library), 1st to early 2nd century CE

the loss of its lid. The form of the reliquary, with a clear area at its upper rim, suggests that it originally had a lid which overlapped the upper rim.

The reliquary has also lost some of its inset jewels. As it survives today it is missing three of the garnets which were set as two rows, 12 above and 14 below. There are three garnets missing in the lower row, one of which survives among the reliquary contents preserved at the British Museum.[124] Unfortunately, Masson's report is ambiguous about the other two missing garnets. He described the reliquary as having two rows of 12 garnets ('lals or rubies of Badakshan'). The drawing in Masson's report does not show the relevant side of the reliquary where the stones are missing.[125] A sketch (**Fig. 52**) of the whole design, surviving among Masson's papers,[126] is not clear enough to detect the missing stones with complete certainty. His drawing of the lower row of garnets is misplaced in relation to the figures, but there are three of the stones marked by different shading (lines on the existing stones and black scribble for the missing stones) suggesting that they may be missing. If Masson's description of the reliquary having two rows of 12 stones is accurate, then he is describing the reliquary in its present condition, with one stone loose, but if his description is an approximation based on counting only the top row, then it remains unreliable.

The loss of other inset stones is, however, certain, as among the objects in the stone reliquary were 10 crosses and a heart of turquoise, which he mentions in his drawing 'ten of this size' next to a sketch of a cross-shaped piece.[127] Among the reliquary contents in the British Museum there survive four cross-shaped pieces and a half-cross.[128] On the reliquary there are 26 cruciform spaces positioned in between the settings for the garnets in both the upper and lower rows, so that there were originally 10 full cross-shaped pieces and 32 half-cross-shaped pieces, the latter positioned in pairs to form a cross shape. The turquoise pieces must have been very loosely fitted as most of them were missing before the reliquary was buried and the remaining 10 fell out between deposit and Masson's excavation. They are tiny, and only the five pieces listed above survive in the British Museum. Apart from the loss of the lid and some of the inlaid stones, the reliquary has also suffered several small cracks on the side where three garnets are missing, particularly around the figure of Brahma above the two missing garnets and on the left leg of the figure to his left.[129]

There has been some speculation about the relationship between the gold reliquary and the rest of the relic deposit. Fussman made the suggestion that the reliquary must be significantly earlier than the date of its deposit.[130] He argued that the loss of the lid indicated that the depositor 're-used or re-enshrined an older golden casket, probably one found in a previously built and subsequently ruined stupa'. From this he asserted that the date of the reliquary should be in the period 1–15 CE. Carter agreed with this analysis of the relationship between the reliquary and the deposit.[131] Kreitman referred to Fussman's view, but argued for a different kind of earlier use of the reliquary as an object venerated by a Buddhist monastic community as a cult object: 'the earlier use of the gold casket, and perhaps also the incomplete steatite casket, as cult objects, presents a plausible alternative to their previous interment'.[132] Errington extended this idea and suggested that the reliquary and stone container could 'have originally been placed in an open shrine (and by extension added to at any time) and suffered damage before their final interment in the stupa'.[133] She added that this scenario could separate the gold reliquary chronologically from the other objects.

The loss of the lid and stones, and the damage to the reliquary therefore suggest strongly that it was being used before it was deposited in the stone container in Bimaran Stupa no. 2. The removal of the interior partitions of the stone container further suggests that the gold reliquary and stone container were not originally intended to be deposited together.

Function

The stupa-like form of the gold reliquary suggests that it was originally made, like a stupa, as a receptacle for a relic of the Buddha. Its damaged state shows that it was not originally made for the deposit in which it was found, but for a different purpose. It could have been made for deposit on a different occasion and/or location. The opulence of the reliquary and its decoration and adornment suggests that a very important purpose was intended. It is certainly the most costly relic

reliquary so far discovered in ancient greater Gandhara. The Bimaran Stupa no. 2 in which the reliquary was found is not even the largest of those erected in its neighbourhood, as at 38.4m circumference it is smaller than the other Bimaran stupas – no. 1 (43.9m), no. 3 (44.2m) no. 5 (46.6m) – so it is difficult to presume that the reliquary was originally made for this location.[134]

It seems most likely, as Kreitman and Errington proposed, that the reliquary was made for use as an object of veneration, rather than for deposit.[135] There is plentiful evidence of the cult of relics outside stupas. Kurt Behrendt has presented the archaeological and architectural evidence for the existence of shrines for the public veneration of relics in Gandhara and the use of stupas as accessible repositories for relics.[136] Behrendt illustrated a Gandharan relief scene showing the veneration by six monks of a reliquary in the form of a pyxis placed on a throne.[137] He identified buildings which could have served this purpose within the complexes at Dharmarajika, Kalawan and Jaulian at Taxila, at Takht-i-Bahi, Jamalgarhi and Thareli in Gandhara and at Butkara, Nimogram and Tokar dara in Swat.

The archaeology of the Darunta area is insufficient to detect whether the gold reliquary could have been used for the veneration of relics close to Bimaran Stupa no. 2. The evidence of relic shrines elsewhere as outlined by Behrendt offers several possible alternative locations for the original use and production of the gold reliquary. For example, at Taxila the Kalawan site offers a suitable location for the gold reliquary. In Kalawan shrine A1, identified by Behrendt as a possible relic shrine,[138] stone reliefs were found which used the same pillared arcade as the gold reliquary, and a relic establishment inscription, dated Azes year 134, i.e. *c.* 87/88 CE. The site of Taxila appears to have been badly damaged by earthquake soon after this, i.e. during the occupation by the Indo-Parthian king Sasan, *c.* 90–100 CE. Behrendt placed the transition point related to the earthquake, or the marked transition in masonry which Marshall associated with it,[139] as the end of his first phase of structures at Taxila and he links the transition from the first to second phase as marked by the year 134 inscription found in Kalawan shrine A1, and a similar inscription dated year 136 (*c.* 89/90 CE), naming Kujula Kadphises, from the Dharmarajika complex.[140]

The Kalawan shrine, therefore, offers a potential context in which the gold reliquary could have been damaged and soon after relocated to the Bimaran Stupa no. 2, which contains coins from the same period. This sample scenario provides no definitive evidence, as relic shrines and similar reliefs have been found in Gandhara and Swat, both of which are in the same earthquake zone, but it illustrates the possible life of the gold reliquary before its final deposit. This hypothesis can be constructed because of the detailed, if confused, excavations carried out at the Taxila sites. Similar scenarios could be constructed elsewhere, but the evidence from Taxila offers the easiest one to create.

The relocation of the gold reliquary seems a reasonable hypothesis to explain its condition and its use of imagery of a kind which has not been reported from the location of its final deposit. One should, however, not entirely exclude the possibility that proper excavations in this part of Afghanistan might yield more images than those so far available, as the number of stupas in the area certainly suggests that it was a very active centre of Buddhist cult. The date at which this took place is less clear. The hypothetical relationship between the damage to the reliquary and the period of Kujula Kadphises at Taxila set out above is only one scenario and the damage could have happened at a later date and elsewhere.

The deposit of a former display reliquary could also apply to another important relic reliquary of significance for Kushan chronology, the Shah-ji-ki-Dheri stupa Kanishka reliquary.[141] Elizabeth Errington has shown that this reliquary was deposited in the second half of the reign of the Kushan king Huviska, Kanishka I's immediate successor, and that it was placed within the stupa during a rebuilding of the stupa.[142] The reliquary had traces of gilding on it. Although Errington has shown that the imagery of the king can be dated to Huviska's reign, it can also be linked with the reign of Kanishka, as the beardless representation of the king, with a halo and covered hand, was in use on coins struck in his Kashmir mint at the start of his reign.[143] The subject matter of the imagery on the Kanishka reliquary is similar in part to that on the Bimaran reliquary, and the Buddha flanked by Indra and Brahma on the lid are likely to also be making reference to the Buddha in heaven, whether *Trāyastriṃśa* or *Tuṣita*. The lotus design on the base of the Bimaran reliquary is repeated as the seat of the Buddha on the lid, perhaps representing the Buddha's position in the heavens above the sky, represented by the solar imagery of the lotus. Around the sides of the Kanishka reliquary is the representation of Kanishka making offering to the Buddha, flanked by the Kushan gods Mao and Miiro, mirroring the scene on the lid. The burial of a reliquary specifically referring to Kanishka I, which had lost its gilding before deposit, about 20 or more years after his death, suggests that the reliquary may have had a previous use, perhaps as a display reliquary. The inscription on it makes no reference to its deposit but only to its donation in relation to the monastery of Kanishka, so it is possible to explain its imagery as originally intended to be seen by worshippers when it was displayed, in the same way as suggested for the Bimaran reliquary.

Huntington's suggestion that the representation of two Buddha and two bodhisattva figures on the gold reliquary indicated that it was 'undoubtedly a Mahayana creation' seems implausible as it does not address the presence of double images of Indra and Brahma. The deposit of the reliquary in a stone container with an inscription honouring 'all the Buddhas', a formula associated with Hinayana sects in the 1st century CE, also argues against her interpretation of this as a Mahāyāna reliquary.[144]

The decoration of the reliquary with a pillared arcade, similar to that used on stupas and featured in reliefs affixed to stupas, suggests that the reliquary might have been intended to represent a miniature stupa,[145] a form often used for small reliquaries.[146] The representations of the Buddha on the reliquary can also be interpreted as an indication of its stupa-like function, a visible manifestation of the bodily presence in relic form within the reliquary.

The form of the reliquary shows similarity to the *pyxis* (lidded box) used in the Greek and Roman world. Such

Figure 53 Buddha, with Indra and Brahma, schist relief found at Nathou (from Cole, *Preservation of National Monuments*, plate 12, detail; current location unknown), 1st to early 2nd century CE

boxes could have flat, domed or conical lids. In Jongeward's list of reliquaries, metal box-shaped examples are recorded with each type of lid. The designs on the side of the Bimaran reliquary suggest that it could have been in the form of a stupa, and therefore could have had a domed lid as recorded for other *pyxis* used as reliquaries.[147] Brancaccio has noted the frequent depiction of arches of the same shape as those on the Bimaran gold reliquary in reliefs appearing on stupas, suggesting that the arches mark access to the stupa, gateways which 'seem to indicate the sacred threshold and to mark the relic's realm'.[148] Her interpretation coincides with the idea that the gold reliquary may be both a reliquary and a symbolic stupa. The stupa shape of the reliquary would reinforce to the viewer the presence of a relic of the Buddha within.

It seems possible therefore that the gold reliquary was originally made as an object for public view, a context which would fully exploit its visibly precious nature. The image of the Buddha displayed on a stupa form would reinforce its role as a focus of devotion to the relic of the Buddha that it contained. The composition showing the Buddha in a heavenly palace, being venerated by the Hindu deities Brahma and Indra and another god, perhaps Maheśvara, either in the *Tuṣita* or the *Trāyastriṃśa* heaven, could also be understood as representing the moment at which the Buddha began his descent to earth with the support of the gods, at the start of his life or of his mission to bring reassurance to humankind. His *abhayamudrā* gesture indicates his purpose. It is a fitting subject, representing the endorsement of the Buddha's earthly mission by the gods and his continuing presence in bodily form, for a reliquary designed for veneration.

The gold casket and chronology

The above examination of the finds associated with the gold reliquary places the production of the stone container, the coins and the associated small finds in the 1st to early 2nd century CE. The loss of part of the stone container (the lid of its knob compartment) and the removal of its inner partitions, and the damage and loss of lid of the gold reliquary, make it clear that their production and first use pre-dated their interment in Bimaran Stupa no. 2. Likewise the jewellery pieces and the signet ring show evidence of previous use. All these aspects of the associated finds provide evidence of the *terminus post quem* in the 1st century CE for their use in this relic deposit. The date of the currency of the Bimaran coins during the last decades of the 1st century CE, and perhaps into the first decade of the 2nd, gives a slightly later *terminus post quem* for their deposit.

Although the materials for the containers and the small finds from the relic deposit are likely to have been available in this region, the possibility cannot be ruled out that they could have been brought from elsewhere and only put together when deposited in the stupa. The only undoubtedly local components of the deposit are the Bimaran reliquary coins, which have been reported in significant numbers only from the same region as the deposit and were probably made nearby at Nagarahara, the seat of Mujatria. This area was rich in Buddhist stupas, mostly to the west of the plain containing the ancient city of Nagarahara. Faxian described the Buddhist monuments and relics he found there *c.* 403 CE[149] and Xuanzang later (*c.* 630 CE) found evidence of a former large Buddhist community and derelict large stupas in and around the city that were associated with important relics.[150]

Accordingly, the conclusion which can be drawn from the evidence collected by Masson is that the deposit cannot have been made before the late 1st century and was probably made then or in the 2nd century. The composition of the deposit from previously used containers, coins and ornaments opens up the possibility, already posited in relation to the gold reliquary, that the stone reliquary was also being redeposited when placed in the stupa at Bimaran. The practice of redeposit is well attested by Gandharan reliquary inscriptions, one of which refers to the transfer of relics from a Mauryan stupa to a new location,[151] while another has inscriptions recording both the original deposit dated Azes year 156 and the redeposit dated year 172,[152] so there is a real possibility that the stone container had a previous role as a reliquary elsewhere before its interment with the Bimaran coins and the gold reliquary in Bimaran Stupa no. 2. Perhaps its earlier use involved the Śivarakṣiṭa of the Shahdaur inscription, as discussed above.

The redeposit of relics by a monastic community as they move to a new location is evidenced by the practice observed by Michael Willis at Sanchi, where the relics of one of the Buddha's disciples were redeposited when the community was established at this location.[153] There is direct reference to the deposit of relics in stupas at previously 'unestablished' locations.[154]

The closest parallel in style and composition to the Buddha images on the gold reliquary are those appearing on the copper coins of Kanishka I, *c.* 127–150 CE, issued towards

the end of his reign at the Kushan copper mint in Begram. The reliquary and coin images share their treatment of the Buddha's hand positions and the scarf end hanging over his left wrist at waist level. This treatment is rare in Gandharan art, where the Buddha normally has the scarf end held in the left hand on his thigh or occasionally bunched in the left hand before his chest. One of the rare examples of the same treatment as the reliquary and coins appears in a relief sculpture on a pilaster at the site of Nathou in northern Gandhara (**Fig. 53**), where the Buddha is shown between Indra and Brahma in the same poses as on the Bimaran reliquary.[155] Behrendt identifies this relief as part of a stupa frieze, featuring scenes from the Buddha's life, which he dates to the second phase of development of Gandharan architecture, i.e. after the last decade of the 1st century CE.[156]

Fussman argued that the prototype for Buddha images represented on the Kanishka I's coins and those on the Bimaran reliquary was to be dated to the early 1st century CE, i.e. 'sixty to hundred years + *x* earlier than the coins', but this opinion is based on his dating of the Bimaran coins to the period to *c.* 20 CE 'or a little later' and his dating of Kanishka I's first year to 78 CE.[157] However, the question of the dating of the prototypes of the Buddha images on Kanishka I's coins can only be assessed on the basis that the coins were created at the end of his reign, i.e. *c.* 150 CE. It would therefore be more satisfactory to express the relationship between the reliquary and coin images to say that their prototype provides them with a common *terminus post quem*, but, as the date of the prototype is not known, then it is more useful to see the Buddha images on the coins and reliquary as *termini ante quem* for their prototype. In relation to the chronology of the Bimaran gold reliquary, this suggests only that it was made before, at the same time as or soon after the coins of Kanishka.

Conclusion

The dating of the Bimaran gold reliquary and the Buddha images it bears remains unresolved, but clearer boundaries for its production and deposit can be observed. The associated coins, current *c.* 85–113 CE, offer a *terminus post quem* for its deposit. The nature of the deposit does not preclude the possibility that the stone container had been used before in a deposit which did not yet contain the gold reliquary. The use of images on coins issued at the end of the reign of Kanishka I (*c.* 127–150 CE) which are very similar to those on the reliquary suggests a *terminus ante quem* of *c.* 150 CE for the prototype used for the Bimaran reliquary. The production of the reliquary is therefore likely to have taken place before or soon after *c.* 150 CE, but its deposit could be placed well after its production as it had clearly suffered damage before its deposit. Its most likely purpose, before it suffered this damage, was as a display reliquary and the most likely scenario for its damage was the destruction of the shrine where it was housed, perhaps during an earthquake. If there is a relationship between the donor of the stone container and the donor of the same name inscribed on a rock at Shahdaur and the owner of a seal ring found at Taxila Sirkap, then the stone container could also have been in previous use as a reliquary, perhaps at Taxila.

Notes

1 I would like to acknowledge the inspiration and help given to me by my former colleague Elizabeth Errington, whose diligent work on the finds made by Charles Masson in Afghanistan provides much of the evidence underlying the analysis of the Bimaran reliquary and its context presented here. She has rediscovered the contents found by Masson in the relic deposit which included the reliquary and has classified and documented the coin finds both from the stupas Masson excavated and from the ancient city at Begram (see E. Errington, *Charles Masson and the Buddhist Sites of Afghanistan: Explorations, Excavations, Collections, 1832–1835*, British Museum Research Publication 215, London, British Museum, 2017; E. Errington, *The Charles Masson Archive: British Library, British Museum and Other Documents Relating to the 1832–1838 Masson Collection from Afghanistan*, London, British Museum, 2017; E. Errington *et al.*, *Charles Masson: Collections from Begram and Kabul Bazaar, Afghanistan 1833–1838*, London, British Museum, forthcoming. The coin finds from both contribute greatly to the revised presentation of the chronology of the political and cultural environment in which the reliquary was deposited. I also thank her for sharing her deep knowledge of the archaeology and art history of Buddhist Gandhara. I am likewise indebted to Gul Rahim Khan of the University of Peshawar, who has shared with me his records of the Kushan coin finds from Taxila, which have allowed a reappraisal of the chronology of that site. I have also found David Jongeward and colleagues' recent book (D. Jongeward, E. Errington, R. Salomon and S. Baums, *Gandharan Buddhist Reliquaries*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 2012) an important resource for this research. I would like to thank Elizabeth Errington, Kay Rienjang, Robert Bracey, Gul Rahim Khan, Nasim Khan, Martina Stoye, Pia Brancaccio, Kurt Behrendt, Luca Olivieri, Shailendra Bhandare, Christine Fröhlich, Harry Falk, Naushaba Anjum, Stefan Baums and David Jongeward for their help and patience, for listening to my idle speculations and for re-educating me in my understanding of Gandharan art and history. I am truly appreciative of Janice Stargardt's support and patience while preparing this paper. Finally I would like to thank Neil Kreitman, whose support and encouragement over more than two decades has enabled me to learn so much about the coins and culture of ancient Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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Chapter 5
Offerings to the Triple Gem: Texts, Inscriptions and Ritual Practice

Michael Willis

Abstract
This chapter explores religious gifts, specifically *deyadharma* or *deyyadhamma*, those things that 'should be given' (*deya*) because they have the appropriate 'qualities' (*dharma*). Texts and inscriptions show that appropriate gifts to the Triple Gem or *triratna* – the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha – were counted as follows: a) monastic robes; b) alms food; c) lodgings; and d) medicine. These four things were classed as the supports (*nissaya)*, foundations (*paccaya)* or requisites (*parikkhāra*) for monastic life. Passages in the *Milindapañha*, *Niddesa* and *Petavatthu*, coupled with epigraphic statements, show that *deyadharma* items could be offered to monks, to relics enshrined in a *cetiya* or *thūpa* and, by extension, to religious images. The equivalence made between monks, relics and images allowed *deyadharma* to be offered to all three. This shows that the operative assumptions of *pūjā* – the rituals in which offerings are made to please consecrated living images – were accepted in Buddhist religious practice from the early centuries CE.

When considering Buddhist relics and the relic cult – the focus of the essays in this volume – most observers will think first about the nature of the Buddha and his relics and how Buddhist traditions have come to describe and classify these relics. From there we might turn to the containers used to hold relics and the places – monasteries and shrines – where these containers are kept. Also of much interest, to both specialists and the faithful, are the supplementary items deposited with relics and the artistic representations that were developed to memorialize relics and depict the places where they were preserved. In this paper I am not concerned with any of these matters. Rather, I would like to look outwards from the relic to the area round about, to what we might call the 'sacred precinct'. Side-stepping the entanglement of preliminary definitions about the nature and variety of sacred precincts, I simply observe that a number of familiar items are normally found in these spaces: altars, oil lamps, flowers, statues, votive tablets and relic shrines of various shapes and sizes (generally termed *thūpa* and *cetiya*). For the greater part, these objects were made to facilitate worship or are, in many instances, the residues of worship. They all show what is obvious once said: relics at the heart of the sacred precinct were and are deemed worthy of religious attention. And for many centuries it has been suitable for devotees to make offerings to them (**Fig. 54**).

Now a key question in all religious traditions is the definition of what constitutes suitable religious acts in general and what constitutes suitable religious offerings in particular. We might burn some incense at an altar, for example, but tobacco is probably not a good idea. In the Buddhist tradition these problems were addressed directly and clearly. The general descriptor for offerings was *deyadharma* or *deyyadhamma*, a term meaning that the donated item has the 'characteristic' or 'quality' (*dharma*) that makes it something that 'could or should be given' (*deya*).[1] This can be understood and translated as 'items worth giving' or 'appropriate gifts'. In the scholarly literature on Indic inscriptions the tendency has been to say that a *deyadharma* is a 'meritorious gift', that is, something that will bring merit to the donor when it is given.

This captures and extends the literal sense, but the subject is worth examining from the historical point of view. Why this should be is due to the fact that *deyadharma*s are necessarily material objects, not theological or spiritual abstractions. To put the matter another way, theology and meditation are excellent things, but sooner or later – in fact sooner rather than later – the theologian and spiritual aspirant is going to need a crust of bread. This too has been openly acknowledged in the Buddhist tradition, a good example coming from the 'great debate' in Tibet, where leaders of the 'gradual path' systematically dismantled the position of those following the 'instantaneous path' that had been introduced from China. After a polemical diatribe against the faulty assumptions of the Chinese monks and their followers, dPal dByangs concluded with this barbed remark: 'If, having done nothing, you do nothing, you won't even obtain your own food and you'll be hungry, so how could you possibly obtain the state of supreme Buddha-hood? If you don't help yourself, how is it possible to look after (the welfare of) others?'[2]

Because *deyadharma* is an important category, what the Buddhist tradition deemed an appropriate offering is not difficult to discover. For historical purposes, the discussion in the *Milindapañha* or 'Questions of Milinda' is an instructive starting point and anchor. Indeed, throughout this paper I will use the *Milindapañha* because it is a text that can be dated with some degree of certainty. My working assumptions are simple: firstly, if the *Milindapañha* quotes a text, then that text can be supposed to pre-exist; secondly, if a subsequent commentary quotes part of the *Milindapañha* then that portion can be assumed to have been in circulation at the time of the commentary. This sounds simple, but complexities are inevitable. By way of introduction to these problems, we can note here that the *Milindapañha* has long been recognized as a compilation of several texts that have been brought together on account of their shared interlocutors, Nāgasena and Milinda.[3] Despite a vast literature, the question of when and where these several texts were combined, and how they were transmitted and redacted, has not been addressed.

The attention the text has received to date is due to the curious fact that its putative subject is Menander, an Indo-Greek king who lived in the 2nd century BCE. Thus the focus has been on the 'original' or 'authentic' text. The inevitable discovery that the *Milindapañha* tells us precisely nothing about Menander has inspired some bad-tempered responses, but, more importantly, the focus on the so-called 'original' has resulted in a general lack of interest in most parts of the book. While a detailed assessment of the text is not a question for this paper, I cannot avoid looking at the make-up of the *Milindapañha* to a certain degree. Rhys Davids started a tradition of referring to the parts of the *Milindapañha* as Book I, II, III and so forth.[4] This is completely made up. There is no evidence for this apparatus in the manuscripts or *editio princeps*, so I will not use these book numbers here. Rather, I will refer to each portion using its title in Pali. As we will see, these portions originally circulated as separate texts.

Within the *Milindapañha*, the *Meṇḍakapañha* or 'Questions about Dilemmas' draws attention first because it contains a discussion of the monastic requisites or *deyadharma*. Portions

Figure 54 Drawing of a relief panel on the north gate at Sanchi (District Raisen, Madhya Pradesh, India), showing the worship of a stupa (drawing © British Museum)

of the *Meṇḍakapañha* date from before the 4th century because they are cited in *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, a commentary on the *Dīghanikāya*, and in the *Papañcasūdānī*, a commentary on the *Majjhima Nikāya*. Both commentaries are accepted as being from the hand of Buddhaghosa, who was active in Ceylon in the middle or late 4th century CE.[5] The *Meṇḍakapañha* is also cited in the *Paramatthajotikā*, a commentary on the *Suttanipāta*. This quotes the *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa's most famous work, and, because it is difficult to imagine the *Paramatthajotikā* as the work of Buddhaghosa, it is probably slightly later in time.[6]

All the commentaries just mentioned cite divisions (*vagga*) I, III, IV and VII of the *Meṇḍakapañha*.[7] In other words, the commentaries cross most of the *Meṇḍakapañha*. While this suggests that much of the text was available to Buddhaghosa, I am inclined to think that some parts were added in South India and Ceylon in the 5th, 6th and 7th centuries. The nature of the *Meṇḍakapañha*, as a work of dogmatics in which contradictory passages in scripture are presented and resolved, would lend itself to insertions and gradual supplementation.

For the moment, the key point is that the four requisites are mentioned in *vagga* II. Some of this division has old material. For example, there is a reference to the use of texts in *parittā* or protective rituals that were first performed, according to the *Cūlavaṃsa*, under King Upatissa I in the 4th century CE.[8] I think, therefore, that *vagga* II was available to Buddhaghosa. The relevant sentence runs as follows: 'Revered Nāgasena, you say: "The Tathāgata was a recipient of the requisites of robe material, alms food,

lodgings and medicines for the sick.'"[9] The wording of this short passage – and the subsequent discussion – shows that the requisites were well known, conventional and uncontentious. The requisites may indeed be taken as well established in the Buddhist tradition, a point more or less proven by the fact that the Milinda texts were composed first in Gandhārī language and subsequently rendered in Sanskrit, Chinese and Pali.[10]

Within the canon proper, the monastic requisites are a frequent topic in the Vinaya, as one might expect. Staying in the Pali tradition, an illustrative listing of the items allowed to monks is found in the *Mahāvagga*.[11] This iteration was prompted by a novice who found that he was not suited to the harsh conditions of monastic life. This led the Buddha to say that new recruits should be properly informed about the challenges ahead:

> I allow you, monks, when you are ordaining, to explain the four supports of monastic life (*nissaya*): that going forth is on account of meals of scraps; in this respect effort is to be made by you for life. [There are] extra acquisitions: a meal for the Order, and meal for a special person, an invitation, ticket-food (*salākabhatta*),[12] [food given] on a day of the waxing or waning moon, on an Observance day, on the day after an Observance day.[13] That going forth is on account of rag-robes; in this respect effort is to be made by you for life. [These are] extra acquisitions: [robes made of] linen, cotton, silk, wool, coarse hemp, canvas. That going forth is on account of a lodging at the root of a tree; in this respect effort is to be made by you for life. [There are] extra acquisitions: a dwelling place, an apsidal cottage, a storied house, a kiosk, a cave.[14] That going forth is on account of ammonia as medicine: in this respect effort is to be made by you for life. [These are] extra acquisitions: ghee, fresh butter, oil, honey, molasses.[15]

In addition to *nissaya* or 'support' – appearing in the passage just given – two other terms are used: *paccaya*, 'foundation', and *parikkhāra*, 'requisite'. These are analogous words with all three frequently translated into English as 'requisite'. The semantic range can be explored using the citations given in dictionaries.[16] The terms are used to cover closely related and often identical items, as a cursory reading of the Pali Vinaya soon shows. In short, the terms represent broad categories into which individual items could be slotted as necessary. The overarching category of 'support' was stable but somehow whatever 'support' was being given to a Buddhist establishment, and whatever the financial mechanism used, it was considered appropriate to provide begging bowls, food, monastic robes, medicines and seats, beds or lodgings. This is seen in the copper-plates of *mahārāja* Subandhu found at Bagh, the well-known Buddhist cave site near Sanchi. This charter recounts that, according to the rules governing land being brought under the plough, an estate or *agrahāra* was created with rights to the taxes known as *soparikara* and *sodraṅga*.[17] The purpose of these revenues was to provide the monks with seats and beds, medicine as a requisite for the sick, begging bowls and robes.[18]

The subtle flexibility of the basic categories is shown by several early inscriptions. At Nasik there is an inscription of Vāsiṣṭhīputra Puḷumāvi engraved on the back wall of the veranda of Cave 3. This records that 'the cave, which is a *deyadharma*, was made by the great queen Gotamī Balasirī'.[19] The Kurā stone inscription of the time of the Hūṇa king Toramāṇa, some centuries later, records 'the establishment of this monastery, a *deyadharma*, for the congregation of monks'.[20] Both examples show that elaborate donations, whether caves or buildings, could fall under the rubric of 'lodgings' and so be classed as acceptable gifts.[21] Further objects are added in the Pali Vinaya listings and deemed *deyadharma*, such as a water strainer and a cloth bag for the monk's begging bowl.

The way that the regulations are set down in layers, with an initial ruling followed by further qualifications regarding robes, medicines and other things, shows that the Vinaya developed over a substantial period of time. Evidence of this chronological layering is particularly clear in the regulations surrounding begging bowls and the stipulation that monks should use a bowl for taking food rather than their bare hands.[22] This appears to be a response to the Digambaras, or at least to those thought to be following the Jain path, as evidenced by a 4th-century Jain inscription that praises a penitent for having taken a vow to eat and drink only with his hands (*pāṇipātrika*).[23] In the *Samantapāsādikā* there is close engagement with those who are *apattaka*, that is, monks who do not use bowls for their alms: '*seyyathāpi titthiyā*: "like members of a different ascetic community", means: like adherents of a different ascetic community (*titthiyā*) having the name of *ājīvaka*; they eat, after having mixed [the food] with curries, the alms food (*piṇḍam*) that is placed in their hands (*hatthesu*)'.[24] Given that the *Samantapāsādikā* is a work of the late 4th or early 5th century, but in either case was available for translation into Chinese in 489 CE, this striking parallel with a contemporaneous inscription from north India shows that engagement with the monastic requisites was an important and widespread way of delineating religious boundaries at this time. Although the internal chronology is not yet clear, the Pali Vinaya itself was redacted to clarify these boundaries, placing 'the executive role for every legal decision with the Buddha himself'.[25] Making all regulations *Buddhavacana* was a textual device – what can be called a 'text event' – deployed to organize and validate a regulatory system with a long and complex history.

Although the *Samantapāsādikā* was a landmark, commentarial engagement with the requisites can be found at a relatively early stage, notably in the *Niddesa*.[26] This is a commentary on parts of the *Suttanipāta*. The *Suttanipāta*, contained in the *Sutta Piṭaka*, is a group of discourses that is regarded as being subject to insertions by the *sangītikāra*s 'participating in the (first?) council'.[27] In other words, even the tradition acknowledges supplementation. Oskar von Hinüber has noted parallels to the *Mahābhārata* and if we accept his observations (which I do) then a date no earlier than the 1st century CE can be posited, at least for the text in its current form.[28] If we think that the *Mahābhārata* is exerting an influence as a literary vehicle, then a later date seems likely, given that the epic only assumed its current shape, and carried influence in south India, from the 4th century.[29] This means that the *Suttanipāta* could have taken its current form as late as the 4th century CE.

An external epigraphic fix for some of the contents of the *Suttanipāta* is found in the Bairat inscription, thought by some to be a record of Aśoka but more probably later and

deliberately archaising.[30] Scholars have noted parallels in the *Divyāvadāna*, a work that also quotes the last two *vagga*s of the *Suttanipāta*. The date of the *Divyāvadāna* in Indological circles has long turned on the oldest Chinese translation, the *Ayu wang zhuan* 阿育王傳 (T.2042), attributed to An Faqin 安法欽 in 306 CE. The conclusion, therefore, is that an Indic version of the text was circulating in South Asia before 306.[31] This dating cannot be accepted. As pointed out to me by Antonello Palumbo, the translation is first cited in an undependable catalogue (the *Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀) of 598 CE, and the translation style is different from the only other text produced by An Faqin (T.816). The terminology used in the translation was established only after Kumārajīva in 5th century CE. The chronological implications are that we are dealing with Indic textual materials later than the 3rd century and that a 4th or 5th century date is likely. The *Niddesa*, in the form in which it has been transmitted to us, appears to be from the same span of time. This is confirmed indirectly by S. Lévi's assessment that the *Niddesa* probably belongs to the 2nd century CE.[32] This is, of course, the earliest possible date of the *Niddesa*. When a text refers to items of some kind, such as particular coins, then those coins must exist already. And given that texts claim validity based on their antiquity, i.e. the older they are, the more authority they have, these references are likely to be archaic or deliberately made so.

With the *Niddesa* not pre-dating the 2nd century CE – and with evidence pointing to a later time as we have just seen and will see from inscriptions taken up below – its definitions become of interest from the historical point of view. The definition of *deyadharma* is given under *yañña* ('sacrifice'). A suitable or good sacrifice in Buddhist polemics is not a Vedic-style offering, but something that might be offered to a monk.[33] Thus the *Niddesa* defines the items of sacrifice as follows: the monk's robe (*cīvara*), a begging bowl (*piṇḍapāta*), a seat and bed (*senāsana*) and medical support in case of illness (*gilāna paccaya bhesajja parikkhāraṃ*).[34] Immediately following this, a second definition is given: *annapānaṃ*, *vatthaṃ*, *yānaṃ*, *mālāgandhāvilepanaṃ*, *seyyāvasathapadīpeyyam*, i.e. 'food and water (*annapāna*), cloth (*vattha*), conveyance (*yāna*), garlands (*mālā*), scented ointment (*gandhāvilepana*), a couch and lodging place (*seyyāvasatha*), a lamp and accessories (*padīpeyyam*)'.

Now some of the items in the second list are not necessities in a fundamental sense: garlands and scented ointment are hardly necessary for a monk's survival. And we find in the Pali Vinaya that these things are forbidden to novices and, more especially, that depraved monks are condemned for wearing garlands on their heads.[35] What the enumerations betray, therefore, is that some requisites (here *parikkhāra*) are ritual items that might be needed by those who perform religious service.

The garlands or flowers mentioned in the *Niddesa* are the most useful indication of ritual offerings, as I hope to show in the remainder of this essay. Yet if we hope that passages in the Pali Vinaya will give a detailed explanation of ritual activities involving garlands and flowers, we will be disappointed. References to shrines (*cetiya*) are found in a passage that describes how a monk will have committed a serious offence if he appropriates what has been assigned to the Sangha or to a *cetiya*.[36] There are several levels in these instructions, but garlands, or any other item that might be offered at a *cetiya*, are not mentioned in the discussion. The Pali Vinaya does not treat ritual and ritual items because the text has been recast to focus on the conduct and person of the monk. The 'when-and-why' of this recasting has sparked controversy.[37] What is not generally accepted in this debate is something that will be obvious when stated: as texts were transmitted over the *longue durée*, they were studied, discussed and copied with great care. In the process they could be redacted and supplemented in ways that are alien to western notions of authorship and fidelity to pre-supposed originals. The following comment in the *Milindapañha* about how texts are handled will make uncomfortable reading, at least for those modern readers seeking to put their hand on an 'original' text.[38]

> As sire, all the water that has rained down on the low-lying and elevated, the even and uneven, and the swampy and dry parts of a district, on flowing away from there collects together in the ocean of great waters – even so, sire, if there be a recipient, whatever are the sayings in the nine-limbed word of the Buddha that relate to submissive habits, to the practice and to the noble limbs of the special qualities of asceticism, all will be collected together here. Illustrations for the reasons, out of my wide experience and discernment, will be collected here also, sire, and by means of them the meaning will be well analysed, ornamented (*vicitta*, *suvicitta*), filled out (*paripuṇṇa*), and completed (*samānīta* or *pūrita samattita*). As, sire, a skilled teacher of writing, on showing some writing, if he is requested to do so, fills out the writing with illustrations for the reasons out of his own experience and discernment, so that that writing will become finished and accomplished and perfect (*anūnika*), even so, illustrations for the reason out of my wide experience and discernment will be collected together here also, and by means of them, the meaning will become well analysed, ornamented, filled out, quite pure, and completed.

These sentences in the *Milindapañha* come from the 'Qualities of Asceticism', a text that once circulated separately and did not attract the attention of Buddhaghosa or other early commentaries.[39] The awkward way in which this book has been positioned in the *Milindapañha*, out of sequence and dropped in only because it offers a further theological dilemma, is a stark indicator of how the *Milindapañha* itself was assembled. How the text came to join the Milinda text-bundle is not a question for the present essay, but because it is full of interesting and difficult terminology, an early Indic origin is indicated, i.e. in India and before Buddhaghosa. Regardless of the precise date – something that might be worked out from a study of vocabulary – the key point is that it is not for us to decide if we agree or disagree with what it says about the treatment of texts. At the very least, we are obliged to accept that this manner of handling and redacting textual material was current in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries of the current era. This will readily account for a rearrangement of certain passages or sections in the Pali texts, and the chronological layers in the canon, without the validity of the texts or the text-critical method crashing to the floor.[40]

The foregoing discussion takes us to a consideration of ritual beyond the Pali Vinaya because that text does not provide useful data. Again the *Milindapañha* is a helpful

starting point. In the book titled *Opammakathāpañha* or 'Account of Similes', it is said that a devoted yogin should sweep the space around a *cetiya*, bathe, attend his elders and then retreat for meditation at the proper time.[41] This shows that those engaged in yogic practice attended to the care of shrines. This is within the portion of the text cited in the *Visuddhimagga* wherein Buddhaghosa ascribes it to the ancients (*Porāṇa*) without naming Milinda or Nāgasena.[42] So we can assume that this was an independent text current in the time of Buddhaghosa and reflective of accepted practice in 4th-century Ceylon.

That worship at stupas was an established part of the life of a recluse from at least the 1st century CE is shown also by the dilemma posed by the veneration of relics in the *Meṇḍakapañha*.[43] The conundrum of relics is an old one in many Buddhist traditions and indeed also in Buddhology: the Buddha decreed that people should not honour his bodily remains, and yet other sources say that the worship of relics leads to heaven. Here I will sidestep the theological and historiographical entanglements.[44] The key point for our purpose in terms of relative chronology is that this section of the *Meṇḍakapañha* cites a verse from the *Vimānavatthu*. This text, paired with the *Petavatthu*, finds its place in the *Sutta Piṭaka* of the Pali Canon.[45] Now the date of the *Pettavatthu* – or at least some of its parts – is shown by the 'Story of Aṅkura'. Aṅkura is the conflation of a number of narratives and has been transmitted with a commentarial frame story.[46] In this case, the frame story starts by telling us that Mahāsāgara, the lord of Uttaramadhura, and his wife, Devagabbhā, daughter of Mahāsaṃsaka, had the following children: Añjanadevī, Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Candadeva, Suriyadeva, Aggideva, Varuṇadeva, Ajjuna, Pajjuma, Ghaṭapaṇḍita and Aṅkura. They conquer India and settled down at Dvarka. We need not be distracted by the complexities. The key point is that Uttaramadhura or northern Madhura is mentioned, showing that the text distinguishes the northern city of Mathura from Madhura in Tamil Nadu.[47] This means that the commentarial frame is a southern addition to the narrative core. Now Mahāsāgara is none other than Sāgara from the *Mahābhārata*, renowned for his mythical conquest of the world, while his several children are a mixture of personalities drawn from the Vaiṣṇava and epic pantheons, listed in pairs, with Ajjuna given Pajjuma to complete the set.[48]

This, with the story called the *Kaṅhapettavatthuvaṇṇanā*, reflects a religious milieu that cannot pre-date the 4th century CE. The commentary of Dhammapāla provides an upper chronological horizon. Dhammapāla is difficult to date, but he is certainly after Buddhaghosa and before Sāriputta, who cites him in the 12th century.[49] To sum up: the Aṅkura text knows Dvarka in western India and characters in the *Harivaṃśa*; the frame story was added in the 4th or 5th century in south India, when and where the text was likely redacted into Pali. The Dhammapāla commentary comes later in Ceylon. This information shows that the *Petavatthu* was being assembled as late as the 5th century CE and added in this form to the Pali Canon. The citation of the *Petavatthu* in the *Meṇḍakapañha* thus demonstrates that both texts were being supplemented into the 5th century.

In terms of content, the *Vimānavatthu* and *Petavatthu* – 'Stories of Heavenly Palaces' and 'Stories of the Departed' – describe how the dead enjoy the fruit of their good deeds in celestial palaces or bear the consequence of bad deeds as hungry ghosts or *petā*s. The works were meant to instruct the laity and encourage them to be generous towards the Sangha. While judged mediocre in literary terms by modern critics, these texts give insight into the wider world in which Buddhist monasticism operated. The stories refer repeatedly to *deyadharma* because it is through these gifts that the laity will enjoy a happy state in the next world. In the 'Story of Nandā' or *Nandāpetavatthu*, for example, 'food, drink, solid food, clothes, dwellings, umbrellas, perfumes, garlands and various kinds of sandals' are given to monks and this allows the protagonist Nandā to escape her fate as a hungry ghost.[50] The Nandā story, like so many, gives a tantalizing list of *deyadharma* items, but does not tell us about their use, ritual or otherwise. For this we need to turn to the 'Story of the Contempt for Relics'.[51]

In this informative tale, the wife, daughter and daughter-in-law of a prosperous householder take perfumes, flowers and other offerings to a relic shrine. The householder made light of their devotions and was reborn a *petā*. He then recounted: 'My wife, daughter and daughter-in-law were taking blossoms of the *tamāla* tree and of the blue lotus and new ointment to the relic shrine: I hindered them. That wicked deed was committed by me.' Suffering grievously for this, the *petā* then instructs his readers: 'Verily those who, while the festival of a worthy one is being held for shrine-worship, manifest wickedness, do you dissuade therefrom.'[52] Then he observes: 'And behold these women approaching, adorned and wearing garlands. They enjoy the reward of their floral offerings. Fortunate and beautiful they are.'[53] The *petā* concludes with the observation: 'Now when I – who am in misery – have left this state and am once more a human being, I shall diligently perform shrine-worship again and again.'

On one level, this story offers a straightforward morality tale: men who ridicule the devotions of their womenfolk are destined for an unhappy rebirth. But rather more is revealed in the narrative. In the first place, lay devotion – clearly in the hands of women – centres on festivals carried out at stupas. These stupas contain, at least in the mind of the commentator, Dhammapāla, the relics of the *arhat*s. And the offerings made at these stupas involve various kinds of flowers and new ointment. When the devotees return from worship, they are adorned with garlands. As the text says: 'They enjoy the reward of their floral offerings. Fortunate and beautiful they are.' The ritual itself is missing from the story, but what has happened is clear enough: the devotees have gone to a shrine, their offerings have been used by the priest or monk conducting the religious services there, and the devotees have returned home with residues, i.e. some garlands and non-material rewards. In other words, the arrangement assumed by the *Petavatthu* is a *pūjā* in which devotees bring offerings to a religious event and return home with a blessing and a physical token.

An additional point of importance can be drawn from the text. The offerings made to the stupa – in reality to the relics housed in the stupa – include the items that can be given to monks as *deyadharma*. This is essential to note because it

shows that an equivalence was being made between relics and living monks. That this analogy was understood and articulated is shown by the Shinkot reliquary inscription, which speaks of the relic inside the container as 'imbued with life' (*prānasameta*).[54] The object of worship is thus sentient and able to give blessings in return for worship, just as a living monk or saint is sentient and able to give blessings in return for *deyadharma* offerings.

The earliest hint I have found for these relationships – in effect for *pūjā* – is an inscription of Huviṣka dated year 51 (thus *c.* 177 CE).[55] This records a monk establishing an image of Śākyamuni *sarvabuddhapūjārtham*, i.e. 'for the worship (*pūjā*) of all the Buddhas'.[56] This probably means that the image was established so that *pūjā* offerings could be made to it, even if flowers and other items are not named specifically. The copper-plate charter of Vainyagupta, found at Gunaighar and dating to the opening years of the 6th century, provides greater clarity in so far as it lists *pūjā* items (even if *pūjā* is not mentioned *per se*). The charter registers a donation 'to the assemblies of Mahāyāna monks who have attained the irreversible (level of spiritual development), in the precinct (*parigrahe*) of Lord Buddha, for the thrice daily and perpetual provision of perfume, flowers, lights, incense etc.'[57] Before continuing, I am obliged to note that there is a long historiography of the 'Vaivarttika monastic order' based on a simple fault in the reading, i.e. *vaivarttika* instead of *avaivarttika*. At least a dozen books published in India have copied out this mistake. It will be tedious and useless to list them. As noted already by Marcelle Lalou in a review of an article by Nalinaksha Dutt: 'Au moyen d'exemples classiques, N. D. montre qu'il ne faut pas s'étonner que le terme *vaivarttika* ne soit jamais usité dans la philosophie bouddhique car il faut lire *avaivartika*.'[58] The description refers, therefore, to monks (*bhikṣu*) who have taken bodhisattva vows and progressed along the spiritual path to such an extent that they are characterized in works such as the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* and *Avaivartikacakrasūtra* as *avaivartika*, 'non-regressive' or 'irreversible'. Both these texts were circulating widely by the early 5th century CE as documented by their availability in Chinese translation.[59] The *bhikṣu*s in question have thus reached the stage (*bhūmi*) in which they no longer accumulate defilements and whence they no longer regress to mundane levels of existence. Now who exactly are these assemblies of Mahāyāna *bhikṣu*s? Monks at the eighth spiritual level are developed bodhisattvas, not the sort of ordinary monks one is likely to encounter in a working monastery. The use of the plural (assemblies, *saṅghānām*) is also unusual. Barring a grammatical mistake (the inscription has many peculiarities) or a monastery filled with supernatural beings (perhaps conceivable in the late Gupta period), what seems to be described here are a collection of bodhisattva images in an enclosure of the Buddha.

The Buddha in this context – the early 6th century in an enclosing shrine (*parigraha*) – meant the Buddha in an image. This evidence extends the testimony of the *Petavatthu*, where, as we have seen, *deyadharma* items were offered to shrines containing relics. While we tend to distinguish between relics and images, Buddhist terminology uses the word *dhātu* for both. Relics of the Buddha or of an enlightened saint are *sarīradhātu*, 'corporeal or body elements', while images and sculptures are *uddesikadhātu*, 'illustrative or commemorative elements'.[60]

The terms show that the difference is one of degree rather than kind and, as a consequence, that both images and relics were 'imbued with life' and able to respond to worship: *pūjā* to one was the same as *pūjā* to the other. Bringing this back to our main theme, i.e. offerings to the *triratna*, these equivalences mean that *deyadharma* items are necessarily equivalent. To put the matter another way, the things that can be offered to a monk, an image and a relic can all be classed *deyadharma*.[61]

This, then, explains the juxtaposition of the two definitions in the *Niddesa*, noted above in detail. Copper-plate charters provide parallels in actual practice and help us to understand the cryptic treatment in the text: returning to the copper-plate of Vainyagupta, we can note that it records an endowment for offerings (scent, flowers, lights, incense and so on) and additionally for the monk's clothing, food, accommodation and medicine.[62] In other words, this inscription shows that items of worship were coupled with the four requisites, just like the *Niddesa* listing. The Vainyagupta inscription is not alone in documenting the parallel. The plates of *mahārāja* Subandhu from Bagh, also noted before, tell us that land revenues were set up to provide the monastic assembly with seats, beds, medicine, begging bowls and robes. But the revenues were also meant to pay for repairs to what might be broken and torn and, in addition, for the offering of perfume, incense, garlands, *bali* and *sattra* to Lord Buddha.[63] This evidence inclines me to pull the *Niddesa* down in time: as already noted, the 2nd century CE seems the earliest possible date, but the deployment of the redacted text by readers in the Buddhist setting of India in the 4th century is supported by the epigraphic evidence just cited. This date is later than most Buddhologists would prefer. But the time has come to move away from scriptural hermeneutics towards a critical historical approach that recognizes that texts were transmitted, read and redacted through time in precise and, in many cases, knowable contexts. A badly edited text is like a badly excavated archaeological site: unless we understand stratigraphy and are ready to make use of it, all we will produce is a one-dimensional facsimile that is basically meaningless.

Notes

1 *Pali deyyadhamma*: see T.W. Rhys Davids and William Stede (eds), *The Pali Text Society's Pali–English Dictionary*, Chipstead, PTS, 1921–5, s.v.

2 Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet*, Vienna, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000. This is my translation based on the manuscript illustrated (folio 24r). The manuscript is now archived in digital form at S. Biondo, 'dBa' bzhed manuscript with folios and line numbers marked', 2017, http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.838180 (consulted 13 November 2017).

3 The best starting points are Oskar von Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, Indian Philology and South Asian Studies 2, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1996, and Peter Skilling, 'A note on King Milinda in the Abhidharmakośabhāṣya', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 24, 1998, 81–101.

4 T.W. Rhys Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda*, 2 vols, Sacred Books of the East, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1890–4.

5 Hinüber, *Handbook*, §242.
6 Ibid., §259.
7 For the commentaries, see I.B. Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, 2 vols, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, London, Luzac, 1963, vol. 1, xx, from which list I have drawn for the discussion here.
8 Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, vol. 1, 211. *Cūlavaṃsa* cited in Lily de Silva, *Paritta: A Historical and Religious Study of the Buddhist Ceremony for Peace and Prosperity in Sri Lanka*, *Spolia Zeylanica* 36, 1981, 19.
9 Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, vol. 1, 217; V. Trenckner, *The Milindapañho*, Oxford, PTS, 1997, 154: *Bhante Nāgasena, tumhe bhaṇatha: lābhī Tathāgato cīvara-piṇḍapāta-senāsana-gilānapaccayabhesajja-parikkārānan ti*.
10 The key work for the Chinese remains Paul Demiéville, 'Les versions chinoises du Milindapañha', *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 24, 1924, 1–685.
11 The Mahāvagga is part of the Khandhaka section of the Vinaya Piṭaka. For a route through the organization of these texts, see Hinüber, *Handbook*, §§28–39.
12 Horner, *Book of the Discipline*, vol. 2, 313, n. 2; this was a ticket issued when food was short.
13 Ibid., vol. 2, 313, n. 4, which explains how this, and the calendar generally, is timed by lunar months.
14 The terminology needs fresh examination, beyond the scope of this paper.
15 Ibid., vol. 4, 75, slightly modified. It is a matter of regret – and frustration for a novice like me trying to work with these materials – that the editors of the *editio princeps* in Pali decided that they knew better and published the text out of traditional order. Horner returned to the old order of books, starting with the *Suttavibhaṅga*, and provided sufficient apparatus to find the Pali passages, thus also to the corresponding dictionary references. Here I use Horner and refer only to her volume and page numbers.
16 Rhys Davids and Stede (eds) *Pali Text Society's Pali–English Dictionary*, s.v. An ethnographic location of the terminology is found in J.F. Dickson, 'The *Upasampadá-Kammavácá*, being the Buddhist manual of the form and manner of ordering of priests and deacons: the Páli text, with a translation and notes', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7, 1, 1875, 1–16.
17 The *soparikara* probably refers to the upper portion of revenue, i.e. the surplus that can be legitimately taken after enough has been produced to support the peasants tending the land, while the *sodraṅga* refers to the traditionally accepted division of the water rate.
18 V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum 4, Ootacamund, Govt Epigraphist for India, 1955, vol. 1, 20–21 (lines 8–10): *āryyabhikṣusaṅghasya … cīvarapi ṇḍapātaglānapratyayaśeyyāsanabhaiṣajyahetor āgrahāra [the word is redundant] sodraṅgasoparikaraḥ bhūmicchidranyāyenāgrahāro tisṛṣṭhaḥ*. I suspect that the text has been carelessly copied and that the requisites are given out of order. It should probably read: … *glānapratyayabhaiṣajyahetor.*
19 D. C. Sircar, *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilisation*, 2 vols, Calcutta, University of Calcutta, 1965–83, vol. 1, 203: *mahādevīya gotamiya balasirīya … kārita deyadhama … leṇa*.
20 Ibid., vol. 1, 422: *bhikṣusaṃghe deyadharmo [*']ya[ṃ] vihāra[ḥ] pratiṣṭhāpana*.
21 So also the shrine (*gṛha*) built for an image in a Sanchi inscription: see M. Willis, 'The Sanchi bodhisattva dated Kuṣāṇa year 28', *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 6, 1999/2000, 269–73.
22 Horner, *Book of the Discipline*, vol. 4, p. 114. There are a number of passages, collected and assessed by Claire Maes in 'Flirtation with the other: an examination of the processes of othering in the Pali *Vinaya*', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 79, 3, 2016, 535–57, doi:10.1017/S0041977X16000549. I am grateful to the author for sharing this study ahead of publication, and for commenting on the text of the present article.
23 Cited in M. Willis, *Archaeology of Hindu Ritual*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 231.
24 Hinüber, *Handbook*, 103–4, notes that the *Samantapāsādikā* is connected to Buddhaghosa for the first time only by Vajirabodhi (*c.* 550–600; *ibid.*, §367–70), noting Finot's attractive suggestion that the text was anonymous until translated into Chinese by Saṅghabhadra. The colophon asserts that the *Samantapāsādikā* was completed at lightning speed in the 20th and 21st years of King Sirinivāsa (*ibid.*, §207). This may correspond to 369–70 or 429–30 CE. Some effort has been made to identify this king, but the research is parochial and based on the assumption that he must be a Sri Lankan king rather than one from south India. The translation from the *Samantapāsādikā* given here was provided by Claire Maes, to whom many thanks are due.
25 Borrowing from Maes, 'Flirtation with the other.'
26 Hinüber, *Handbook*, §116. The *Mahāniddesa* and *Cullaniddesa* really form one text, as von Hinüber notes, although published separately.
27 Ibid., *Handbook*, §95. The question mark has been added.
28 Ibid., *Handbook*, §95; Dieter Schlingloff, 'The oldest extant Parvan-list of the *Mahābhārata*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89, 2, 1969, 334–38, revisited in Eli Franco and Monika Zin (eds), *From Turfan to Ajanta: Festschrift for Dieter Schlingloff on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday*, Bhairahawa, Lumbini International Research Institute, 2010.
29 See Willis, *Archaeology of Hindu Ritual*, 87, n. 30.
30 Hinüber, *Handbook*, §97; Harry Falk, *Aśokan Sites and Artefacts: A Source-book with Bibliography* (Mainz: Von Zabern, 2006), pp. 62–3. Bairāṭ may not be alone: Johannes Bronkhorst, *Buddhism in the Shadow of Brahmanism*, Leiden, Brill, 2011), 18 notes the peculiar nature of the Lumbini inscription in the Aśokan corpus, i.e. the surrender of revenue back to the village being taxed. But he does not consider the implication that the king's upper share of revenue is a convention unknown in Indian inscriptions before the beginning of the common era. Most recently, Christopher I. Beckwith, *Greek Buddha: Pyrrho's Encounter with Early Buddhism in Central Asia*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015, 241–2 points to differences between Aśokan inscriptions and that from Bairāṭ and places the later between the 1st and mid-3rd century CE.
31 John S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, 16.
32 Hinüber, *Handbook*, §118. K.R. Norman has disputed the conclusion, as von Hinüber notes. Norman is everywhere ahistorical and at pains to show texts are invariably old, reaching back to the time of the Buddha. This is nothing but ahistorical fundamentalism.
33 The issue is explored in Oliver Freiberger, 'The ideal sacrifice: patterns of reinterpreting Brahmin sacrifice in early Buddhism', *Bulletin d'études Indiennes* 16, 1998, 39–49.
34 W. Stede, *Niddesa, II: Cullaniddesa*. London, PTS, 1918, 233.
35 Horner, *Book of the Discipline*, vol. 1, 315, and vol. 4, 105.
36 Ibid., vol. 2, 162, cited in Gregory Schopen, 'The Stūpa Cult and the Extant Pāli Vinaya', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 13, 1989, 83–100 (reprinted in G. Schopen, *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*, Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, 86–98).
37 Richard Gombrich, 'Making mountains without molehills: the case of the missing stupa', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15, 1990, 141–3; Charles Hallisey, 'Apropos the Pali Vinaya as a historical document: a reply to Gregory Schopen', *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15, 1990, 197–208. There is an extended methodological critique in Alexander Wynne, 'The historical authenticity of early Buddhist literature: a critical evaluation', *Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 49, 2005, 35–70.
38 Trenckner, *Milindapañho*, 349, Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, vol. 2, 202, with her footnotes that are essential for the understanding of this difficult passage.
39 Trenckner, *Milindapañho*, 348–62.
40 Ronald Inden in *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, has attempted to describe the complex authorship of Indic texts, but his account is so polemical and overlain with once-fashionable literary theory that it has not had a significant impact. The problem is also taken up in Gregory Schopen, 'If you can't remember, how to make it up: some monastic rules for redacting canonical texts', in Petra Kieffer-Pülz and Jens-Uwe Hartmann (eds), *Bauddha Vidyāsudhākaraḥ: Studies in Honour of Heinz Bechert on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, Swisttal-Odendorf, Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1997, 571–82.

41 Trenckner, *Milindapañho*, 367, Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, vol. 2, 232.
42 Horner, *Milinda's Questions*, vol. 1, xx.
43 Ibid., vol. 2, 249
44 Schopen, 'Monks and the relic cult in the Mahāparinibbāna-sutta', in *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks*, 99–113.
45 Hinüber, *Handbook*, §§ 100–2. The texts fall within the Khuddaka Nikāya, a collection of smaller heterogeneous texts added at the end of the Piṭaka.
46 These texts can be approached through the following publications: H.S. Gehman, I.B. Horner, N.A. Jayawickrama and J.W. Kennedy, *Vimānavatthu: Stories of the Mansions. New Translation of the Verses and commentarial excerpts by I. B. Horner, assisted by N. A. Jayawickrama*. *Petavatthu: Stories of the Departed, Translated by H. S. Gehman*, London, PTS, 1974; I.B. Horner and H.S. Gehman, *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, London, PTS, 1974. The Pali is given in N.A. Jayawickrama, *Vimānavatthu and Petavatthu*, London, PTS, 1977; the story of Aṅkura is given in part II, no. 9, pp. 45–46.
47 Peter Masefield, *Dhammapāla: Elucidation of the Intrinsic Meaning: So Named the Commentary on the Peta-Stories (Paramatthadīpanī Nāma Petavatthu-Aṭṭhakathā)*, London, PTS, 1980, 142, n. 4, notes that northern Mathura is to be distinguished from Madhura in Tamil Nadu but has not explored the implications.
48 The Ārjunāyana and Prārjuna are listed together in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, see D.R. Bhandarkar *et al.*, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings*, New Delhi, Archaeological Survey of India, 1981, 213 (line 22). The Pājjūṇaka are mentioned in *Arthaśāstra* 3: 18: 8 (*prājjūṇakagāndhārādīnāṃ ca janapadaupavādā vyākhyātāḥ*) in which text fines are set for defamation. This refers to a people rather than a literary character, but the evidence cited here shows the pairing (Pajjuma/Pājjūṇaka with Ajjuna/Arjuna) was a trope that was circulating in the 4th and 5th centuries CE.
49 Hinüber, *Handbook*, § 365. The matter of the date of Dhammapāla is taken up in the review of the *Handbook* by Lance Cousins in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61, 1, 1998, 155–6.
50 Gehman et al., *Vimānavatthu … Petavatthu*, 176; in the Pāli, part II, p. 23.
51 Gehman et al., *Vimānavatthu … Petavatthu*, p. 81; in the Pāli, part II, p. 63.
52 Dhammapāla adds: 'You should separate therefrom those who make known the disadvantages when a great (ceremony of) honouring the stūpa of the arahant is in progress.' See Masefield, *Elucidation of the Intrinsic Meaning*, 222.
53 Dhammapāla adds: 'And behold these approaching, wearing garlands and adorned, enjoying the results of flowers – they are magnificent and resplendent.' Ibid., 223.
54 Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śaka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin, under the supervision of Jean Dantinne, Louvain-la-Neuve, Université Catholique Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1988, 431.
55 For the date of the Kuṣāṇa era, begun in Spring 127, see Harry Falk, 'The yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the era of the Kuṣāṇas', *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 7, 2001, 121–36.
56 Heinrich Lüders, and Klaus Ludwig Janert, *Mathurā Inscriptions*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961, 64–5 (lines 1–2): *[bhagava]taḥ [śāk]y[am]u[*neḥ] pratimā pratiṣṭhāpita sarvapu [read: bu] ddhapūjār[th]a[m]*.
57 Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, vol. 1, 341 (lines 5–6) with emendations: *pratipādita[*ṃ] mahāyānikāvaivarttikabhikṣusa[*ṅ]ghānām parigrahe bhagavato buddhasya satataṃ triṣkālaṃ gandhapuṣpadīpadhūpādipra[*vartt anāya]*. The word *parigraha* often means 'property', but this sense, along with 'precinct' or 'abode', is an extension of the core meaning of something being 'surrounded' or 'enclosed'.
58 Marcelle Lalou, review of Nalinaksha Dutt, *Vaivarttika-saṅgha*, *Indian Historical Quarterly* 6, 3, 1930, 572, in *Bibliographie bouddhique*, 3, 1930–1, 79 (item 461). Due to a slip in note taking, I assigned this to Louis de La Vallée Poussin in my *Archaeology of Hindu Ritual*, 301, n. 241. The reading *avaivarttika* was suggested without comment in G. Schopen, 'The Buddha as an owner of property and permanent resident in medieval monasteries', *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 18, 1990, 181–217, at 185.
59 See James B. Apple, 'The influence of the Avaivartikacakra Mahāyāna sūtra in Indian Buddhism based on its citation in Indian Buddhist commentaries', *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies* 61, 3, 2013, 93–100; and James B. Apple, 'The irreversible Bodhisattva (avaivartika) in the Lotus Sūtra and Avaivartikacakrasūtra', *Bulletin of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy* 29, 2014, 154–76.
60 The key study of the classifications is found in Kevin Trainor, *Relics, Ritual and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Sri Lankan Theravāda Tradition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997.
61 The sacred text, i.e. *dharma*, can be included in many contexts, a theme recently covered in Jinah Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred: Illustrated Manuscripts and the Buddhist Book Cult in South Asia*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013.
62 Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, vol. 1, 341–42 (lines 6–7): *gandhapuṣpadīpadh ūpādipra[varttanāya*] [ta*]sya bhikṣusaṃghasya ca cīvarapiṇḍapātaśayanās anaglānapratyayabhaiṣajyādipratibhogāya vihāre [ca] kaṇḍaphuṭṭapratisaṃs kārakaraṇāya*.
63 Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era*, vol. 1, 20–1 (lines 6–7): *… bhagavato [read: bhagavate] buddhāya gandhadhūpa- [7] mālyabalisattropayojyaḥ [read: yojyo] bhagnaṣphu [read: sphu] ṭitasaṃskā [read: ska] raṇārtham*. The meaning of *sattra* is discussed in Willis, *Archaeology of Hindu Ritual*, 104–6.

Chapter 6
Relics Exposed: Rules and Practices from Art-historical, Epigraphic and Literary Sources

Karel van Kooij

Abstract

This chapter focuses upon principal occasions when relics of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni were exposed, or rather 'revealed themselves (*darśana*)', to the assembled devotees.

Relic processions were held to show the relic of a Buddha before it was installed in a stupa. However, a few of the 'great relics' were never deposited at all but carefully kept in heavily secured relic shrines, and taken out to be seen daily or on special occasions. These shrines were built within the palace compound and therefore in general were not accessible, except for the king and high dignitaries. However at the time of Xuanzang in the 7th century, 'great relics' of the Buddha were definitely exhibited on the top floor of generally accessible shrines, often paired with the Buddha image. One effect of this practice was the development of the architectural concept of the image-cum-relic shrine. The Buddha image and the relic became entwined. Sources include the art historical, epigraphic and literary.

Introduction

Once enclosed in monumental stupas the bodily relics of the Buddha remained hidden from sight for an indefinite period of time. For a long time people knew that relics had been installed, as the ceremony involved much pomp and splendour. Costly reliquaries containing relics of the Buddha were carried through the city in festive processions, and were shown to a crowd of devotees before being installed in the still open relic chamber of a stupa under construction. Pictorial and literary data about this custom go back to the earliest strata of Buddhism, and are confirmed by epigraphy and archaeology.

Some of the 'great relics', both *śarīra* and *paribhogaka*, were never enclosed in stupas. They were, and still are, daily or annually displayed in halls, open pavilions or temples. Eye-witness reports from Chinese travellers who visited Central and South Asia in the 5th to 7th centuries CE, attest that they saw the 'great relics' with their own eyes, such as the skull bone in Hadda, a tooth relic in Anuradhapura or the alms-bowl in Gandhara. In Kandy the tooth relic is still annually carried around in a festive parade – nowadays a tourist attraction (**Fig. 55**) – while most of the year the reliquary is stored on the top floor of the Temple of the Tooth. In the course of time, exhibition and showing of relics – not only of the Buddha Śākyamuni but of other Buddhas and 'saints' as well – have become common practice throughout the Buddhist world in various ways, being a sure sign that relic worship has become part and parcel of the Buddhist faith.[1]

This paper focuses upon some principal occasions when relics of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni were exposed, or rather 'present themselves (*darśana*)'. (Although Sanskrit *darśana* and Pali *dassana* are usually translated with 'seeing', the causative form strictly means 'causing to see'. The relic 'reveals' itself, actively and intensely. In a Hindu context, the deity *makes* his or her 'appearance'. The real Sanskrit equivalent of 'seeing', 'gaze', 'look', is *dṛṣṭi*,[2] not *darśana*. The occasions on which the relic presents itself will be examined.) What follows is a re-examination of mostly well-known art-historical, epigraphic and literary material from this point of view. The research is limited to the region of South Asia and

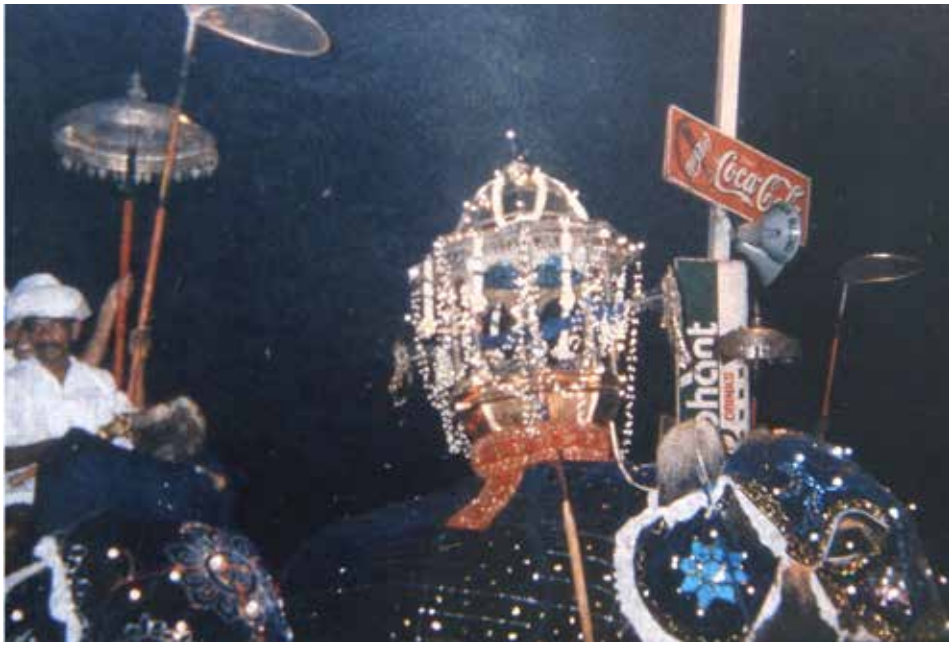

Figure 55 Nightly parade (*perahera*), Kandy: the famous tooth relic is carried around the city in a festive shrine borne by a richly adorned elephant (photo Karel van Kooij)

to the early periods of Buddhism, ranging from the 3rd century BCE to the 7th century CE.

Source material

Regarding the art-historical evidence, in my view ancient sculptures and paintings offer unique visual material concerning ritual practices which otherwise would have been hard to retrieve. Sculptors from Kausambi or Vidisha working on the reliefs of the stupas of Bharhut or Sanchi looked at devotees paying worship to relics and sacred places, and incorporated these observations in their work. By proportionally enlarging the figure of the worshipper, the artist made devotees the focal point of his composition, enabling the visitor to look through their eyes to the exposed relic, and to participate in the solemn acts of worship. Because of this remarkable composition technique I feel convinced that these reliefs, apart from narrating stories, yield important information about the way in which relics of the Buddha were exposed and handled.[3]

Epigraphy is called upon to supplement the evidence found in the pictorial record. Dedicatory inscriptions carved on the reliquaries – often in clearly visible letters – clarify key aspects of relic worship. Robert Brown has suggested that the words so carefully written on the outside of the reliquary, along with the precious objects hidden inside, replaced the bodily relic in course of time, as frequently no relics were found at all.[4] However, to my knowledge, only *sūtra*s (i.e. words spoken by the Buddha) – occasionally written indeed on the lid or belly of the reliquary or on gold leaves installed in the relic chamber or inside the reliquary– were considered the equivalent to a bodily relic, not names of donors. Hence, it seems plausible to assume that the inscriptions were meant to make known to everybody present that a true relic of the Buddha was inside, offered by such and such a donor, mostly of royal blood. I speculate that the inscribed names were read aloud by a monk or an official when the reliquary was taken around in a festive procession or at the moment of the solemn installation in the still open relic chamber. I imagine him shouting: 'These are the relics of Śākyamuni donated by … for the welfare and happiness of … and of all living beings'.[5] The Chinese monk Faxian describes in his diary how a 'Crier' sounds a drum and announces the parade of the tooth relic in the city of Anuradhapura ten days beforehand.[6]

For a classic account of the first exhibition and installation of relics ever, we are dependent on the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (MPS). This widely known text 'invented a tradition', and was listened to by generations of Buddhists wishing to learn how relics of the Buddha should be handled. Invaluable too are the reports of the Chinese monks who travelled to the land of the Buddha. Often quoted, these 'diaries' deserve to be consulted again with the present viewpoint in mind. The Sri Lankan chronicles and the works of Buddhaghoṣa are likewise known for their detailed stories of relic ceremonies. Particularly meaningful in the present context is their testimony of the strong emotional impact[7] upon the assembled devotees when a minute parcel of the Buddha's body revealed itself, descending from the sky, enveloped in a mysterious cloud, and spreading its cosmic glory before it was installed in the relic chamber. These 'miracles' are more than gothic tales, and express the deep meaning the relic had in the past.

Archaeology has been, and still is, mainly concerned with stupas, which may be considered the crown of the installation procedures. For a long time open-access relic shrines were not recognized at all. Recently, however, Kurt Behrendt argued that a number of architectural remains in the Gandhara area should be re-interpreted as permanent, accessible, open, relic shrines, and coined the term 'Direct Access Shrine'.[8] However, evidence for the existence of permanent open and accessible relic temples in the period to be discussed is hard to find.

A brief excursus on the consecration of the relic chamber and its foundation deposits is inserted below.

The rules

Significantly, stupas do figure in the MPS but open relic shrines do not. The Sanskrit version of the text, published by

Figure 56 Right part of back side of lowest architrave of southern gateway of Sanchi Stupa no. 1, 1st century CE; on the extreme right is part of a procession leaving the city of Kusinagara, purposely showing the relics of the Buddha (photo Karel van Kooij)

Ernst Waldschmidt, relates that, after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa* and the subsequent cremation of his body, the golden vase with his bodily remains was festively carried into the city, and installed upon a grand platform (*mahāmaṇḍa[la]*) in the city hall of Kusinagara and worshipped.[9] The Sanskrit text reads:

> Then, the Mallas of Kusinagara threw the bones in a golden vase, put it on a golden litter, and while paying respect, homage, honour and worship with perfumes, garlands, flowers, incense and music, they entered the city and placed the vase on a grand platform in an excellent hall, and paid respect, homage, honour and worship with perfumes, garlands, flowers, incense and music.[10]

It is to be noticed that the Sanskrit term repeatedly used for this kind of worship is *mahas*, being the 'heroic' form of celebration, not *pūjā*.[11] In the Chinese version it is added that everybody, rich and poor, took part in the celebrations and paid their respects.

The account continues with the division of the relics among eight royal contenders. These kings, or their ambassadors, each brought a portion to their respective capital, and enshrined it in a stupa. Ajātaśatru, King of Magadha, acted as follows:

> Thereafter, the King of Magadha, Ajātaśatru, son of Vaidehī, erected a relic stupa for the Reverend in Rājagṛha, fastened banners and flags, arranged celebrations, and paid respect, welcomed, honoured and worshipped with perfumes, flower garlands, flowers, incenses.
>
> … At that time, there were eight relic stupas of the Reverend in Jambudvīpa, the urn stupa being the ninth and the charcoal stupa the tenth.

Only stupas are mentioned, not open, accessible, relic shrines. When the four tooth relics are enumerated at the end of this passage, the Sanskrit and Pali versions declare that four tooth relics are 'worshipped', and the Chinese version adds that for each tooth relic a stupa was erected.

That relics had to be handled in a specific way can be learned from the Vinaya of the Dharmaguptakas: 'A relic of the Buddha, enclosed in a reliquary of gold, silver, with precious stones and covered in a costly cloth should be carried on elephants, on chariots, palanquins, on the shoulder, or on the head.'[12] Since this passage is part of a section on stupas, it can be safely assumed that these rules concern reliquaries that were brought to a stupa. The means of transport mentioned, viz. elephants, chariots, and palanquins, are all royal conveyances, and imply that a king, a member of the royal house or a royal official was involved. The basic rules of Buddhist relic exposure had thus been laid down.

The practice: relic processions

The rules for a proper relic transport as mentioned in the Vinaya of the Dharmaguptakas become visible in coping stone reliefs from the railing of the stupa of Bharhut, carved at about the same time. One, or several, royal personages ride richly adorned elephants, holding reliquaries in their hands. Parasols are visibly held above the reliquary as a sign that a relic of the Buddha is being carried through the city.[13] One elephant-rider is pictured in a rather amusing posture as if doing his utmost to obey the Vinaya rule to be always lower than a relic of the Buddha. A group of dancers and musicians – pictured in the next relief – complete this pictorial 're-enactment'. Although these scenes obviously refer to the story of the eight kings, as told in the MPS, who are each taking a portion of the relics to their capital cities, they do give a faithful rendering of the way in which relic processions were performed in those days.

One century later, reliefs of the Great Stupa of Sanchi likewise depict royal personages riding on elephants or seated in chariots, carrying the relics in the prescribed way. On a relief with the scene of the War of the Relics, seven kings or high officials put the relics on the heads of their elephants when they are about to leave the city of Kusinagara (**Fig. 56**). Another relic procession is to be seen on the lowest architrave of the western *toraṇa*.[14] As can be expected, the reliquary is carried upon the head of the royal personage seated on the foremost elephant, followed by an impressive retinue riding on horses and in horse-drawn chariots. The royal procession is apparently moving towards a city, its walls being represented in the left corner of the relief. This picture is considered either a reference to the

Figure 57 Museum reconstruction of the relic chamber of the Sutighara cetiya at Dedigama, Sri Lanka, 12th century. The reliquary sits on top of the Meru-like pedestal, Dedigama Archaeological Museum (photo Karel van Kooij)

arrival of the bodily relics at the city of Kusinagara or to the Emperor Aśoka reaching the city of Vidisha in order to install a portion of the relics in the Great Stupa, as Marshall and many others saw it – if Aśoka has indeed ever been depicted at Sanchi, which has been denied by Dieter Schlingloff with good reasons.[15] In terms of the reception of this work of art,[16] it is almost inevitable that the citizens of Vidisha would have proudly pointed at the walls of their city as being depicted on the newly erected *toraṇa*, and that they were talking about the majestic relic parade that had obviously taken place, when the Buddha relic had been installed in the relic chamber of the Great Stupa. It has convincingly been argued that annual celebrations took place at the Great Stupa to commemorate the event.[17] Whatever these citizens may have read into this masterpiece, it certainly offers a magnificent picture of a royal relic procession approaching a capital city, performed according to the Vinaya rule and the model laid down in the MPS.

In the same period, similar reliefs were carved in the south of the Indian subcontinent. An early inscribed relief from the site of the great stupa of Amaravati clearly represents the story of the Buddha's stay in Vaiśālī and his *parinirvāṇa* in the Sala wood.[18] Another early relief gives a condensed representation of the impending war of the relics, and their subsequent division and transport. Bowmen can be seen, as well as three elephants striding out of a city gate, carrying personages with relic caskets in their hands. A music and dance performance is also still partly visible on the heavily damaged stone.[19] Real relic processions must have been well known in this area too, following the same pattern. The division and transport of relics frequently figure on reliefs from the middle and late periods of the Amaravati style.[20]

In Gandharan art, too, riders on royal conveyances such as horses, elephants, chariots and camels openly carry reliquaries in their hands.[21] The scene became an emblem of the spread of Buddhism into Central and East Asia. It is pictured on the outside of portable diptychs made of schist, ivory or wood, which were taken by pilgrims far into Central Asia and China. On the cover of the box there is a standard representation of the royal elephant-rider carrying a reliquary. When the box is opened, a concise history of the life of the Buddha unfolds itself, from the scene of Māyā giving birth to the future Buddha up to the *parinirvāṇa*, or another major event.[22] A spectacular example of such an ivory diptych dating from the 7th or 8th century CE was found in China but was possibly brought there from Kashmir.[23] The interior of this little 'shrine' contains no fewer than 50 miniature scenes and images.

Gandharan inscriptions support the art-historical evidence. The well-known inscription on the Avaca relic casket seems to use a distinct word for relic procession for the first time. In Bailey's reading, the inscription says that 'these relics have been brought (*paḍibāria*) from a stupa in the Muryaka cave hermitage, and have been deposited in the highest central deposit site'.[24] If we read *paḍihāria*, and interpret the word not as Sanskrit *pratihṛta*, as Salomon did,[25] but as Sanskrit *parihārita*, 'taken around', we meet the first occurrence of a term for relic procession which returns in the Sinhalese word *perahera*, which is the common expression for the annual tooth relic procession that takes place in Kandy. According to the same Avaca inscription, the relic is installed in the *ahethimajjima praṭithavaṇami*, translated by Bailey as 'the highest central deposit site', while Salomon takes the first part of the compound as a name of a person, and the second part as a word for relic shrine. In my interpretation, the compound may indicate an elevated place in the middle of the stupa platform where the relic chamber is erected. One is reminded of the pedestals upon which reliquaries were installed in the relic chambers of the Sri Lankan stupas. These pedestals often take the form of Mount Meru, symbolically expressing that the relic had to be installed upon the highest possible deposit site, i.e. the top of the cosmic mountain (**Fig. 57**). The Avaca inscription also seems to establish that a relic of the Buddha was solemnly brought from a stupa in a cave monastery (*liṇa* < *leṇa*) to the relic chamber of the stupa under construction. Mahinda's cave at Mihintale, Sri Lanka, was the starting point of a similar kind of relic procession heading for the stupa at Thuparama (see below). The relic of the Avaca

inscription had probably been taken out of a slot – or out of a cavity underneath a removable *harmikā* – of a small stupa in the chief monk's cave, where it had been stored. Similar slots can be found in the side of rock-cut stupas in the cave monasteries of Pitalkhora.[26] Removable sandstone *harmikā*s belonging to small brick so-called 'votiv' stupas are found in large numbers in, and fallen down from, the Stupa gallery of Kanheri.[27]

During his stay in Sri Lanka in the 5th century CE, the Indian monk Buddhaghoṣa wrote in his *Samantapāsādikā* [SP] about the festive transport of the very first relics that had come to the island. The parade started at Mahinda's cave and moved towards Thuparama. The text reads:

> On the instructions of Sumana, the king had levelled the road, swept it clear and set up banners and flags, scattered flowers, burned incense. The king rode the elephant, held the white umbrella to cover the relic*s*, and went to the Cetiya mount, i.e. Kaṇṭhaka *cetiya* where Mahinda lived and to which the monk Sumana had brought the relic directly from India. After receiving the relic, the elephant went backwards to the East Gate of the city of Anuradhapura, and left the city through the South Gate.[28]

The detail about entering the city is reminiscent of the account of the MPS quoted at the beginning of this paper. The Chinese version of the SP by Sanghabhadra describes the procession in almost the same words.[29]

Buddhaghoṣa says that he based himself on 'older sources', presumably the *Dīpavaṃsa*, for the description of an event that had taken place more than 600 years before his lifetime. In the *Dīpavaṃsa* itself another, similar, account can be found about the relic of the right collarbone. The relic had again been produced from India by the 'flying monk' Sumana, and was brought by him to Tissamahārāma, a monastery situated on a hill near Anuradhapura. The king, his brothers and a great army went to Sumana to receive the relic out of his hands:

> The relic established himself on the frontal globe of the elephant …, the princes worshipped the relic …, the noble elephant departed in the presence of foot soldiers, and entered into the town by the east-gate. Men and women worshipped with all kinds of perfumes and garlands. The elephant came out by the south gate. The elephant came to the spot where three of the former Buddhas had established themselves, and installed the relic of Sākyaputta there …, a *dagoba* was built and worshipped.[30]

The *Cūḷavaṃsa*, in which the Tooth Relic Temple is mentioned for the first time (chapter 60, 16), attributes the institution of the tooth relic procession to a former king called Siri Meghavaṇṇa (301–28 CE), thereby quoting the 'Tooth Relic Chronicle' (*Dāṭhadhātuvaṃsa*), which was written in the year 1211 CE. According to this rather late tradition it was a king of the 4th century who made the arrangements for the annual procession with the tooth relic from a palace shrine (see below) to Abhayagiri monastery, where it was on display for three months.[31] One century after the reign of King Meghavaṇṇa, the Chinese monk Faxian visited Anuradhapura and confirms that such an annual procession was indeed held:

> They always bring out the tooth of Buddha in the middle of the third month. Ten days beforehand, the king magnificently caparisons a great elephant, and commissions a man of eloquence and ability to clothe himself in royal apparel, and, riding on the elephant, to sound a drum and proclaim as follows … 'After ten days the tooth of Buddha will be brought forth and taken to the Abhayagiri monastery. Let all ecclesiastical and lay persons within the kingdom, who wish to lay up a store of merit, prepare and smooth the roads, adorn the streets and highways; let them scatter every kind of flower, and offer incense in religious reverence to the relic.' … At length the tooth of Buddha is brought forth and conducted along the principal road. As they proceed on the way, religious offerings are made to it.[32]

It is to be noticed, first, that a 'man of eloquence' is commissioned by the king to loudly proclaim the upcoming procession of the tooth relic; second, that 'they bring the tooth of the Buddha out', namely out of the secured palace shrine where it is kept in store; and, third, that the annual procession offers a chance to everybody to receive the blessings of a 'great bodily relic' of the Buddha, when it reveals itself.

Enshrinement in a stupa

According to J.C. Harle, a famous relief from Bharhut 'undoubtedly refers to the enshrinement of the main relics in the newly erected stupa'.[33] This complex statement would imply that the relief presents a picture of the deposit ceremony, which had taken place at the time when the stupa of Bharhut was erected, and, more importantly, may depict historical figures involved in its foundation and consecration. It would be tempting to identify the royal personages as a king of the Mitra dynasty, or possibly a vassal king of the Śuṅga line, ruling from the nearby capital of Kausambi, as Bharhut and the neighbouring trading-routes fell under his jurisdiction.[34] This king would have carried the Buddha relic all the way from Kausambi to the new stupa under construction in a festive parade, and arriving at the stupa would have showed it to the assembled monks and devotees. In a more cautious interpretation, Susan Huntington suggests that the relief may indeed 'record a ceremony in which a king participated … perhaps the instalment of its relics, or it may, however, be a reference to the original distribution of Śākyamuni Buddha's relics'.[35]

Both meanings may have crossed the mind of the visitors of that time, monks as well as lay Buddhists. A surprising detail should be brought to our attention, as it directly concerns the main theme of this research, namely *darśana* of relics as part of the enshrinement ceremonies. The scene is sculpted – very meaningfully – on the first post (*paṭhama thabho*, according to the inscription) of the eastern projection of the railing, i.e. at the main entrance to the circumambulation path. Here, the relic procession had to come to a standstill. What does the picture show? A royal personage sitting on top of the foremost elephant holds a reliquary in his left hand, and is managing the elephant's hook with his right. He is holding a parasol above the reliquary, showing that it contains a relic of the Buddha. The elephant halts on a wooden platform. Two attendants are flanking him. They are also riding elephants, much smaller than the one with the reliquary. A nobleman and a noble lady on horseback, one of them holding a standard crowned by the royal emblem of a Suparṇa, complete the retinue.

The detail that concerns us here is the elevation upon which the foremost elephant is apparently standing, or rather halting, in front of the first terrace (**Fig. 58**). As has been noticed by Ananda Coomaraswamy, the huge animal is standing upon a 'palisade' supported by 'Yakkhas', who carry the poles on their shoulders. In Coomaraswamy's view this structure 'has thus been conceived as a moving palanquin'.[36] However, from archaeology it is known that roads and walls were strengthened with wooden poles, for example at Kumrahar or Pataliputra.[37] The poles and the Yakṣas possibly indicate a strengthened and raised pathway, or platform, which served to elevate the large elephant carrying the Buddha relic above everything and everybody else. Moreover, raised platforms (*mañca*, *maṇḍa*) to show relics or erected for the Buddha to meditate upon are known from literature and inscriptions.

If this is correct, the relief seems to capture the solemn moment when the reliquary containing a relic of the Buddha is presented to the public before it is brought to the relic chamber. At this very moment, monks and lay worshippers who had flocked together must have had ample opportunity to see and hail the relic of the Buddha, and had a full view of the king as well. We may speculate that, a moment later, the royal rider handed the reliquary to a dignitary, who, taking the relic casket on his head, walked on foot to the middle of the first terrace. There, he – or the king himself – would place the reliquary respectfully on the pedestal in the open relic chamber, no doubt watched by monks and laity. A massive celebration (*mahas*) must have followed, devotees queuing to see and hail the reliquary in place. After the ceremony, the relic chamber was closed and the stupa completed.

The above reconstruction is inspired by literary accounts, which give a fairly accurate picture of such a ceremony, thereby using a noticeable terminology. Although considerably later than the relief just discussed, these texts describe, or refer to, a ceremony that may actually have taken place in the first centuries BCE, and may be used as evidence with regard to the reliefs from Bharhut. In the SP it is related that the elephant carrying the relic of the Buddha stopped intentionally at the base of the Thuparama stupa, and halted at the place where the stupa had to be erected: 'Then, the elephant with the relics arrived at Thuparama, made a round about the site of the stupa, and stopped intentionally at the basic foundation'.[38] The relic however, could not be lowered down, as 'it is not allowed to take it down once it had been raised'. On the instructions of Mahinda, the king had a terrace or platform built 'equal to the height of the top of the elephant'.[39] This specific instruction can only mean that the first terrace of a stupa, the so-called drum, should be as high as the elephant's head, i.e. about 3m, a measure which roughly corresponds with the height of the 'drum' of some of the large relic stupas in ancient India. Measuring about 4.5m – assuming this would have been the original height – the first terrace of the Great Stupa of Sanchi presupposes a raised platform or pathway for the elephant carrying the Buddha relic to cover the difference in height between the elephant's head and the first terrace. Whether archaeology can support this suggestion is to be investigated.

Figure 58 Yakṣas carrying the poles of a plartform on their shoulders. Detail of the lower part of a relief on the first pillar at the entrance to the stupa, Bharhut, 1st century BCE. Drawing by Marlies Vorselaars, Oud-Turnhout, Belgium

In the *Mahāvaṃsa*, the first terrace of the stupa is significantly called *hatthivedi*, 'elephant terrace', and *hatthipākāra*, 'elephant wall', supposedly because of the decoration of life-size sculptures of elephants. However, it has been argued convincingly that this term can hardly be derived from the elephants sculpted on the wall of the Ruvanveli Dagoba in Anuradhapura, as it dates from the time of Vijayabāhu, i.e. the 12th century CE.[40] As Dohanian has pointed out, the terms *hatthivedi* and *hatthipākāra* possibly refer to some practical function. Building upon this suggestion, I assume that both terms indicate the wall (*pākāra*), or the first terrace (*vedi*), in front of which the elephant (*hatthi*) with the relic halted. It is speculative to imagine what really happened when the elephant carrying the relic came to a standstill, but it was surely not allowed to kneel down *before* the reliquary had been respectfully put into the hands of the dignitary standing on the edge of the first terrace above the elephant's head. The technical terms for the wall, as well as the elephant decorations, may have been inspired by this ritual practice.

The SP continues: 'All the people of the country, with flowers, scents and music, came to see the bodily relics.' After performing several miracles – 'exactly as when the World-honoured One was living in the world', as Buddhaghoṣa explains[41] – the relics came down on the head of the king, who placed them within a small stupa erected on the 'foundation'. In this description, the relic miraculously moves through the sky towards the king, who, after dismounting the elephant, had climbed the terrace and now carries the reliquary on his head to the relic chamber. The emotional impact on the devotees at the moment that a true Buddha relic showed itself (*darśana*) is expressed in the miracle that is 'seen'.

The *Mahāvaṃsa* gives an exalted description of the splendour of the relic chamber of the Thuparama: the 'little shrine' contained a magnificent miniature bodhi tree made of jewels and various gems, with a silver stem and fruits of gold; over it was a canopy adorned with pearls and chains of little golden bells, a golden Buddha image set with jewels, and depictions of the life of the Buddha and *jātakas*, as well as the gods of heaven.[42] This description is partly confirmed by archaeology. In some relic chambers at Anuradhapura and at Mihintale, remnants of mural paintings have been discovered depicting, for example, the Buddha preaching to the gods of Indra's heaven (**Fig. 59**). These decorations could indeed be admired when the relic chamber was still open.

Figure 59 Outline of lost mural painting on the wall of the relic chamber of Kanthaka stupa, Mihintale, Sri Lanka, 8th century. Mihintale Site Museum (photo Karel van Kooij)

Summarizing this evidence, it seems apt to conclude that both the pictorial record and literary texts show that relics of the Buddha were festively and solemnly shown to everybody when the royal elephant carrying the relic halted in front of the first terrace, and again when the king or a dignitary took the reliquary to install it in the relic chamber, carefully placing it on the high pedestal and covering it with coins and jewellery. After this ceremony, I imagine a crowd of devotees queued on the terrace, eager to see the reliquary and throwing all sorts of coins and valuables around it. It must have been an unforgettable experience indeed.

Consecration deposits

That the relic chamber was considered a shrine in itself is confirmed by a word that frequently recurs in texts and inscriptions when a stupa is to be erected or relics are installed. The word used is *pradhiṭhāveti* (Sanskrit *pratiṣṭhāp-*), usually rendered as 'established'. In the MPS and in other Buddhist texts as well, the same word *pratiṣṭhāpayet* is found for the erection of the stupa, although *kārayet* ('cause to make') also appears. When a Buddha image is erected, the same term is used: 'Mathura inscriptions, dating from the Kuṣāna period, all record the erection (*pratiṣṭhāp-*) of an image (*pratimā*) of *bhagavat* Śākyamuni, while most Kharoṣṭhi inscriptions [from the north-west], dating from the pre-Kaniṣka and Kuṣāna periods, record the installation (*pratiṣṭhāp-*) of a relic (*śarīra*) of *bhagavat* Śākyamuni'.[43]

The ritual connotation of the term *pratiṣṭhā* and its derivatives, in a Vedic, Hindu – as well as Buddhist – context, does not need to be emphasized.[44] The word *pratiṣṭhā-* implies a consecration of the pedestal or base where an image is to be erected. The terminological continuity between the word for installing relics in the north-west and for installing Buddha images in Mathura, noticed by Damsteegt, suggests that in the case of enshrining relics similar consecrations might have taken place. This would mean that, before installing Buddha relics, the relic chamber had to be consecrated. I assume that the relic chamber of the Great Stupa of Sanchi had to be consecrated in one way or another, as it should contain relics of the Buddha Śākyamuni, but I do not expect consecration deposits underneath the relic chambers of the other stupas in the neighbourhood which contained relics of *arhat*s or 'holy men' (*sapurisas*). To my knowledge, a foundation deposit or deposit stone has not been found in the Great Stupa, but it has never been sought for.

The Vinaya quoted above makes a few general remarks about a preliminary purification of the ground upon which a stupa was to be erected but does not say anything about consecration rituals.[45] In the early days, monks were possibly not involved in consecration rituals, which remained the territory of Brahmin priests. As a result the Vinaya did not need to answer questions of monks about this topic. Although a monk's text, the 5th-century *Mahāvaṃsa* nevertheless describes a consecration ritual performed on the ground upon which the first stupa of Sri Lanka, the Thuparama, was to be built. Whether this kind of ritual actually did take place in the 2nd century BCE cannot, of course, be verified. I assume, however, that the account mentions practices that were carried out when this part of the *Mahāvaṃsa* was written, and it is therefore worth noting in the present context. The procedure runs as follows: after the size of the future *cetiya* had been delineated in the presence of a large crowd of monks and lay worshippers, a foundation stone was placed, containing

> eight vases of silver and eight of gold did he [the king] place in the midst, and in a circle around these he placed a thousand and eight new vases, and eight splendid bricks did he lay, each one apart by itself, as well as a hundred and eight garments. When he then had commanded an official … to take one of them, he laid on the east side, which had been prepared with many ceremonies, the first foundation stone, solemnly, upon the sweet-smelling clay. … And he caused the other seven to be laid by seven other ministers and ceremonies to be carried out.[46]

What is described seems to be a square stone with 16 compartments, alternately containing a gold or a silver vase. The 1008 [!] new vases were apparently put in circles around the deposit stone, while the eight bricks were laid in the eight directions. The whole place was covered with 108 garments. The passage quoted points to an extensive consecration ritual of the place upon which the stupa was to be erected, carried out in the presence of the king and his ministers.

The arrangement of this consecration deposit pre-dates and anticipates the deposit stones found from the 8th century CE underneath images of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as underneath the relic chambers of the *dagobas* in Sri Lanka. These deposit stones are usually named *yantragala*, no doubt because they look like a stone *yantra*, and more aptly *garbhapātra* because of ritual similarities with foundation deposits in Hindu temples.[47] *Yantragala*s were made of brick or stone, were square and were usually divided into 9 or 25 compartments, each compartment containing bronze figures, either of deities or of *maṅgala* signs like the *svastika* or the two fishes. The bronze deities represent the regents of the eight directions, with Brahma in the centre (**Fig. 60**).

Figure 60 Newly excavated *yantragala* with original small bronze figures still inside, situated in the centre, underneath the floor of a possible relic shrine, 10th century, Maligavila, Sri Lanka (photo Nandana Chutiwongs)

Placed underneath the relic chamber, the consecration deposit is strictly separated from the relic deposit, and more importantly is hidden in the foundation. The deposit stone found underneath the relic chamber of the Sūtighara *cetiya* at Dedigama, dating from the 12th century, is a clear example. In general, consecration deposits are expected in the foundation of a stupa or underneath its most essential parts, such as the relic chamber or *harmikā*, but not in the relic chamber itself.[48] In *yantragala*s no relics of the Buddha have ever been found, nor are their contents specifically Buddhist, nor is the practice exclusively Sri Lankan. Consecration deposits underneath images and shrines occur everywhere in the Buddhist and Hindu world, in South, South-East and East Asia.[49]

However, deposits – relic, consecration or burial – are sometimes difficult to identify. For example, the great Stupa of Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh contained several deposits inserted into the *āyaka* platforms at the four cardinal directions. Five deposits have been recovered from the bases of the five pillars of the southern *āyaka*, consisting of crystal and ivory caskets.[50] New excavations in the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 brought still more deposit boxes to light: crystal and ivory caskets found near the western, northern and eastern *āyaka* platforms.[51] The caskets were placed in slots of limestone slabs, or inside an earthenware pot. Considering their contents – no relics were found – as well as their location, the caskets may fall into the category of consecration deposits, installed when the platforms were being constructed. On the other hand, some caskets contained human remains or ashes, and thus may have been relic deposits after all, although not for bodily relics of the Buddha, but for the ashes and remains of chief monks and *arhat*s awaiting their own 'burial' stupas.[52] Similar problems arise when trying to distinguish consecration deposits from burial or relic deposits with regard to stupas in the Gandhara region.[53] In spite of these retrospective confusions and overlap, at the time of their construction, relic chambers and foundation deposits were strictly separated, both in location and in 'ritual framing'.[54] The kind of ceremony would have decided what kind of deposit was meant,[55] and most importantly, consecration deposits were not exhibited, i.e. did not give a *darśana*. This explains why the bronze figures found in the *yantragala*s are very crude.

Open display in a hall

Our sources speak about several occasions when 'Great' relics were displayed in halls, and were never enclosed in a stupa. Again we have to go back to the first visual representations available, and consult another well-known sculpture from the Bharhut stupa (**Fig. 61**), only as far as the representation on the relief may or may not be taken as evidence for the existence of permanent open relic shrines at a very early time. Inscriptions confirm that the relief offers a picture of the celebration of the arrival of the crest-jewel (*cūḍamaṇi mahas*) in Indra's heaven; they make clear that the relic is on display on an altar or throne erected in the 'assembly hall of the gods' (*sudhammā devasabhā*). An open, eight-cornered, pillared hall is depicted, covered by a dome. The assembly hall is situated close to another building, upon which the word 'victorious' (*vejayanta*) is inscribed, referring to the heavenly palace of Indra. The high, impressive gateway to the hall offers a full view of the relic. It is a deliberately applied optical effect, as it should lead the eye of the devotee – and of the past and present viewer as well – directly to the main object of veneration on the altar. Next to the altar, divine devotees are making salutations and offering flowers. In front of the hall a music and dance performance is going on, filling the lower register. The whole picture offers a festivity, a celebration, called *mahas* in the inscription, on the occasion of the arrival of the legendary relic of the crest-jewel in Indra's palace. On the basis of the inscription it can be established that on this festive occasion the relic is on display in the assembly hall of the gods. An open relic shrine is not in the picture.

The same formula is used in a lively composition carved on the pillar of the south gateway of Sanchi Stupa no. 1 (**Fig.**

Figure 61 (left) Festive display of the relic of the crest-jewel of the Buddha, upper panel of left side of Ajatasattu Pillar, Bharhut, 2nd century BCE, Indian Museum, Kolkata

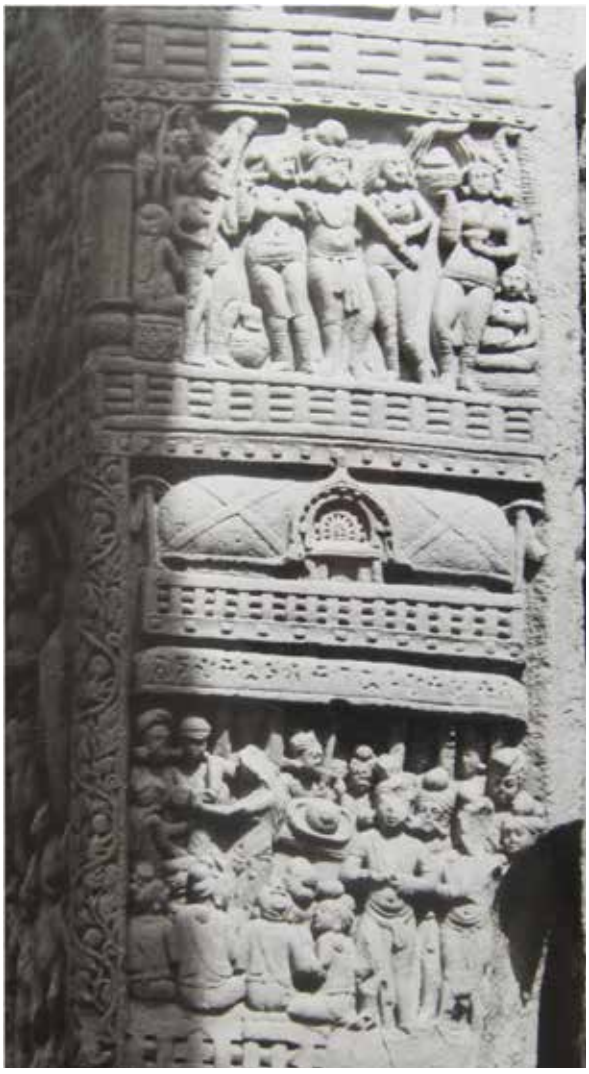

Figure 62 (right) Festive display of the crest-jewel relic, Sanchi Stupa no. 1, 1st century CE (photo Karel van Kooij)

62). The inscription written on the projecting roof merely mentions the ivory carvers of Vidisha as the artists who made and donated the relief. The relic of the crest-jewel is in full view lying upon an altar erected under a projecting roof. There are no further architectural details. Heavenly surroundings are not indicated either. Normal human worshippers seem to stand and sit around the altar, some of them talking to each other. To the left, a female dancer accompanied by musicians is giving a performance. Only the relic of the crest-jewel contains the reference to the legendary event of the arrival of this great relic in Indra's heaven. On the face of it, the relief seems to depict a relaxed scene of a celebration on the occasion of a display of an important 'contact' relic, installed under a kind of porch.

The exposure of other 'contact relics', such as the begging bowl, and the hair-dress jewel as well, had become favourite topics in the art of Amaravati.[56] A medallion from the Great Stupa of Amaravati shows a reliquary that is placed upon a royal throne with arms and *vyāla*s and under a huge parasol. Only the presence of the Nāgas points to the correct interpretation.[57] Another stupa relief from Amaravati offers a concise version of the same scene: in front of the depicted stupa a relic casket is shown, placed upon a throne and worshipped by the Nāgas.[58] The relic, which is laid on a large plate, is always carried above the head, or it is on display upon a festively decorated throne placed in the centre of a palace hall, in front of the royal family and the court. While the presence of the Nāga king and his family points to the well-known legend, the reliefs also offer lively pictures of a festive relic display in a palace hall, as no doubt had taken place when a great relic of the Buddha had arrived and was welcomed by the king, for example when the Great Stupa of Amaravati had to be built.

Preceding the passage of the *Cūḷavaṃsa* quoted before, it is related that Siri Meghavaṇṇa (301–28 CE) received the tooth relic from a Brahmin woman from Kalinga. In the present context, the passage is worth quoting in full:

> In the ninth year of this [king] a *brāhmaṇī* brought the tooth relic of the Great Sage 'here', taking it from Kaliṅga. In the manner set forth in the Dāṭhadhātuvaṃsa, the king took it with great respect, paying the highest honour. He put it in a 'basket' (*karaṇḍa*) of pure crystal and 'moved' (*vaḍḍayittha*) it to the house (*gehe*) called *dhammacakkha*, made by Devānaṃpiyatissa on 'royal ground' (*rājavatthumhi*). Henceforth, they call this house Tooth Relic House. The king spent nine hundred thousand, mindful of merit, and then held a great Tooth Relic Festival (*mahāmaham*). He decreed to hold the same celebration every year, after bringing the relic to Abhayuttara Vihāra.[59]

The passage is important in so far as the tooth relic was allegedly first brought to the still-existing 'house' or 'shrine of the Wheel of the Law', formerly built by Devānaṃpiyatissa on royal ground. In a relief from the

Figure 63 Remains of conjectured Tooth Relic Temple (Gedige B), Anuradhapura, Sri Lanka (photo Karel van Kooij)

railing of the Bharhut stupa, King Prasenajit is visiting such a shrine, leading a festive parade of elephants, chariots and horses. The inscription *bhagavato dhamacakaṃ* confirms that a type of Buddha hall is represented.[60] It is an open hall or shrine indeed, but not a preaching hall, which would have been part of a monastic complex. Similarly, the 'Shrine of the Wheel of the Law' mentioned in the *Cūḷavaṃsa* is used to house the tooth relic, but it is not an open relic shrine. The word 'here' in the first line of the quotation might refer to the city of Anuradhapura, as Geiger explains it, but the context suggests that the hall itself is meant, where, according to Faxian, a golden statue of Mahinda had just been erected (see below). In this old *dhammacakka* house the tooth relic was apparently exhibited, lying in an open 'bowl' put upon an altar. The *Dhātumañjūsā* explains the word *karaṇḍa* as *bhājanatthe*, meaning 'in the sense of a bowl'.

Visiting Anuradhapura one century after this event, Faxian reports the existence of a 'chapel' where the relic was housed most of the year, by which he probably meant the same '*dhammacakka* house'. With regard to this 'house' Faxian writes: 'within the capital, moreover, is erected the chapel of the tooth of the Buddha, in the construction of which all the seven precious substances have been employed. This chapel is thrown open on fast days for the purpose of religious worship, as the law directs'.[61] Apparently, this 'converted' relic shrine on royal ground was now open on *uposatha* days. However, when staying in Anuradhapura, Faxian witnessed the display of the tooth relic when it was exhibited in the grand Buddha hall in the monastery of Abhayagiri. This hall is described as follows:

> [in the midst of the Buddha hall], which is covered with gold and silver engraved work, is a jasper figure of the Buddha, in height about 22 feet, glittering and sparkling with the seven precious substances, and holding a pearl in his right hand. A slip of the Bodhi tree, procured by an embassy to Mid-India, was planted by the side of the hall, which had grown into an enormously tall tree, of about 220 feet high, and had to be supported by eight or nine surrounding props. Under the tree is erected a chapel, in the middle of which is a figure of Buddha in a sitting posture. … When they arrive [in procession with the tooth relic] at the Abhaya *vihāra* they place it in the hall of the Buddha, where the clergy and laity all assemble in vast crowds and burn incense, and light lamps, and perform every kind of religious ceremony, both night and day, without ceasing. After ninety complete days, they again return it to the chapel within the city.[62]

During fieldwork in Sri Lanka, Roland Silva pointed out that a structure called Gedige B at Abhayagiri, Anuradhapura (**Fig. 63**), has been tentatively identified as being Faxian's relic hall. It consists of an inner *cella* with a high throne inside, and was originally surrounded 'by a spacious circumambulation path'. On both sides of the main entrance the remains of two niches were discovered. On the outer side of the circumambulation path was an open corridor, with a projecting and elaborate entrance facing east, and minor entrances towards the other cardinal points. Was the above structure suitable to house a 'jasper image of the Buddha' more than 7m tall, and to manage vast crowds of monks and lay worshippers flocked together during the time that the tooth relic was installed? Following Faxian's remarks, an already existing Buddha hall was used to expose the tooth relic at Abhayagiri, meaning that Gedige B would have been, not an open relic shrine, but a Buddha hall used to exhibit the tooth relic during the three months of its stay at the monastery. Another edifice that has been identified as a relic house could have stored the tooth relic during the hours when it was not on display.

Observations made by Xuanzang two centuries later, when he was travelling through Central Asia, seem to confirm that relics were exhibited in existing Buddha halls. For example, he visited a monastery called 'Navasanghārāma' ('New monastic compound'), situated in the neighbourhood of Bactra. Within this convent, 'in the Southern hall of Buddha, there is the washing basin which Buddha used, as well as a tooth relic and a sweeping brush'.[63] All three were exhibited in the Buddha hall, i.e. in a hall with a Buddha image, not a special relic shrine.

Exhibition in the open air

Gandharan pictorial art offers several examples of the display of the Buddha's alms-bowl in a pavilion, or on a throne without further architectural elements added. In case of a false gable carved with several scenes, the alms-bowl is always shown on top.[64] Behrendt published a relief from the Peshawar basin, where the relic is placed on an altar adorned with a cloth, and with a parasol above it. Another relief carved on the pedestal of a Buddha image depicts worshippers approaching the relic and paying their respects by making salutations or offerings.[65] In other representations the begging bowl is installed upon a throne with arms placed under a parasol, and it is worshipped by lay devotees in Scythian dress.[66] Sometimes a pavilion or a flat-topped canopy is added.[67]

In the same way, the relic of the crest-jewel is depicted on an altar or throne, under a large parasol, sometimes under a canopy, but mostly without further architectural details added, as if they are displayed in the open air on a throne under a temporary pavilion.[68] This practice was usually followed in this region (see below). On some representations the throne is definitely surrounded by divine worshippers, two of whom can be identified respectively as Brahma, recognizable by his loosened ascetic hair, and Indra, wearing a royal hair-dress similar to that of the Buddha himself.[69] One stair-riser relief pictures the hair-dress lying on a throne, worshipped by two lay devotees, while a performance of music and dance is executed by a flute-player, a woman dancer, and musicians playing the harp and drum.[70] Or the hair-dress relic is depicted on top of a false gable relief, installed upon a pedestal and worshipped by lay devotees.[71] The open display of the relic is the central theme in these representations, not the story, nor the location. The setting is an open pavilion, not a permanent shrine.

This way of displaying the relic in the open air, on a throne or in a pavilion conforms to the description given by Faxian, who actually saw the alms-bowl in this position. When staying in the kingdom of Purusapura, he witnessed how the alms-bowl of the Buddha was brought out twice daily, at noon and at evening, and was installed upon a throne. He apparently saw the alms-bowl with his own eyes and describes it vividly and in detail:

> At the approach of noon the priests bring out the alms-bowl, and with the *upāsakas* make all kinds of offerings to it; they then eat their midday-meal. At evening, when they burn incense, they again do so. It is capable of holding two pecks and more. It is of mixed colour, but yet chiefly black. The four divisions are quite clear, each of them being about two-tenths thick. It is glistening and bright. Poor people with few flowers cast into it, fill it; but very rich people, wishful with many flowers to make their offerings, though they present a hundred thousand myriad of pecks, yet in the end fail to fill it.[72]

After a small digression on the activities of his fellow travellers, Faxian mentions that one of them, 'Hwui-ying, dwelling in the temple of Buddha's alms-bowl, died there'.

In the present context, two observations can be made. First, the relic of the alms-bowl is brought out into the open twice a day, and is then worshipped by monks and lay devotees. Faxian does not mention a throne or a pavilion, but these provisions would surely have been made, and are duly rendered into sculpture. Second, when it was *not* brought outside, the relic was apparently kept in the 'temple of Buddha's alms-bowl'. What kind of structure Faxian had in mind depends on the translation of the Chinese term, which Beal rendered as 'temple' and Legge as 'monastery'.[73] In these cases Legge mostly uses the Sanskrit equivalent *vihāra*, which is no less ambiguous and can be interpreted as either chapel or monastic residence. Faxian does not give any indication that lay worshippers had a direct access to this particular relic shrine, although one of his fellow travellers was apparently allowed to stay there for a while – and died there. Nor does he speak about a procession to bring the relic from one place to another. I take it that monks or high officials brought the relic out of a closed shrine, every day, and installed it upon a throne or under a pavilion erected on the compound.

Faxian then went to Hadda to see the skull bone of the Buddha, and again he saw the relic with his own eyes and witnessed how it was brought out of a shrine and worshipped. Again, it is necessary to read the whole passage closely, particularly the portion in (my) italics:

> From this Faxian went on alone to the place of Buddha's skull-bone. Going west 16 *yojana*s, he reached the country of Nagarahara. On the borders, in the city of Hadda, is the chapel of the skull-bone of Buddha; it is gilded throughout and adorned with the seven precious substances. The king of the country profoundly reverences the skull-bone. *Fearing lest some one should steal it, he appoints eight men of the first families of the country, each man having a seal to seal (the door) for its safe-keeping. In the morning, the eight men having come, each one inspects his seal, and then they open the door. The door being opened, using scented water, they wash their hands and bring out the skull-bone of Buddha. They place it outside the chapel on a high throne; taking a circular stand of the seven precious substances, the stand is placed below and a glass/lapis lazuli bell, as a cover, over it.* All these are adorned with pearls and gems. The bone is of a yellowish-white colour, four inches across and is raised in the middle. Each day after its exit men of the chapel at once mount a high tower, beat a large drum, blow the conch, and sound the cymbal. Hearing these, the king goes to the chapel to offer flowers and incense. The offerings finished, each one in due order puts it on his head and departs. Entering by the east door and leaving by the west, the king every morning thus offers and worships, after which he attends to state affairs. Householders and elder-men also first offer worship and then attend to family affairs. Every day thus begins, without neglect from idleness. *The offerings being all done, they take back the skull-bone. In the chapel there is a stupa which opens and shuts*, made of the seven precious substances, more than five feet high, to receive it. Before the gate of the chapel every morning regularly, there are sellers of flowers and incense; all who wish to make offerings may buy of every sort. … The site of the chapel is forty paces square.[74]

From this colourful but enigmatic account it can be more or less established that at the time of Faxian this relatively small chapel was not directly accessible. It seems that there was a carefully secured shrine where the relic was preserved in a sizable reliquary in the form of a stupa that could be opened to take the relic out. Worship apparently took place outside the shrine, on the temple square. Faxian indicates that this skull-bone chapel was found in the city of Hadda, not in the capital but not too far away either, because he continues with: 'Going from this one *yojana* north, we come to the

capital of Nagarahara'. That the king worshipped the skull-bowl daily would imply that he had to leave his palace every day and go to Hadda to venerate the relic. And the skull bone was not the only relic he had to worship. Faxian proceeds: 'In the city there is, moreover, a Buddha-tooth tower (tope, stupa), to which religious offerings are made in the same way as to the skull-bone.'

The *saṅghāṭi* and staff of the Buddha were preserved in other chapels, not far away. Faxian implies that they too were worshipped by the king, as had probably been told to him by proud monks. What Faxian saw seems to correspond to what is transmitted by the pictorial record as far as Gandhara is concerned. Can the data provided by Faxian be verified by archaeology? What Faxian speaks about are, on the one hand open, temporary pavilions where relics were exposed, and, on the other hand, heavily secured shrines where the relics were locked away. The secured shrines were only accessible to officials appointed to safeguard the relic. This evidence leads to the inevitable conclusion that the open-air pavilions of Faxian are hard to recover among archaeological remains. As to the storage shrines, there is a chance to identify them, particularly among the remains of citadels and palace compounds hitherto excavated. However, the apsidal temple D, situated in the old city of Sirkap (Taxila), might have been a relic shrine, safely located in the citadel. The remains of a royal palace or citadel have not yet been identified, to my knowledge, or are not indicated on the map published by Behrendt.[75] Nevertheless, a location in the citadel implies that direct access must have been limited.

'Direct access' shrines?

Open relic shrines, directly accessible to the public, do not seem to figure in the pictorial, epigraphic and literary records discussed. However, an early relief from a pillar of the south gate of the Great Stupa of Amaravati seems to offer an example of an open shrine in which a reliquary is installed. A round, open building is depicted, covered with a dome resting on pillars. A frieze of false windows decorates the dome. The pedestal is square, and is provided with a railing. Inside an altar or throne is visible, crowned by a small umbrella, which is attached to the canopy above it. On the throne, a reliquary is installed.[76] The relief is found on one side of a pillar fragment, the other sides showing a bodhi tree with a throne, a wheel on a throne, and a stupa. This context places the relic shrine in the category of three of the four most important events, or locations, in the life of the Buddha: enlightenment, first sermon and final *nirvāṇa*. Because of this syntactic context, the depiction may be a reference to the 'grand platform' (*mahāmaṇḍala*) in Kusinagara where the relics of the Buddha were first put on display. However, the inscription on the pillar mentions 'a *caitya* pillar with a relic, a gift' (*cetiyakhabho sadhāduko dānam*). The relief definitely pictures an open relic shrine, either for permanent or for temporary exhibition.

As far as Gandhara is concerned, it is tempting to view some of the shrines depicted on the reliefs as permanent, directly accessible, open relic shrines, as Behrendt proposed to do on the basis of his extensive archaeological research. Nevertheless, his reading of the pictorial record is open to discussion. In one of his examples, a double-storey and domed shrine is depicted with the door half-closed and windows on both sides.[77] The shrine stands upon a square elevated platform with a projecting staircase. The platform is provided with a railing and has four free-standing pillars at the corners. On either side, a monk is depicted, one making an *añjalimudrā* and the other holding a *cāmara*. The figures of the monks are enlarged as compared to the shrine, emphasizing the figures of the monks visiting and worshipping. The scene is separated from the next by means of a Corinthian pillar, and apparently formed part of a narrative cycle. Similar to the one just quoted we come across other pictures of shrines with the doors closed and worshipped by lay devotees on both sides of the shrine,[78] or by two monks sitting in a meditation posture on the left side of the shrine.[79] To the right, another relief represents a reliquary and meditating monks on both sides.[80]

Behrendt considers the shrine on the reliefs mentioned as 'direct access shrines', i.e. open relic shrines meant for permanent relic display. Indeed, the conspicuous presence of monks and lay devotees, worshipping and meditating, signifies the presence of the Buddha, but not necessarily of his relics, simply because a reliquary is not depicted. In this connection, a relief from Mathura should be mentioned; it shows a three-storey shrine with doors half-closed, crowned by a dome and worshipped by lay devotees offering lotus flowers. Coomaraswamy assumed that this shrine possibly represents the *gandhakuṭi*, the 'perfumed chamber' of the Buddha at Jetavana.[81] According to the story, Ānanda visited Jetavana after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*. Then he *opened* the door of the Buddha's chamber, cleaned out the place and spread flowers and perfumes. In the course of time this flowery and odorous 'chamber' grew indeed into a sign of the presence of the Buddha.[82] Behrendt acknowledges the importance of the *gandhakuṭi* concept but identifies small image niches as renderings of the 'odorous chamber'. In these open niches the figure of the seated Buddha is shown surrounded by multiple attendants, among whom are donors and monks, an assemblage which he styled '*gandhakuṭī* iconography'.

This conclusion is open to debate. Elisabeth Errington, in a personal communication, drew my attention to Gandhara reliefs showing similar niches in which reliquaries are depicted on a pedestal under an impressive arch, the arch being the only architectural element.[83] In Mathura, similar pictures of relic worship are found.[84] These niches are best interpreted as pavilions for a temporary relic display. However, the shrines with closed doors may represent the *gandhakuṭī* at Jetavana. It is noteworthy that in the Mathura relief the shrine with closed doors is paired with a representation of the wheel on a pillar on one side, and an altar with the begging bowl paired with the bodhi tree on the other. Moreover, the same structure, now with its doors open, appears on another Gandhara relief as a 'hut' inhabited by an ascetic.[85] In another example, again without doors, it is a fire temple.[86] It seems that this type of architecture served several purposes, and was used both as a 'hut' or 'chamber' and as a shrine, which is why it is usually vaguely but correctly named *vihāra*, meaning both chapel and residence. On another relief, an open double-storey

Figure 64 Inner staircase of the Tooth Relic House (Polonnaruwa) leading to relic exhibited on the top floor (photo Karel van Kooij)

shrine is depicted housing a reliquary covered with a cloth.[87] The relief possibly formed part of the *parinirvāṇa* cycle, and is part of a narrative, representing the platform on which the relics of the Buddha at Kusinagara were installed before enshrinement. A relic shrine or platform has certainly been depicted. However, no hard conclusions can be drawn from these art-historical data about the occurrence of permanent directly accessible relic shrines in the period under discussion.

After the seventh century

The situation concerning open relic shrines apparently changed. Xuanzang, visiting Gandhara in the 7th century, speaks about a

> two-storeyed tower in the city of Hadda, its beams painted and the columns coloured red. In the second storey is a little stupa, made of the seven precious substances; it contains the skull-bone of Tathāgata; it is one foot 2 inches round; the hair orifices are distinct; its colour is whitish-yellow. It is enclosed in a precious receptacle, which is placed in the middle of the stupa. Those who wish to make lucky or unlucky presages (marks) make a paste of scented earth, and impress it on the skull bone; then, according to their merit, is the impression made.

Surprisingly, Xuanzang writes of another little stupa enclosing a second skull bone of the Tathāgata, contained in a precious casket, sealed up and fastened.[88] There seems to have been a two-storey tower, the skull bone being enclosed in a precious receptacle on the top floor. The relic was apparently visible and could be touched in order to make an impression of it on an earthen plaque. Access to the top floor would have been via an internal staircase. The mention of painted beams and red columns would confirm such a supposition. Xuanzang's two-storey 'tower' with a relic shrine upstairs must have replaced Faxian's closed relic shrine of the 5th century.

A similar internal staircase leading to the upper story of an image temple is found in the Tooth Relic Temples known from Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka. The *Cūḷavaṃsa* mentions a 'lovely and costly Tooth Relic House', built by order of Vijayabāhu I in Pulatthinagara (present-day Polonnaruwa).[89] This temple has been identified and appears to be a monumental image temple, where three Buddha images were installed on the ground floor, and the relic was exhibited on the top floor, accessible through an inner staircase (**Fig. 64**).

As far as Anuradhapura is concerned, Xuanzang noticed a '*vihāra* (chapel) of the Buddha's tooth' and writes: 'The king three times a day washes the tooth of Buddha with perfumed water, sometimes with powdered perfumes', implying that the chapel must have been easily accessible from the royal palace. It probably replaced the original *dhammacakka* shrine mentioned above. This identification is supported by an 8th-century inscription found in the gatehouse mentioning the gift of land set apart for the maintenance of the Tooth Relic Shrine. The building 'is nearly 75 feet by 45 feet, and provided with 40 stately stone pillars'. The temple must have been impressive both in size and in its decoration.

From the time of Polonnaruwa onwards up to the Kandy period, Temples of the Tooth took the format of image temples, whereby the relic was kept in a small shrine on the top floor. This format is meaningful, as tradition prescribes that a relic of the Buddha should always be in the highest position, i.e. above the image of the Buddha. The present Tooth Relic Temple on the palace compound in Kandy is actually an impressive image shrine, where the relic is kept in a small costly shrine on the top floor. The reliquary is shown on a daily basis to the devotees assembled on the ground floor, while loud music is played. An inner staircase leads to the top floor and via a small corridor to the heavily secured relic shrine. The extremely narrow one-person access to the relic shrine was formerly meant for high officials, chief monks and the royal family. Nowadays tourists line up, one by one, to wonder at the costly reliquary. The octagonal tower next to the shrine – now containing a library – had a special function. On the final day of the *perahera*, it was the king who presented himself in the centre of the tower and was paid homage to by his people, before he personally took the reliquary with the Tooth Relic from the Temple of the Tooth and put it in the little shrine resting on the back of the state elephant.[90] After the procession, the relic was brought back to the king, who stored it again in the Temple. It is to be noticed that this image-cum-relic temple is still situated on the palace compound, as in the old days, for security reasons.

Some conclusions

Magnificent relic processions were held to show the relic of a Buddha before it was installed in a stupa. The data bring us back to the first relic processions described in the MPS and the oldest art-historical records available. The procession was a festive celebration (*mahas*) in itself, headed by the king,

who therewith legitimated both the relic and his political position. James Duncan rightly draws attention to the political aspects of the Kandy *perahera*, which served to reaffirm the king's control over the city and the country.[91] It leaves no doubt that the stately relic procession was also a display of military and political power, from the time of Aśoka onwards. It is well known that religious processions and military marches served to consolidate or regain the power over a city or a country.

At the enshrinement ceremony, the reliquary was solemnly shown to a crowd of devotees at two moments: first when the stately elephant halted at the entrance to the circumambulation path, and afterwards when the assembled devotees filed along the still open relic chamber to receive the blessings of the relic before it was hidden forever. Afterwards, the bright, white-coloured, monumental stupas could still be seen from afar. People would have remembered the festive instalment for a long time, and must have told each other the miracles that had taken place when the relic 'revealed' itself.

Some 'great relics' were never deposited in stupas but kept in secured relic shrines, often built on the palace compound and therefore in general not accessible, except for the king and high dignitaries. However, these relics were regularly taken out of the palace shrine and were daily or annually exhibited in an open assembly hall or under a temporary pavilion in the open air, or in a Buddha hall of a city monastery. Permanent relic shrines, directly accessible to the public, are not found in the period and sources examined so far. However, at the time of Xuanzang in the 7th century, some 'great relics' of the Buddha were definitely exhibited in permanently accessible shrines installed on the top floor of two-storey buildings. From the Sri Lankan material, it appears that the relic shrine was in due course joined to the image shrine, the relic being installed on the top floor and the Buddha image on the ground floor. The architectural concept of the image-cum-relic shrine meant that the Buddha image and relic became entwined.

Notes

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Chapter 7

The Great Silver Reliquary from Sri Ksetra: Where Early Buddhist Art Meets Early Pali Inscriptions in the Pyu Culture of Burma (Myanmar)

Janice Stargardt

Abstract

This chapter is based on the evidence provided by the iconography, art styles, epigraphy, palaeography and archaeological context of the great silver reliquary of Sri Ksetra (**Fig. 65a–b**). An object of outstanding importance in the early history of Buddhism in Southeast Asia in general, and of Burma (Myanmar) in particular, the reliquary has received surprisingly little scholarly attention. Research, however, has shown that the golden Pali text associated with it in the same relic chamber carries probably the oldest and certainly the longest early text in canonical Pali (**Fig. 66**). This magnificent golden book may have been destined to form the centrepiece of the chamber but, owing to a textual omission, it was imperfect. As I emphasize below, one of the four Pyu-Pali texts on the lid rim of the reliquary supplied the phrases missing in the golden Pali text. Thus we encounter here the remarkable fact that, of two of the oldest surviving examples of Pali, one was composed to rectify a defect in the other and both were installed together in the same relic chamber in ancient Burma.

Unlike the 'almost Pali' Prakrit inscriptions from Devnimori and Ratnagiri,[1] and the Kathmandu Pali manuscript (long considered the oldest known Pali text), the golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary from Sri Ksetra belong to a rich archaeological context. They are the principal components of a sacred treasure in a particular relic chamber and monument, and formed part of a cluster of Buddhist monuments in a specific area of the largest city of Southeast Asia before Pagan and Angkor. Others have studied the encounters in Andhra between early Buddhism and its pre-existing megalithic burials. At Sri Ksetra current research is revealing the pre-Buddhist Pyu funerary culture and its interaction and long co-existence with early Buddhist traditions, thereby placing the reliquary in a context where ancient funerary practices can be seen to be harmoniously fused with Buddhism. This study of the Sri Ksetra reliquary and its context complements the other studies of relic and related worship in this volume, in particular, illuminating some of the complex cultural changes involved in the transmission of Buddhism to non-Indic societies to the east of South Asia.

The archaeological context at Sri Ksetra

Sri Ksetra, the largest of the ancient Pyu cities of Myanmar, and the largest city in Southeast Asia before Pagan and Angkor, was granted World Heritage status in June 2014. At present it provides the earliest objective dates in Southeast Asia for the adoption of Buddhism in the second half of the 4th century on both the elite and popular level. A brief background sketch of the archaeological context is relevant to illuminate some of the processes of cultural change involved in this adoption and their diverse sources of inspiration. Sri Ksetra is a huge site, embracing 1,847ha. inside the outer walls, with additional, extramural areas (**Figs 67–8a–b**). The site contains many stepped burial terraces both inside and outside the city walls and moats. Surrounded by these funerary monuments stand the three towering cylindrical stupas of the city (Bawbawgyi, now

Figure 65a The great silver reliquary from Sri Ksetra as found. © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar, from the author's collection of prints from glass plate negatives

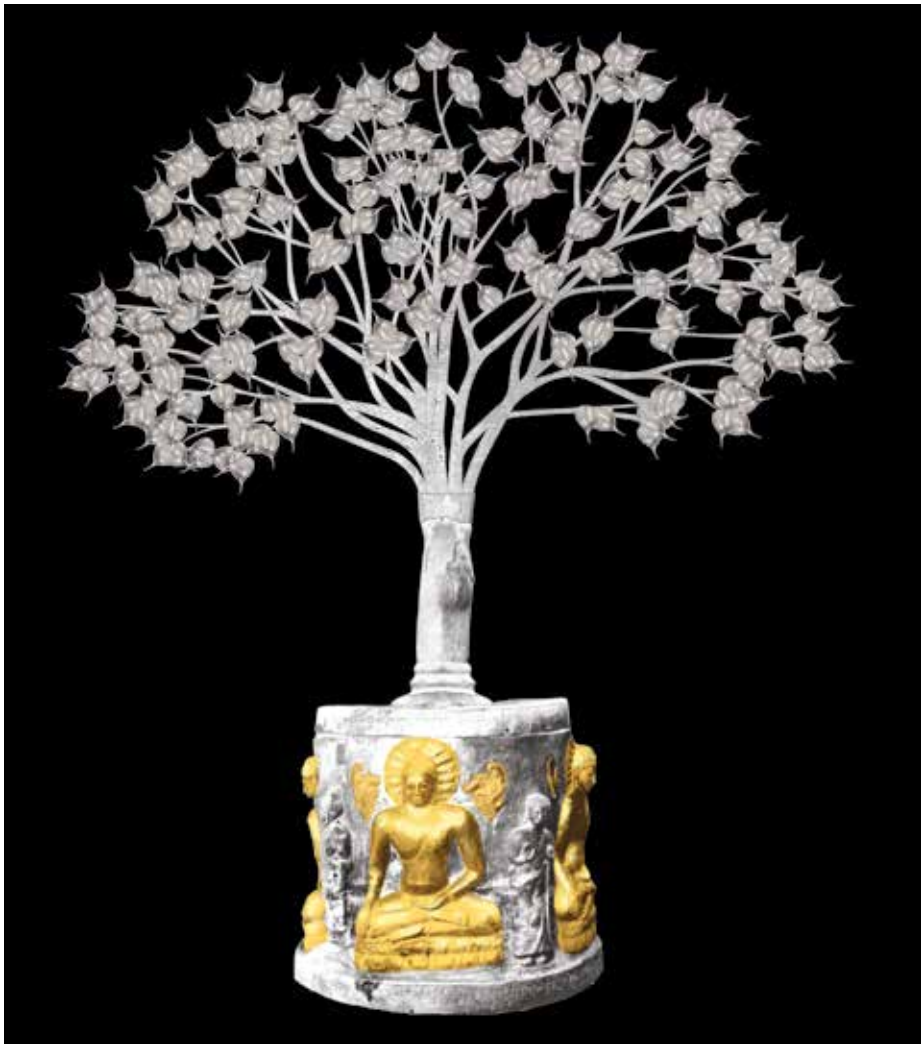

FIgure 65b The great silver reliquary as originally made, with three-dimensional tree shrine top. Composite image constructed by Vicki Herring using data provided by Janice Stargardt

Figure 66 The golden Pali text of Sri Ksetra (closed). © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar, from the author's collection of prints from glass plate negatives, hand coloured by Philip Stickler, cartographer in the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge

c. 44m high; Phayagyi, now *c.* 36m high; Phayama, now *c.* 34m high). These stupas may have all originated in the first wave of Buddhist monumental construction, around the mid-first millennium CE, and have been initially of similar size to the recently excavated small, cylindrical stupa, HMA51 (**Fig. 69a**, *c.* 4th–5th century CE), with its pillaged relic chamber, or the slightly larger Mathegya stupa (**Fig. 69b**, *c.* 6th century CE). The current dimensions of the huge stupas at Sri Ksetra probably result from several phases of refoundation and enlargement during the first and second millennia, but stupas and burial terraces were never spatially segregated.

At 18°50′ N and 95°20′ E, Sri Ksetra stands on the threshold of the Dry Zone of Central Burma. It feels the impact of long dry seasons and, without irrigation, traditional agriculture was always precarious. Only since 1990 have maps of Sri Ksetra registered the significant association between Pyu Buddhist monuments, burial areas, ancient irrigation canals and water tanks, and the importance of Pyu funerary culture.[2] The maps of the author and colleagues illustrated here show that most of the extramural monuments were linked to the walled urban area by ancient canals, which frequently formed regular moats around burial terraces before converging on the city. Round pools often occurred in pairs at the northern end of the great Pyudaiks (**Figs 68a–b**).[3] Both canals and pools seem to have served a ritual function in the extramural burial and monumental areas, as well as irrigating fields inside and outside the city walls.[4] **Figures 68a–b** show that ancient irrigated fields covered more than half of the intramural area of the city and continued without change of type into the extramural areas to the north, east and south-east, thereby demonstrating the continuity of land use between the city and its hinterland. As the Burmese chronicles record for the origins of Pagan, so too the Pyu cities appear to have evolved out of groups of irrigation villages. The Khin Ba mound – findsite of the relic chamber containing the great silver reliquary and the golden Pali text – was part of a cluster of ruined stupas in the south-east corner of the city, which were located inside, outside and on the walls. Their distribution indicates that at least some of them pre-date the walls and moats in this area. Excavations in 2016–17 at the Khin Ba mound have revealed the full extent of its huge brick platforms with decorative bricks

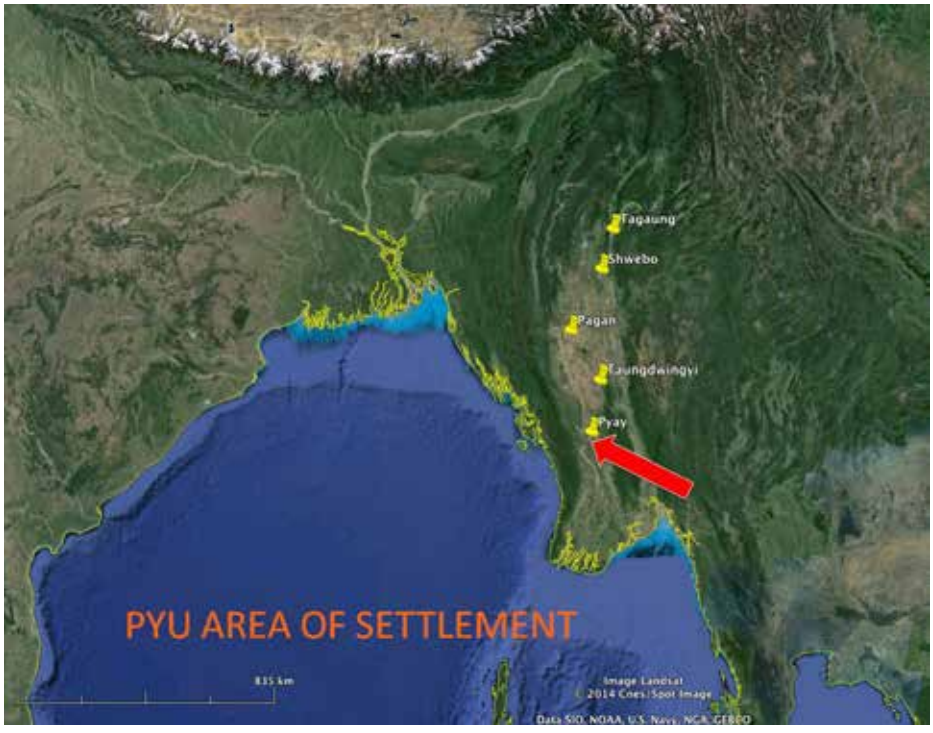

Figure 67 Regional map of Myanmar showing the location of Sri Ksetra. © Gabriel Amable

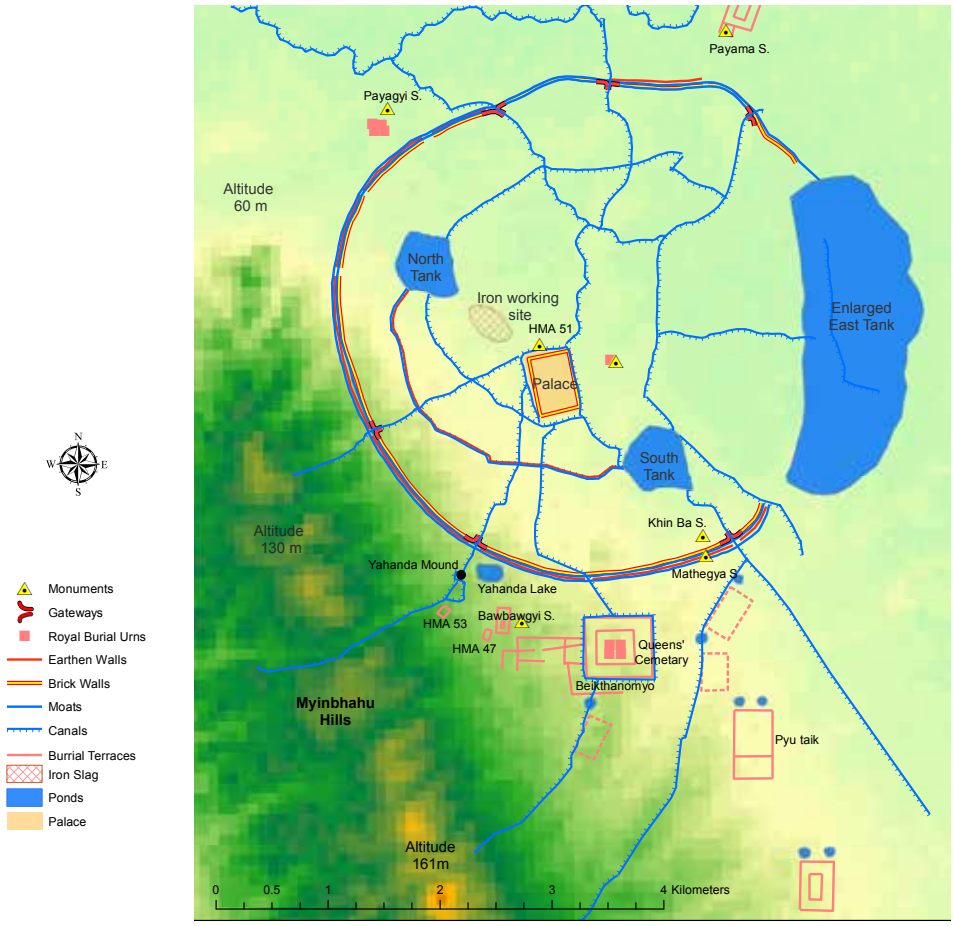

Figure 68a Map of Sri Ksetra, Phase 2, 2nd–6th century CE. © Gabriel Amable and Janice Stargardt, University of Cambridge, 2018

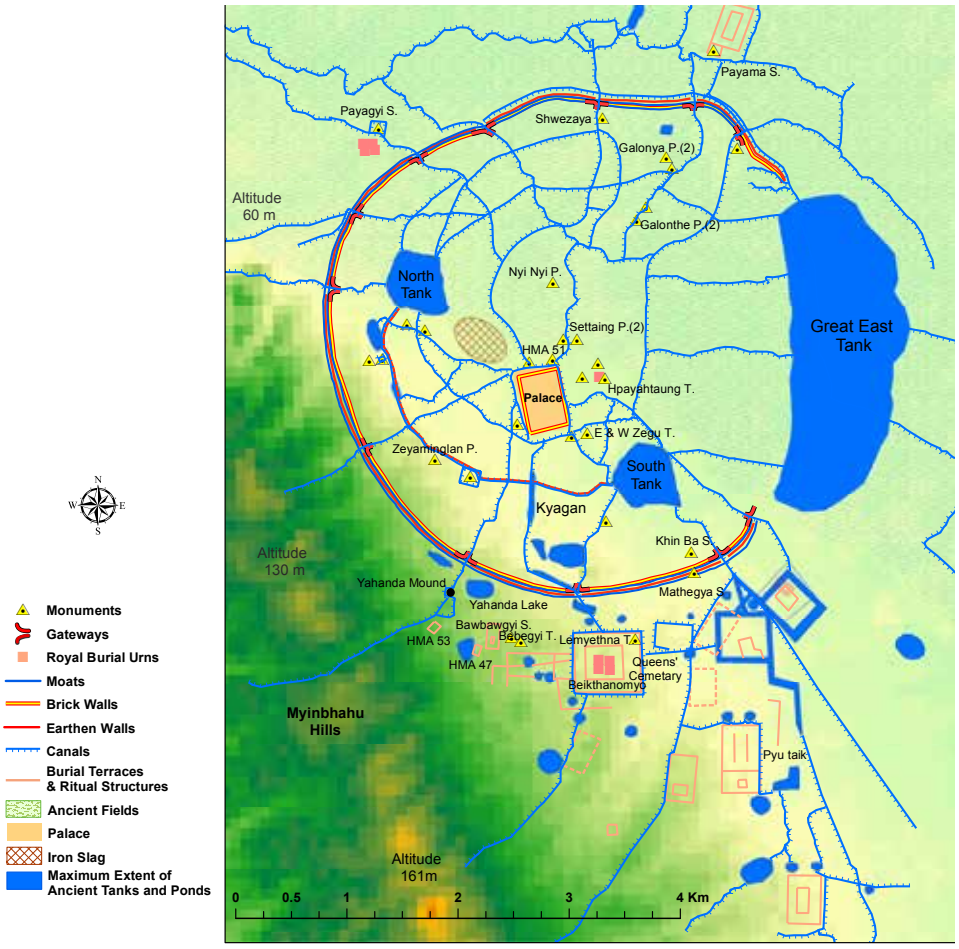

Figure 68b Map of Sri Ksetra, Phase 3, 6th–8th century. © Gabriel Amable and Janice Stargardt, University of Cambridge, 2018

Figure 69a Early cylindrical stupa Andhra style at Sri Ksetra, *c.* 4th century, HMA51 found with urn burials. © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar

Figure 69b Cylindrical Mathegya stupa at Sri Ksetra, with platform, four entrances and decorative bricks, *c.* 6th century. © Janice Stargardt

similar to, but much larger than those of the Mathegya stupa, with four entrance stairways and structural evidence of several phases of rebuilding and enlargement.[5]

The three largest Pyu cities, Sri Ksetra, Beikthano and Halin, together provide complementary evidence (which is otherwise extremely rare in South and Southeast Asia) on the key question of how, within the same spaces, highly developed Iron Age societies made the decisive transition from villages to early cities and states. In that process, they selectively adopted and adapted Indic forms of literacy, religion, art and architecture into a culture that already possessed a strong funerary tradition that was recognizably non-Indic.[6] That the Pyu had active contacts with several South Asian kingdoms in their diplomatic, religious and commercial relations over long periods is eloquently revealed by specific features of their art, architecture, writing styles and regnal titles. But in none of these domains is there to be found an instance of passive cultural copying; the evidence always reveals selective cultural adaptation and assimilation, often from more than one source, resulting in combinations that are highly original and not found in India itself. The great silver reliquary testifies to such processes.

The monuments at Sri Ksetra marked on **Figure 68a–b** are only those which have been excavated and to a varying extent restored. The total number is unknown, but was certainly much greater. Most of the fortifications, stupas and temples were built of brick, sometimes in combination with rammed earth and wood. The cylindrical form of the Andhra stupa tradition of the 2nd to 4th century CE, already adopted at Beikthano and Sri Ksetra in about the 4th century, was taken much further at Sri Ksetra between the 4th and 6th centuries (**Fig. 69a–b**). Habitations, however, from kings to monks to commoners, were built of organic materials regarded as *living*: wood, earth and thatch (later sometimes tiles). Pyu funerary culture was highly developed from a Pre-Buddhist period, and included burial terraces constructed of rammed earth pounded into stepped rectangles, often faced with bricks, covering large numbers

Figure 69c Excavation of an inscribed royal stone burial urn in the precincts of the Phayagyi stupa, Sri Ksetra, 1912. © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar; from the author's collection of prints from glass-plate negatives

of burial urns densely packed in groups and layers.[7] At Sri Ksetra, the custom of cremation burial was general, mostly in terracotta urns, but royal cremation burials have been found in large cylindrical stone jars – inscribed and uninscribed – outside and inside the walled area of the city (**Fig. 69c**).[8] Numerous burial terraces at Sri Ksetra have been traced, especially since 2009. Although the number recorded on **Figure 68a–b** is larger than on earlier maps of the city, it is still work in progress. To date, groups of urn burials have been found in several types of location: in burial terraces, grouped around the foundations of many stupas (including those in **Fig. 69a–b**) and, most recently, under the floors of five ancient houses on the Yahanda mound, outside the southern walls of the city.[9] It was not recorded whether urn burials were also found near the ancient stupa platform of the Khin Ba mound in 1926–7, but sherds of terracotta urns were found there in the most recent excavations.[10]

Figure 68a provides the immediate context of the golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary, by showing how many of the linked urban and irrigational developments had been constructed at Sri Ksetra by the time that the relic deposit was first sealed up inside the Khin Ba mound around the middle of the first millennium CE, while **Figure 68b** shows the further developments in this part of the city up to the 8th century.[11] But in concluding this outline of the context of the great silver reliquary, a few wider aspects of Pyu urban and Buddhist culture should be mentioned. It is not only the case that, before the mid-first millennium CE Sri Ksetra had major links with other Buddhist courts in South Asia, but shortly afterwards its influences can be seen elsewhere in Southeast Asia. These features are traceable in links with the Buddhist architecture and iconography, texts and schools of palaeography in Andhra and to some extent in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, in Rakhine [Arakan], and in Beikthano and Halin, in Dvaravati sites [Thailand], where fragments of Pali inscriptions have been found that are nearly as old as those at Sri Ksetra and often cite the same texts.[12] The Pyu thus participated in extensive Asian networks, exercising considerable influence over contemporary societies in Rakhine and Dvaravati, over the later Buddhist Pali traditions and architecture of Pagan and, in some ways, up to the present in Burma. In short, Pyu Buddhism was impacted on, and itself influenced both particular and wider contexts for many centuries.

The monumental setting

The great silver reliquary and the golden Pali text were found in the winter of 1926–7 inside a sealed relic chamber in a mound situated on the land of U Khin Ba, a farmer in Kalagangon village, just inside the south-east walls of the ancient city of Sri Ksetra. The mound as it was then identified was low and not unusually large, with a diameter of *c.* 6m at the top and *c.* 17.3m at the bottom. The excavation report does not say why this relatively inconspicuous mound – among the many still visible at Sri Ksetra – was chosen for excavation in the first place.[13] Like most monuments and mounds at Sri Ksetra, it had already been explored by treasure-hunters, who had fortunately given up too early. No surface indications pointed to the remarkable treasure inside. There was a surface scatter of bricks and stone fragments, and, as excavations progressed, more terracotta fragments of moulded architectural plaques were found (when complete: *c.* 77 × 54 × 13.5cm in Sri Ksetra Museum); as well as fragments of carved stone plaques. The fragmentary monumental remains then reported in the Khin Ba mound indicated that the final form of this structure was similar to another in a slightly better state of preservation found nearby at Sri Ksetra two years later: a brick-built stupa surrounded by an elevated square brick platform, whose sides were decorated by a frieze of large rectangular terracotta plaques.[14] The latest excavations have revealed the whole extent of the Khin Ba platform, but of the original stupa and its relic chamber nothing now remains.

The excavation of this particular mound was to yield results of decisive importance for understanding early Pyu Buddhist civilization, in particular, and the relations between Indian and Southeast Asian Buddhist civilizations more broadly. In the whole of Sri Ksetra, many pillaged and ruined relic chambers were noted in passing in the annual *Reports of the Superintendant, Archaeological Survey of Burma*. Only in the brick core of this ruined stupa was the relic chamber found intact. Its treasure of gold and silver ritual objects formed a concentration of material and spiritual riches, reflecting in turn both on the material wealth and on the level of Buddhist culture in the Sri Ksetra kingdom, starting in about the 4th–5th century CE. The two artefacts discussed in this paper were the most important objects in a relic deposit of astonishing size and richness.[15] The golden Pali text found in that relic chamber consisted of 20 sheets of pure gold inscribed with eight excerpts of canonical texts. All 60 lines were perfectly preserved and legible (**Fig. 72**). They provided the earliest surviving examples of canonical Pali textual material and also revealed the extent of knowledge of Buddhist texts among the Pyu at that time, a subject on which several scholars have expressed their views.[16]

Finally, the great silver reliquary of Sri Ksetra is a major piece of early Buddhist art and exceptionally large (**Fig. 65a–b**). It originally comprised a three-dimensional silver

Figure 70a The cover slab of the Khin Ba relic chamber found *in situ*. Sri Ksetra Museum. © Janice Stargardt

Figure 70b The cover slab found broken nearby, Sri Ksetra Museum. © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar

bodhi tree with branches and leaves, attached by a socket on the trunk to a cylindrical base with lid, which was decorated, by repoussé method, with four seated Buddhas, gilded and in high relief, and four standing figures. The total height of tree and base must have originally been *c.* 1.20m; the surviving cylindrical base alone is *c.* 45cm high. The other contents of the relic chamber were arranged around the base, while the broken branches and leaves were found scattered in the relic chamber. The reliquary base has nail holes on its lid and side, indicating that it was originally a gilded silver sheath attached to a wooden receptacle of the same size and design. It is by far the largest reliquary in precious metal of *c.* mid-first millennium date in South or Southeast Asia and also indirectly provides rare evidence of what a sculptured wooden reliquary would have looked like in that period.

The relic chamber and its contents

The excavation of 1926–7, directed by Charles Duroiselle, Superintendant of the Archaeological Survey of Burma, left many lacunae, but he was the first to acknowledge that he was not trained for such fieldwork. Moreover, it is clear that most of Duroiselle's work at Sri Ksetra was carried out under great pressure – the race against site robbers, which in every other case the robbers won. Thus, there is no record of the depth below the surface of the mound at which he encountered the two large stone cover-slabs, the dimensions of the relic chamber beneath them, or the details of the arrangement of the ritual treasure installed in it.

One of the cover-slabs was found intact, lying face down *in situ* securely attached to the sealed chamber; the other lay broken nearby. Both are now on display in the Sri Ksetra site museum at Hmawza. These sandstone slab-covers are similar in motifs but not identical either in size or in art style. The smaller slab (found broken) now measures 145 × 135 × 11cm; the larger measures 160 × 137.5 × 15cm (**Fig. 70a–b**). Both were carved in low relief showing an Andhra-type cylindrical stupa surmounted by *harmikā*, *chattra* and banners. The *in situ* slab has a naturalistic five-tiered umbrella in the Andhra style, with long banners down each side of the umbrella finial. The broken slab has two surviving umbrellas of the same kind, but its upper edge was found broken and subsequently trimmed. Approximately 15–20cm of the top of this slab are missing, notably the top umbrellas and the place where the banners were attached to the summit of the pole (*yaṣṭi*). At the drum of both stupas, in five small arched shrines, are four seated Buddhas and Maitreya in meditation *mudrā*. On each side and slightly above the Buddhas, devotees stand in a flexed position holding single umbrellas with banners (similar to those on the finial) on long poles. The devotee on the proper right of the stupa stands on a higher level than the one on the proper left, and is thus depicted as the principal devotee (donor?). On both slabs, there is a sun in the top proper right corner and a crescent moon in the top proper left corner (since 2015 almost invisible owing to heavy cleaning).

The *in situ* slab reveals the direct inspiration of Andhra relief sculpture. This goes beyond the distinctive form of the stupa already noted. The elegant waisted profile of the *harmikā* and the naturalistic portrayal of the umbrellas, as if seen from below, are in the style seen on drum slabs at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda, Jaggayapeta and Kanaganahalli, though the stupa body at Sri Ksetra is devoid of ornamentation and is thus more austere than most sculptures originating in Andhra. The principal devotee is slightly awkwardly posed, but his dynamic posture, the relative proportions of his slender body and the shape of his headdress all reveal a fresh knowledge of Andhra style. Similarly, the sculptures of the Buddhas all relate to the proportions of the slender Andhra style. Surface wear and

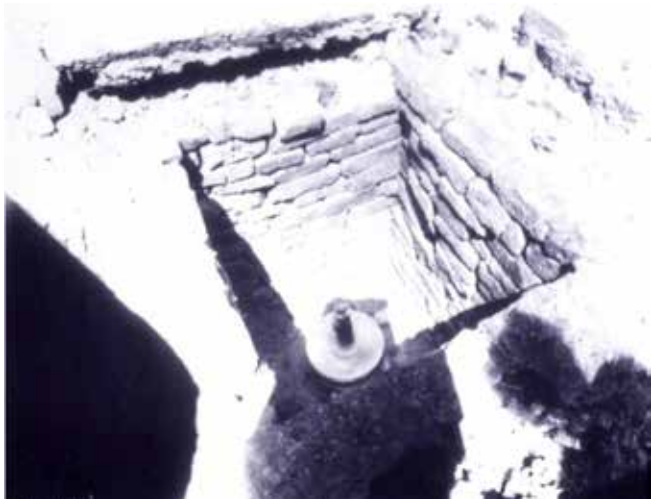

Figure 70c The relic chamber of the Khin Ba stupa, with only the great silver reliquary *in situ*. © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar; from the author's collection of prints from glass-plate negatives

cleaning have removed all the fine detail. Even so, it seems that the Buddhas' robes on both slabs were carved in the transparent Sarnath manner – i.e., without folds – from the outset. The combination of this important mature Gupta/early post-Gupta innovation with strong Andhra influences suggests that the *in situ* slab was carved between the second half of the 5th century and the mid-6th century. The combination of features mentioned above suggest that it was probably made by the Pyus – the stone is locally abundant along the banks of the Ayerarwadi.

I consider the broken slab-cover to be a much later copy of the one that was still *in situ* at the time of excavation. On it, the bodies of the Buddhas and the devotees are heavy and solid. They have big round heads with ears jutting out. The seated Buddhas and devotees on this slab are iconographically remote from any Indian sculptures, but have many counterparts among other stone Buddha images from Sri Ksetra which I date to the 8th–9th century.[17] Whereas the banners on the *in situ* cover-slab hang gracefully each side of the umbrella finial and lend an impression of movement to the sculpture, the banners on the broken slab describe two stiff heavy arcs of equal size, far removed in time from the naturalism and graceful dynamism of the Andhra style. The presence of these two stone slab-covers, one a later copy of the other, is the first indication that the stupa was rebuilt and refounded and the relic chamber opened and renewed in antiquity, though it was not noted until much later.[18] In the late first millennium, the second slab-cover was probably placed on top of the older one. It is likely that in the early 20th century it was lifted, dropped and broken by robbers who abandoned their efforts on finding a second more massive slab fixed solidly in place under it. The mixed chronological character of some of the objects in the huge relic deposit supports the possibility of one or more refoundations, as do the visible phases now revealed in the stupa platform, but the golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary belonged to the nucleus of objects deposited in the relic chamber in the period of the original foundation.

The Khin Ba relic chamber was brick-lined. Although its dimensions were not recorded, a photograph was published in the excavation report (**Fig. 70c**).[19] My measurements of the great silver reliquary and the cover-slabs of the relic chamber provide an indication of the relative proportions involved: I estimate that the relic chamber was a cube of *c.* 120 × 120 × 120cm. It contained a treasure of 68 groups of votive objects in silver and gold, ranging in size from the great gilded silver reliquary at the centre of the chamber and the golden Pali text nearby to a mass of smaller objects of silver and gold, e.g. small Buddha images in silver and gold, two small silver reliquaries, stupas and lotus flowers, embossed and inscribed plaques in silver and gold, a fleet of silver boats, delicate silver butterflies, flowers, tiny finger rings, small silver boxes and loose precious stones, as well as a few objects in lead-tin alloy and copper. The long inventory of the treasure lists an incredible 430 numbered objects, as well as many sets whose components remain unnumbered.[20] I know of no other relic deposit in South or Southeast Asia of 4th–6th century date of equal size and largely comprising such a high proportion of precious materials.

I consider that the original nucleus of the relic chamber deposit consisted of the gilded silver reliquary in the centre, the golden Pali text, five silver and partly gilded *dvārapālas*, a small silver Buddha in *vitarkamudrā* [preaching mode], four silver stupas *c.* 25cm high, four large partly gilded silver lotus flowers on silver stems, and Pyu silver coins, Sri Ksetra type, of *c.* 5th century date.[21] Significantly, all these objects, apart from the coins, are works in sheet silver. With the restoration of the stupa and the refoundation of the relic deposit in *c.* the 7th–8th century, a Pyu-language inscription was added to the lower rim of the silver reliquary with the names of two people, and a further line of small Brahmi letters beneath it – a frequent occurrence in Pyu inscriptions. The smaller ritual treasures mentioned above – sets of silver boats, boxes, trays, embossed sheets of silver and gold, smaller lotus flowers, small Buddha images, inscribed plaques and finger rings in silver and gold were probably added at this time, including additional Pyu silver coins, Sri Ksetra type, of a 7th–8th century date,[22] making a total of 45 silver coins in all. Two royal persons, Śrī Prabhuvarman and Śrī Prabhudevī, mentioned in the lower rim inscription, were probably the refounders of the relic chamber and enlarged stupa. Duroiselle called them a royal couple and this has been repeated by many, including Luce.[23] Lore Sander advises that the shared roots of their names indicate that they were royal siblings or father and daughter.[24] There seems to have been a later refoundation, when the second slab-cover was laid on top of the original, in the late 8th to 9th century as its art style suggests.

It is unlikely that a ritual treasure was installed haphazardly in the relic chamber; it probably reflected a concept of the correct spatial order of forms and materials. For instance, small Buddha images in the four metals: gold, silver, lead-tin and copper, may have faced the four cardinal directions, as may four out of the five gilded silver *dvarapala* figures in repoussé work, the four silver stupas and the four fully opened three-dimensional lotus flowers on stems, made of gilded silver. These last may have symbolized the cosmic

sea of infinity (as they would do later in the temple murals at Pagan), thereby introducing further sacred symbolic spaces into the relic chamber. Information of this kind would have provided precious insights into the Buddhist cosmology of the Pyu at the time of the original and final forms of this deposit, but it is lost as the location of most of the treasures in the relic chamber went unrecorded. The two exceptions whose locations were recorded are fortunately its most important objects: the golden Pali text was found in the south-east corner of the relic chamber, while the great silver reliquary formed its centrepiece.

Iconography, style and date of the great silver reliquary

The surviving base of the reliquary is a thin silver sheet now 45cm high, 32cm in diameter at the top and 40cm diameter at the base. There is no indication that it ever had a bottom. The ends of the flat sheet are fastened together in a dovetail joint down one side to form a cylinder (**Fig. 71a**). The lid is movable and surmounted by a tree trunk ending in a socket. This in turn was once surmounted by the three-dimensional bodhi tree with silver branches and leaves, already depicted in **Figure 65b**. When complete, this remarkable work of art must have been *c.* 1.20m high and *c.* 1.20m wide. Formed from a silver sheet with gilding over the figures of the Buddhas, the reliquary base was sculptured in high relief by the *repoussé* technique, and there was presumably a casket of hard wood inside it with the same design. In many Indian relic chambers, the outer casket – in stone, terracotta or wood – had the dimensions of this cylinder, with a small reliquary in gold, silver, crystal or ivory inside. One of the several peculiarities of the great silver reliquary of Sri Ksetra is that it inverted this order: the outer casket is large and of precious metal, while the inner casket must have been of wood (of which no trace was found by the time of excavation in the 1920s). The cylindrical silver reliquary base bears some of the earliest depictions of the Buddha known in Burma. Its decorative scheme is simple but finely executed. The four Buddhas of the present *kalpa* are depicted in high relief with haloes; each is seated with folded legs on a double lotus cushion on a square-backed throne. The proper right hands of the Buddhas are in the position of 'calling the earth to witness' (*bhūmisparśamudrā*), while the left hands are in meditation position (**Fig. 71a**).

The upper edges of each throne back terminate in two outward-facing *makara* heads with jewelled collars depicted in low relief. The Buddha figures occupy the entire vertical space on the body of the reliquary base between the lower ledge and the lid rim. Seen from above, they divide the circle formed by the cylindrical reliquary base into four equal segments, while the smaller standing figures between the Buddhas (**Figs 65a–b**, **71b–c**) subdivide it into a total of eight equal segments. In its original form, the great silver reliquary united four central elements of Buddhist thought and practice: it contained a relic; it represented a tree shrine in three dimensions; it displayed in high relief the four Buddhas of the present *kalpa* in meditation under the bodhi tree; and it showed their resistance to distractions and temptations. It *may* have also implied the association of each Buddha with one of the four cardinal directions, and the importance of the eight spatial subdivisions. The hollow eyes

Figure 71a The great silver reliquary base, showing the joint in the sheet silver. © Janice Stargardt

of the Buddha figures suggest that a ceremony for implanting the Buddha spirit into these images may have been carried out before they were inlaid with other materials which are now lost, and their bodies and haloes were gilded. Though the full extent of its multiple potential meanings may elude us, the size of the reliquary, its costly materials and fine workmanship announce that it was certainly an object of immense religious significance and royal patronage.

Turning to the material aspects of the reliquary base, the faces of the Buddhas are not identical. While all four haloes have the sun's rays incised in them and scalloped edges, and all the heads of the Buddhas are depicted with prominent curls, two of the four Buddhas have a straight hairline across the forehead and a slightly higher elevation of the crown of the head to suggest a low *uṣṇīṣa*, while the other two Buddhas have a curved hairline and extremely low *uṣṇīṣa*.[25] Like the Buddhas on the *in situ* cover slab, here the Buddhas' robes are depicted in the transparent (Sarnath) robe style, without folds, and with the proper right shoulder uncovered. Within each pair of Buddhas there are further minor differences in the placing of the feet and the angle of the heads on the necks. The standing figures are also beautifully modelled, but in lower relief than the Buddhas and ungilded (**Figs 65a–b**, **71a, c**). Each standing figure has his head and body

Figure 71b The great silver reliquary base, Buddha image (detail). © Janice Stargardt

Figure 71c The great silver reliquary base, standing figure (detail). © Janice Stargardt

turned deferentially in three-quarter profile towards the Buddha on his right. Their enigmantic hand gestures will be discussed below. Each monastic robe is depicted without folds, other than the heavy double fold falling from the left hand, which curves across the hem in front and also curves towards the back at the bottom left. Each right shoulder is bare. Again, the exact stance and facial type of these figures reveal differences. Thus two faces are identical, and on two bodies the falling fold forms a pronounced loop above the proper right foot before disappearing at the side.[26] Names stamped into the silver at the feet of these standing figures identify them as the principal disciples of the Gotama Buddha and I shall return to this point in the section on epigraphy below.

The great silver reliquary base as it survives was, as already noted, originally a silver sheath without bottom, fitting over a wooden receptacle and lid of the same shape, size and design, which disintegrated over the centuries and left no trace of itself or the relic it contained in the dust at the bottom of the relic chamber. This explains the thin and highly vulnerable character of the surviving reliquary base. Its cylindrical body was not made to be self-supporting but is now hollow and the thin silver sheet very brittle. When excavated in the winter of 1926–7, there were only small breaks in the metal affecting the single row of inscriptions on the rim of the lid and the double row on the lower ledge (**Fig. 65a**). By March 1997, the lid and its rim had broken into three pieces, leaving large gaps in the inscription. The author took photographs of the lid rim inscription in February 1995, which served as basic documents for the *Cambridge Symposium on the Golden Pali Text* in April that year.[27] Regrettably they remain the most complete recent photographic record of this unique lid rim text and the only photographs published (**Fig. 65a, 71a–b, 73**).

The iconography and style of the great silver reliquary will now be discussed in detail, both for their inherent importance and in relation to the following questions: was the reliquary made locally or imported? What are the indications of its date? What has it to contribute to the larger debate about the relations between Indic and Southeast Asian religious art in the first millenium CE? The presence of three bands of inscriptions on the reliquary base – on the lid rim in Pyu-Pali, at the feet of the standing figures in assimilated Pali and on the lower rim in Pyu with two Sanskrit royal names, respectively – is proof only of the local origin of those inscriptions, which were all added after the reliquary was made. Several basic features can usefully be repeated here: both in Buddhist literature and in Buddhist iconographic style from the 4th to 6th centuries, the Pyu appear to have received powerful influences from more than one region in India and possibly also from Sri Lanka. They assimilated influences selectively, however, adapting and recombining them with innovative results. Thus there is no prototype–copy relationship between Pyu art and either Indian or Singhalese art styles. The Buddha images on the great silver reliquary reveal some influence of the mature Gupta style of depicting the Buddha, *c.* 430–470 CE. Among those diagnostic features are: broad shoulders, large chests, upper arms dynamically braced away from the torso, high waists, short hips, well-rounded volumes of the torso and arms, a visually dominant triangle formed by the legs on seated images, the Buddhas' hair evenly coiled in the auspicious direction in largish curls gently rising to a low or very low *uṣṇīṣa*, the transparent robe (in the Sarnath idiom and its derivatives) and the general concept of the halo as filled with the sun's rays and having a scalloped edge.[28] The influence of Gupta style of face, body and robe is also visible in the modelling of the four standing figures on the Sri Ksetra reliquary base.

There are important ways, however, in which the sculptures on the great silver reliquary differ from surviving examples of Gupta Buddhist art. Whereas the lowered eyes of the Buddha are an important, eloquent innovation of mature Gupta art, on the Sri Ksetra silver reliquary base,

since the eyes were originally hollow and inlaid with another material – metal, lacquer or precious stones – they are depicted frontally. Frontal eyes on the Buddha image are an older feature, found in the Mathura images of the Kushan and early Gupta periods before *c.* 430 CE, and in Andhra statues imported into Sri Lanka in the 4th to 5th centuries.[29] The shoulders and knees of the Buddhas on the reliquary are even wider, relative to the rest of the body, than in Gupta art but do reflect the Andhra style of the 5th century in this respect. In the Gupta tradition the soles of both feet of seated Buddhas were exposed in the true *padmāsana*, or lotus position, whereas on the Khin Ba silver reliquary, and many other examples of Pyu Buddhist iconography, the Buddhas have the proper right foot folded over the left, in *virāsana*. This practice also commonly occurs in seated Andhra Buddhas found in Sri Lanka of the 5th–6th centuries.[30] Though the Gupta halo often has scallops around the edge, it frequently has intermediate bands of foliage, and is larger relative to the Buddha figure than on the silver reliquary. The Gupta throne is square-backed like those on the Sri Ksetra reliquary base but outward-facing *makara*s are rare. On the other hand, the form of the Sri Ksetra *makara* as fusion of monster, lion and elephant is close to the Gupta treatment of that motif. The double lotus cushion as the seat of a throne without legs depicted on the Sri Ksetra reliquary is not a common Gupta feature but does occur.[31] It also appears in Andhra iconography at Nagarjunakonda,[32] and in Sri Lanka,[33] where a small halo behind the Buddha's head also occurs. The slender noses of the reliquary Buddhas and relatively narrow jaws are much closer to the 4th–5th century Andhra style of the Buddha's face than to the Gupta modelling.[34]

The mixed features I have just delineated might suggest that the great silver reliquary was made in, or influenced by, 5th–6th century Buddhist cultures that continued to exist on the Andhra coastal plains or along the river valleys leading into the Deccan, little of whose art has survived *in situ*. Societies, in short, where the surviving Andhra iconographic traditions might have been influenced by contemporary Gupta art. Specific and important influences passed from the late 3rd- to early 4th century royal Mahācaitya monastic group at Nagarjunakonda to the Mahāchaitya and royal monastic group at the Pyu city of Beikthano.[35] The same area of India, as noted above, also influenced the stupa architecture of Sri Ksetra and the style of the art on the *in situ* stone cover-slab of the Khin Ba relic chamber. The complex relations of the imperial Guptas with both the Śālaṅkāyana kings of Veṅgī and the Vākāṭakas[36] mean that these kingdoms could have been a channel through which a mixture of Gupta and Andhra art styles reached the Pyu during the second half of the 5th century. The evidence available from the Godavari River basin,[37] reveals similarities between Śālaṅkāyana and Pyu stupa architecture and a similar impulse to create ritual deposits, Andhra being one of the 'hot-spots' of relic deposits in India.[38]

The Ikṣvākus, whose direct influences are traceable on Pyu architecture at Beikthano, were defeated in the first half of the 4th century by the Pallavas. Pallava palaeography reveals the closest affinities in style, but not in language, with that of the golden Pali text, with the Śālaṅkāyanas in second place.[39] As the preceding paragraph shows, the Buddhist culture and art styles of the Ikṣvākus and the Sātavāhanas, the predecessors of the Pallavas and Śālaṅkāyanas in their respective parts of Andhra, were not immediately extinguished by the Pallava conquest. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Faxian recorded great Buddhist foundations and religious communities flourishing in this area at the start of the 5th century.[40] Building and Buddhist culture is now thought to have continued at Nagarjunakonda into the 5th century. At Alluru, four large standing Buddha images in stone wear robes pleated in the Amaravati style but, like the great silver reliquary, have large frontal eyes.[41] At least 118 early Buddhist sites have been identified in Andhra Pradesh, dating from about the 3rd century BCE to the 3rd century CE,[42] but little of the art has survived, with the notable exceptions of the Amaravati,and Nagarjunakonda sites of the Krishna River Valley, Kanaganahalli on the Bhima River and Andhra pieces imported into Sri Lanka.

There are two further unusual features in the great silver reliquary relevant to this discussion of its origin. The standing figures are labelled at their feet as the four principal disciples of the Gotama Buddha. Each is turned slightly and deferentially towards the Buddha on his right (note the way in which the problem of the foreshortened feet is handled in the service of this posture, **Figs 71a, c**). The hand gesture of reverence – *namaskaramudrā* – would be normal here according to the canons of Buddhist iconography (as in the Bimaran reliquary). On the great silver reliquary, however, the disciples make hand gestures more appropriate for the Buddha himself. Indeed, their right hands, which are in *abhaya* or 'fear not' *mudrā*, have on the palms a set of concentric circles – one of the auspicious signs of a superior being or Buddha. Their left hands are in a curious position, reminiscent of the Buddha holding the edge of his robe.

The combination of *abhayamudrā* and this gesture occurs on Gupta and post-Gupta period standing bronze Buddha figurines.[43] The type was widely distributed over vast distances in Southeast Asia, from the 6th or 7th century to the 8th or 9th century.[44] The standing figures on the great silver reliquary base, though superficially similar, are in fact stylistically and iconographically distinct from such bronze Buddhas. They do not perform the same gesture – in the figures on the reliquary base both hand gestures are high: the right-hand gesture is on the level of the upper arm, the palm of the left hand is upright and above the elbow, but the left fingers close over a loop or string which is not part of the robe. On the bronze Buddhas, the right-hand gestures have been lowered to elbow height, while the left hand is lower still, and such lowering of the gestures has been regarded as chronologically important.[45] The depiction of the standing figures on the reliquary base – heads, hands and robes – is close to that of a Buddha, but without any trace of an *uṣṇīṣa*, and their whole stance is deferentially directed towards the large seated Buddhas. Possibly, despite the names stamped at their feet, they represent bodhisattvas.[46] The second iconographic peculiarity of the great silver reliquary is characteristically Pyu, and is found in other sculptures at Sri Ksetra of undoubtedly local origin. It is the position of the

Figure 72 The golden Pali text of Sri Ksetra (open). © Department of Archaeology and National Museums, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture, Myanmar

Buddhas' proper right hands on this reliquary. Instead of extending the hand and fingers straight down towards the earth over the shin-bone of the right leg, as is usual in Indian iconography of *bhūmisparśamudrā*,[47] the hands here rest on the knee with fingers only pointing towards the earth. This became an even more pronounced characteristic on a number of large *c.* 7th century stone reliefs at Sri Ksetra, which are certainly of local origin.[48]

Thus the iconography and style of the great silver reliquary reflect the Pyu assimilation of influences from more than one Indic source, including possibly some Sinhala influence, united with some independent features of local origin. The strong and fresh influence of both Andhra and early mature Gupta Buddhist art style is particularly visible and carries valuable chronological connotations of the second half of the 5th century to the early 6th century. If these Gupta influences passed through the intermediary of the Śālaṅkāyana culture at Veṅgī, or some other contemporary Buddhist culture in the coastal area of central Andhra, icons of mixed Gupta–Andhra style *may* have been made there and sent from south-east India to central Burma. But in this instance, it is striking that the art style of this reliquary in its original form reveals originality of design on an impressively large scale harmoniously achieved. Their datable aspects appear to be close to the date of the inscription on the lid rim, and to the date of the *in situ* stone cover-slab of the relic chamber: that is, to the period from the second half of the 5th century to the mid-6th century CE. Based on the foregoing, I consider it to be local in origin, but inspired by still fresh and powerful influences from several Indic styles of religious art.

The epigraphy of the great silver reliquary

A number of materials inscribed in Pali, on gold, silver and stone were found at Sri Ksetra in the first three decades of the 20th century. They comprise two inscribed Maunggun gold plates of *c.* 6th century date, three inscribed fragments from a single stone found at the Bawbawgyi stupa from about the 6th century, and the single inscribed Kyundawzu gold plate of possibly 5th-century date. All were found in the urban area of Sri Ksetra or nearby. The gold and silver plates may have been scattered survivors of other relic chambers that had been plundered.[49] The inscribed stone may have been deliberately deposited on the terrace of the Bawbawgyi stupa; it was certainly preserved there during successive refoundations and enlargements. All these inscriptions are in canonical Pali.[50] In their date, language and material form, they corroborate the evidence provided by the golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary base, and demonstrate that a Buddhist tradition of inscribing canonical Pali texts on gold, silver and stone, and placing them in or on stupas, flourished at Sri Ksetra in the 5th and 6th centuries. In addition to these larger and relatively well-preserved gold and silver plates, numerous smaller complete and fragmentary inscribed silver and gold leaves were preserved in the Khin Ba relic chamber,[51] while the empty relic chambers at Sri Ksetra bear sadly eloquent testimony to the spiritual and material riches that are now lost.

Before continuing this section, I shall give a brief outline of the golden Pali text, which, as foreshadowed in the Abstract, forms a necessary background to a consideration of the epigraphy of the great silver reliquary. Eight excerpts of Buddhist canonical texts were represented in the golden Pali text. The passages have been read, identified and dicussed elsewhere.[52] The golden Pali text was approximately a half-size version of a palm-leaf manuscript, just over 16cm long and *c.* 3cm wide, consisting of 20 inscribed leaves of solid gold, inside wooden end boards covered with sheet gold and bound with thick gold wires (**Figs 66, 72**). The eight excerpts varied greatly in length from less than one line to 25. Of the 20 gold leaves, 18 were

Figure 73 The great silver reliquary base; lid rim inscription after the name of the Buddha Gotama with the phrases omitted from the golden Pali text, eye-copy made by Ingo Strauch 2015 based on photographs by Janice Stargardt

numbered and carried three lines of text, the 19th was unnumbered and had four lines, while the 20th was also unnumbered and had only two lines. The total of 60 lines in this text reveals the work of many hands; all except the one responsible for less than one line had been trained in the palaeographical traditions of Andhra. Falk's detailed study of the *akṣara*s in the golden Pali text led him to conclude that the oldest monk was responsible for the last leaf and trained in the mid-4th century,[53] while the others (perhaps as many as 19) were trained before the mid-5th century. In the view of Falk and von Hinüber, the script of the golden Pali text relates most closely to the Pallava, followed by the Śālaṅkāyana of Veṅgī. U Lu Pe Win, who made the first reading of this text, agreed about its date, but still accepted Finot's hypothesis that the script derived from the Kadamba.[54] U Lu Pe Win did not, in his pioneer reading of the golden Pali text, note that, in excerpt 5, two of the fourteen kinds of knowledge possessed by a Buddha (*Buddhāñaṇas*) had been omitted: *ñaṇas* 9 and 10. This fact was pointed out by Falk in his paper for the Cambridge Symposium, where he was also the first scholar to note that more than one hand was involved in inscribing this text.[55]

On the great silver reliquary base, inscriptions occur in three places: a single-line inscription on the lid rim, beginning with a Pyu invocation, *baṇḥ*[56] (not *ba*, as read by Blagden in 1917;[57] and not *baṃḥ*, as read by Falk[58]). This invocation is followed by the name of a Buddha, a Pyu word and a brief Pali text. The regular epigraphic style of the upper rim inscription (**Fig. 73**), shows an experienced scribe at work, who probably etched the text lightly onto strips of prepared palm-leaf with a fine stylus and then incised through these master sheets into the silver metal with a stronger and slightly thicker stylus. Duroiselle reported seeing the names of Konagamana (in fact written with hard consonants in the Pyu manner as Gonagamona), Kakusandha (Gagusadha), Kassapa (Kasyaba) and Gotama (Godama), in that order, but he gave no reading of the rest of the texts inscribed on the rim between each name.[59] My 1995

photographic record shows a break in the rim where the text following Kakusandha's name should have appeared; by 1997 much of the lid and its rim inscription were missing. The second group of inscriptions simply gives the names of the four principal disciples of the Gotama Buddha, deeply impressed into the lower ledge of the reliquary base just in front of the feet of each standing figure: Kassapa (again written as Kasyaba), Moggallāna (Maulana), Sāriputta (...putra) and Ānanda (An...). Finally, as already mentioned, there is a third inscription running around the bottom ledge of the reliquary base consisting of one line of larger letters and one of smaller letters. The larger letters are mainly Pyu words which can be transliterated but not yet confidently translated, as Pyu remains one of the few ancient literary languages of Southeast Asia that has not yet been reconstructed.[60] This line does, however, contain the Sanskritic names of two royal persons: Śrī Prabhuvarman and Sri Prabhudevī, discussed above.

I turn now to the unread texts between the names of the four Buddhas on the lid rim of the reliquary base. During the Cambridge Symposium in 1995, through the joint efforts of Professors O. von Hinüber, R. Gombrich and H. Falk using my photographs, it was established that the text after the Buddha Konagamana praises the Buddha, that after the Buddha Kassapa praises the Dhamma, and that after the Buddha Gotama praises the Sangha. These three core texts of the Pali Canon thus invoke the Triple Gem. There is, however, a most unusual feature in the text immediately after the name of the Gotama Buddha. It is not the standard beginning of a key text but rather a passage taken from the middle of one: namely the two *ñaṇa*s that Falk had noted as missing from excerpt five of the golden Pali text. Praise of the Sangha then follows (**Fig. 73**).[61]

Thus, these two sacred objects, the golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary, each outstandingly important in its own right, were also ritually related to each other because part of the inscription on the lid rim of the reliquary base was composed to rectify an omission in the fifth excerpt of the golden Pali text. Together they made a complete ritual assemblage. The rarity of two ancient inscriptions, one composed in relation to the other, needs no further emphasis. The fact that they also formed the main components of the Khin Ba relic chamber, and are the most important among a group of other early texts in canonical Pali from Sri Ksetra, enhances their importance, while at the same time locating them in the context of flourishing Pyu early Buddhist culture outside India.

Conclusion

The historical circumstances surrounding the creation of both text and reliquary can be sketched as follows. The monastic community associated with the original stupa and relic chamber at the Khin Ba mound must have been renowned for its learning. The distribution of 20 leaves of solid gold among them, to be inscribed with Pali excerpts, must have been a major royal religious act. Texts can be treated as the central relics in a stupa,[62] and the other remnants of gold and silver texts found at Sri Ksetra show that inscribing the canon on leaves of precious metal was a strong tradition there in the 5th to 6th century. Since one leaf in the golden Pali text was flawed, the entire text was understood to be ritually imperfect and could not serve as a text relic by itself. Nor, however, could it be discarded. Work once dedicated to the Buddha cannot be taken away – a precept still respected in the monasteries of Southeast Asia. The great silver reliquary base was inscribed to supply that omission and also to carry texts invoking the Triple Gem, thereby approaching – in two ways – the status of a text relic itself. A major image of the Buddhas and the Tree Shrine in its own right, the great silver reliquary would also have contained a bodily relic, thereby rendering the Buddha doubly present. By this time the image of the Buddha could be viewed *as* the Buddha, so the installation of the great silver reliquary in its original grandeur inside the Khin Ba stupa reified several times over the relic of the Buddha.

With the golden Pali text, the great silver reliquary base and the other inscriptions belonging to the 5th or 6th centuries, the Sri Ksetra Pali materials are at least two centuries older than the Kathmandu manuscript, long regarded as the oldest known source of canonical Pali, as noted above.[63] In contrast to that isolated example, the Sri Ksetra Pali materials come from a rich archaeological context. Interestingly, but not surprisingly given the diverse borrowings evidenced in Pyu culture, certain orthographical characteristics of the golden Pali text noted by Falk – e.g. the doubling of consonants after 'r'; nasals before a consonant not indicated by an *anusvāra* but accompanied by the nasal *parasavarna* – show that the writers of this text had some knowledge of Sanskritic grammatical rules in addition to their knowledge of Pali.[64] In many respects this feature faithfully reflects a significant moment in Indian cultural history, namely the rise of Sanskrit learning within Mahāyāna Buddhism and early theistic Hinduism in the 5th and 6th centuries. The golden Pali text, the great silver reliquary and the several Pali fragments of Sri Ksetra provide rare and important evidence that Pali learning was far from extinguished or in decline, however, but rather was, at this critical moment, spreading eastwards beyond India to strike permanent roots in the Buddhist traditions of ancient Burma, Thailand, Laos and later Cambodia.

During the mid-4th century, the Pallavas expanded their territories northwards to the Krishna River by conquering the Ikṣvāku dynasty, whose greatest city was Nagarjunakonda, but who also controlled at that time the other Buddhist complexes at Amaravati and Jaggayapeta (all in the central-lower Krishna Valley). Major 4th-century Buddhist influences from that area have been traced in the Pyu monumental architecture of Beikthano and Sri Ksetra.[65] Some of these suggest court-to-court contacts as the avenue for the transmission of Buddhist culture to the early Pyu in central Burma. The golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary, as part of a royal religious endowment, continued to reflect elite patronage of Buddhism among the Pyu. The sacred objects discussed here originated in a context of established Buddhist culture in Burma at least a century after the first surviving evidence of such contacts. This perspective has now been widened by recent archaeological research showing that Buddhism had been adopted at Sri Ksetra on a popular level by the 4th–5th

century.[66] Falk, however, regarded the golden Pali text as the work of a 'missionizing' phase of Buddhism in Burma, carried out by a group of monks originating (with one exception) from the Krishna River area.[67] His earlier idea, expressed in 1995 at the Cambridge Symposium, was that the great silver reliquary and golden Pali text exhibit unusual orthographic features that were further developed in the Maunggun gold plates, indicating that all were composed in Burma.[68] The idea of 'missionizing efforts' among the Pyu in the 5th to 6th centuries needs, therefore, to be nuanced by the archaeological evidence that major Buddhist influences from Nagarjunakonda were assimilated by the Pyu at Beikthano and Sri Ksetra in the 4th century at the latest.[69] The golden Pali text and the great silver reliquary together reveal the mid-5th to mid-6th century as a period of substantial affluence in Sri Ksetra. The remains of stupas and other Pali fragments noted here combine to show that they belong in the midst of an established, flourishing Buddhist culture of the Pali-based tradition, which began at least a century earlier.

If we look at the distribution of the donatory inscriptions of just one Buddhist benefactress, the *Upāsaka* Bodhisiri of Nagarjunakonda, we glimpse the geographical range of the contacts of Nagarjunakonda. Though not royal Bodhisiri was certainly elite as her long inscription on the floor of an apsidal temple (F) appears amidst endowments by the royal women of Nagarjunakonda. Its first part extols the vast extent of conversions to Theravamsa Buddhism from Kashmir to Sri Lanka, followed by the names of her family members whom she wishes to share in the merit of her foundation and ends with a list of her other donations to the *Saṅgha* in the 4th century, which spread from Nagarjunakonda along the Krishna River towards the coast as far away as Ghantasala, Hirumuthuva, Papila and Pushpagiri. They embraced foundations for Sinhala as well as local monks, and ranged financially from the apsidal temple to two stupa shrines, a bodhi-tree shrine and a *maṇḍapa* pillar to a hall for monks, four complete stone *maṇḍapa*s, ten monastic cells, a tank and a verandah.[70] Bodhisiri was obviously rich and well able to patronize Buddhism. She chose to promote the Theravaṃsa tradition in both Andhra and Sri Lanka and celebrated it elsewhere. Her immediate family connections encompassed both trade and the finances of the Ikṣvāku court.[71] The Buddhist eucumene of Andhra in the 4th century is thus revealed as a particularly dynamic, and geographically extensive world.

Since we can document epigraphically the links between the middle Krishna River Valley and Sinhala monastic communities of north-west Sri Lanka, should we neglect the evidence that monks travelled and brought about major transmissions of Buddhist knowledge between Nagarjunakonda, Beikthano and Sri Ksetra in the mid-4th century? It is clear, that the royal religious traditions revealed at Beikthano were also present in Sri Ksetra by the 5th century at the latest.[72] In fact, the art styles of the great silver reliquary base and the palaeography of the golden Pali text suggest that contacts between Sri Ksetra and south-east India also remained fresh and direct during the 5th and 6th centuries. From the 4th century onwards, a complex network of missions, pilgrimages, religious donations and foundations existed between south-east India, central Burma and north-west Sri Lanka, under the patronage of kings, queens, merchants (male and female) and eminent monks, while farmers and craftspeople also embraced the new religion. The Nagarjunakonda heritage was joined in the 5th and 6th centuries by expanding Pyu contacts with Gupta, Vākāṭaka, Śālaṅkāyana and other Indic centres, which left visible traces in the writing and art styles of the great silver reliquary base and the golden Pali text.

In the case of these two iconic objects, not to mention the city of Sri Ksetra itself, we encounter many questions on the nature, mode of transmission and dating of Indic elements in Southeast Asia on a much wider front than simply art styles evidenced by a small number of artefacts. One would like to engage with the changing currents of Buddhist thought and ritual practice, with the monastic travellers who carried them and the many levels of Pyu society who responded to them. The two objects of this study – inscribed reliquary and text – incorporate a range of cultural processes that had taken place before they could be produced: the transmission of Indic alphabets and specific writing styles mainly from south-east India to the Pyu, knowledge of the Pali language and a part of the Pali Canon, some knowledge of Sanskrit, and knowledge of Buddhist iconography and of several styles of depiction. So far, though Andhra and Gupta influences are the primary sources, other possible intermediaries are also visible. But no prototype–copy relationship has been traced between the great silver reliquary and the Buddhist iconography of any community in India or Sri Lanka, though prudence requires us to recognise that such a comparison is burdened by the destruction of many Buddhist sites and their votive objects – or their reconstruction as Hindu monuments – in the areas most central to our study. The foregoing pages present, however, persuasive reasons to consider that the fusion of art styles and the unique scale of their creation in the great silver reliquary result from a selective borrowing and mixing of Indic features by the Pyu with the addition of their own innovations. The great silver reliquary from Sri Ksetra signals the beginning of recognizably Pyu art traditions to accompany the refinement of Pyu Buddhist thought and practice.

Notes

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