

at an image inscribed with the 'Hymn of dependent origination'. We see the inscription on the sculpture and immediately next to it we see the Buddha. And when we see the Buddha we know him.

## NOTES

1. *Sabbāpaṇaṃkho mahārāja bhagavato navagaṃ buddhavacanaṃ sārīrikāni pārībhogikāni cetiyāni saṃgharatanā c* (Trenckner, 1928: 341); to be read with Horner's (1963–4) translation.
2. *dhātusu dīṭṭesu dīṭṭo hoti jino* (Geiger, 1908: 17: 3). The Buddha is here referred to as Jina 'the Conqueror', a common epithet. The most important study of the relic cult is that of Trainor (1997), upon which we have partially drawn for this essay. The tri-ratna, and its relation to the architectural configuration of monasteries, was first explored by Bandaranayake (1974: 27).
3. For the Sanskrit version, see *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.
4. The question of Aśoka's role is dealt with by Strong (1983).
5. For an account of relics in central India known from nineteenth-century excavations, see Willis (2001).
6. *praṇasamedā śarīrabhagavato śakamunisa* (Sircar 1965, vol. I, 104). The key word *praṇasamedā* = Sanskrit *prāṇasametah*, i.e. endowed with or possessed of life. For further discussion, see Schopen (1997: 117–18).
7. The Buddha's presence in Theravāda seems to have been figurative rather than actual: the resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*) of the Buddha and the Arhats explains the marvels (*pāṭhira*) that may occur at relic monuments, see *Milindapañha* (Trenckner, 1928: 309–10). Compare the Mīmāṃsaka view about the actual sentience of deities in *Śabarabhāṣya* (*Devatādhikaraṇa* 9: 1: 5: 6–9).
8. See Smith's edition of the *Khuddakapāṭha* (Smith, 1915: 221–222).
9. The text is summarized in Trainor (1997: 170).
10. The number of bodies was elaborated over time to meet philosophical and theological needs, see Strong (1983: 105–19); Reynolds (1977); and more recently Harrison (1992); with a response in Makransky (1997).
11. There are seven basic meanings of the term 'Dharma' in Buddhism, see further Conze (1962: 92–106).
12. The opposition these scholars set up between Mahāyāna text and Theravāda relic is overdrawn: the Tibetans have many stūpas and relics, see further Bentor (1996).
13. Divakāra's translation into Chinese given in Boucher (1991: 810).
14. *Āryapratityasamutpādanāmamahāyanasūtra*, translation from Tibetan Boucher (1991: 11).

## 4

## The Power of Proximity

### Creating and Venerating Shrines in Indian Buddhist Narratives<sup>1</sup>

ANDY ROTMAN

In India, in the first centuries of the Common Era, along with a sudden and vast proliferation of Buddhist monasteries—most of them situated just outside of urban centres on easily accessible trade routes (Heitzman, 1984)—a promotional plan was put in place to encourage pilgrimage to Buddhist shrines. In a wide range of Buddhist sources, devotees are shown extolling or enjoying the benefits of visiting sites associated with the Buddha's biography, and reliquaries of a buddha are shown to be powerful tools for merit making (cf. Dehejia, 1989; Trainor, 1997; Walters, 1997; Zwalf, 1996; and Strong, 2004). Yet, what constitutes a shrine of a buddha? What empowers it? What transforms a place, such as a building at a monastery, into a site of veneration? And why go there? Furthermore, what does one do at such a site, and how does one benefit?

In an effort to address these questions, I want to examine a story found in the *Divyāvadāna* ('Divine stories')—a vast compilation of Indian Buddhist narratives from the early centuries of the Common Era. In both the 'Story of a Brahmin named Indra' (*Indrabrahmaṇa-avadāna*) and then again in the 'Story of the Toyikā Festival' (*Toyikāmahā-avadāna*), a tale is told about a place called Toyikā

concerning the great merit that is accrued when devotees who are faithful in mind perform ritual practices at a shrine of a buddha.<sup>2</sup> Though tropes are repeated in the *Divyāvadāna*, this is the only tale that is told twice, and the only tale that contextualizes the mechanics of practice for the faithful, both for when a buddha is alive and for when no buddha is in living-and-breathing presence.

The story begins with the Buddha and Ānanda going to Toyikā. There a Brahmin ploughing in the fields sees the Buddha, and then reflects,

'If I go to Lord Gautama and pay my respects, my work will suffer. If I don't go to him and pay my respects, my merit will suffer. Isn't there any skilful way that neither my work will suffer nor my merit?' Then this thought occurred to him: 'I will pay my respects standing right here. This way neither my work will suffer nor my merit.' Standing right there and still holding his goad-post,<sup>3</sup> he paid his respects: 'I pay my respects to Lord Buddha!'<sup>4</sup>

The Buddha then explains to Ānanda,

This Brahmin has a [great] opportunity to put an end to worldly existence. If he only had the proper experience, knowledge, and insight, [it would have occurred to him] that in this place lies the undisturbed assemblage of bones of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa. Hence, he could have venerated me and, in this way, have venerated two perfectly awakened buddhas. How is that? In this place, Ānanda, lies the undisturbed assemblage of bones of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa.<sup>5</sup>

The 'skilful way' (*upāya*) that the Brahmin devises to venerate the Buddha and not stray from his work, however, is not skilful enough. The rite performed by the Brahmin is not considered successful by the Buddha. The Brahmin 'pays his respects' or 'respectfully greets' (*abhivādanam* √kr) the Buddha from beside his plough, yet the Buddha tells Ānanda that the Brahmin has missed a '[great] opportunity to put an end to worldly existence'. If the Brahmin had 'the proper experience, knowledge, and insight', he would have known that he had to come closer and venerate Gautama Buddha and Kāśyapa Buddha.

In the version of the story preserved in the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya*—the probable source for the narratives in the *Divyāvadāna*, if not the *Divyāvadāna* itself (cf. Hiraoka, 1998)—the problem is glossed even more clearly as one of proximity. As the Buddha explains,

Ānanda, this Brahmin has made a mistake. Had he approached and respectfully greeted me in this place, then he could have looked and come to know for himself that in this place lies the undisturbed assemblage of bones of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa. Having approached, he could have venerated me. Hence, he could have venerated two perfectly awakened buddhas. How is that? In this place, Ānanda, lies the undisturbed assemblage of bones of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa.<sup>6</sup>

It is being in the presence of the object of veneration that allows for a skilful way of practice. In this case, ritual action from a distance is a mistake.

In the above portion of the Toyikā story, two forms of ritual action are differentiated—that of 'respectfully greeting' (*abhivādana*) and 'venerating' (*vandana*). The act of 'respectfully greeting' does not occur frequently in the *Divyāvadāna*, nor is it described in detail, but it is elaborated upon in texts such as the *Manusmṛiti*.<sup>7</sup> In *The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, V. S. Apte explains the practice as a form of 'salutation of a superior or elder by an inferior or junior, or of a teacher by his disciple. It consists of (1) rising from one's seat (*pratyutthāna*); (2) clasping the feet (*pādopasaṃgraha*), and (3) repeating the form of salutation (*abhivāda*) which includes the name of title of the person addressed, followed by the mention of the person's own name'. In the Toyikā story, however, the act of 'respectfully greeting' is done at a distance, too far away for 'clasping the feet.' As a practice in the *Divyāvadāna*, it is distinguished only by its relative lack of efficacy. By 'respectfully greeting' the Buddha, the Brahmin has not 'put an end to worldly existence'. The process of 'venerating' is also not defined in the *Divyāvadāna*, but it does occur frequently in a stereotyped trope of what one does upon meeting the Buddha—one 'venerates with one's head the feet of the Blessed One'.<sup>8</sup> This act does require physical proximity and also a touching of the feet. And it is this act that has great karmic efficacy.

Now to return to the story:

In response to the Buddha's pronouncement that the Brahmin has missed a chance to venerate two buddhas, Ānanda springs into action:

The venerable Ānanda very quickly folded his upper garment into four as a seat, and then said this to the Blessed One: 'May the Blessed One please sit down on this seat that I have specially prepared. In this way, this piece

of earth will be made-use-of by two perfectly awakened buddhas—by the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa and now by the Blessed One.<sup>9</sup>

Gregory Schopen (1997: 29; cf. 1997: 131–2) has written about the Toyikā story, and in his assessment, the text 'is concerned solely with the sacralization of that otherwise unmarked piece of ground by acts of worship and the establishment of a festival (*maha*)'. While Schopen is no doubt right that the text is concerned with the sacralization of the site at Toyikā—with somehow endowing it with sacred significance, with marking it as a site of ritual efficacy—the text is also interested in explaining how the ritual efficacy of such a site arises. And this problematic does not seem to involve the cult of the book, as Schopen (1975: 174–5) had previously speculated. Instead, it involves the action of 'making use of (*paribhoga*)' something.

Now in the Toyikā story, the Buddha first explains that if the Brahmin ploughing his fields had come to him, 'in this place' he could have venerated two buddhas. Ānanda then asks the Buddha to sit down there so that 'this piece of earth will be made use of by two perfectly awakened buddhas—by the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa and now by the Blessed One'.

Judging by Ānanda's request that the Buddha sit down there so that the place will be twice 'made use of', the internment of Kāśyapa's bones there constitute one making-use-of the spot, but the Buddha's standing there does not. It seems that for the Buddha to make use of the spot, he needs to sit down on it—perhaps understood as a need to touch it, to engage with it more physically.

In the version of the Toyikā story in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakkathā*, this notion of a shrine being constituted by an object that has been made use of is stated explicitly. There the Buddha explains to a Brahmin that there are 'three kinds of shrines: shrines for bodily remains, memorial shrines, and shrines by use'.<sup>10</sup> In a commentary of the *Khuddakapāṭha* the great fifth-century scholar Buddhaghosa clarifies this classificatory system:

It should be built up, thus it is a shrine—it is said that it should be the object of worship. Or, it is a shrine because it has been built up. Moreover, it is of three kinds: a shrine by use, a memorial shrine, and a relic shrine. In this regard, the Bodhi tree is a shrine by use, an image of the Buddha is a memorial shrine, a stūpa with a reliquary that contains a relic is a relic shrine.<sup>11</sup>

In regard to the creation of shrines, it seems that there may have been a connection between making use of an object and sitting on it or in its presence. Both 'the place' (*pradeśa*) in question in the Toyikā story and the Bodhi tree in Buddhaghosa's example are apparently made use of by the Buddha's sitting there. In the story of the present that begins the *Kāliṅgabodhi jāta*, a Bodhi tree is likewise transformed into a 'shrine by use' by the Buddha's sitting at its base and meditating.<sup>12</sup> Though Kāśyapa's bones would technically be a shrine for bodily remains according to this schema, Kāśyapa's bones also could be said to make use of the spot, for they too could be said to have an active connection with it.

This notion of making-use-of is further glossed in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*. As Gregory Schopen explains, monastics are shown to be obligated to make use of things that people give them as a way of generating merit for those donors. Hence, the notion of 'merit resulting from use' (*paribhogānvyam puṇyam*) is applied to a range of monastic offerings (Schopen, 1996: 112ff.). Much like these examples, here too there is a sense that certain objects must be put to use as a way of creating merit.<sup>13</sup> Here, however, merit is not created as a gift-in-turn or a payment-of-goods to an individual donor. Instead, merit is created by dint of transforming a place into a more efficacious field of merit for any future donor.<sup>14</sup>

Now in the Toyikā story, this passage concerning the logic of making-use-of something has multiple concerns, and primary among them is promoting pilgrimage to shrines of a buddha. The text seems to contend that a 'place' becomes a 'shrine of a buddha' when it is made use of by a buddha, and that this occurs through close physical contact. If this is the case, then the notion of a 'shrine of a buddha' may have had a very wide signification, encompassing any place that a Buddha sat or slept.<sup>15</sup> India may very well be filled with such shrines, whether they are recognized or not.

Yet how does one know if a place has been transformed into a 'shrine of a buddha'? In the 'Story of Kunāla' (*Kunāla-avadāna*), for example, Upagupta brings King Aśoka to various sites associated with the Buddha's life and explains that 'in this place' such and such event occurred. Are these sites merely 'places', or also 'shrines of a buddha'? Did the Buddha's activities in these places constitute a making-use-of them or were these activities inert, as standing apparently was in the

Toyikā story? When one considers the exhortations that the Buddha later makes in the Toyikā story regarding the great rewards accrued from ritual practices at 'shrines of a buddha', this question of the status of these sites becomes crucial.

It is striking, nonetheless, that in this case the activity of standing is not sufficient to transform a place into a shrine, for the existence of 'footprint shrines' (*padacetiya*) is well attested in the Buddhism of South Asia. In his discussion of the status of the Buddha's footprint, Jacob Kinnard (2000: 42–3) explains that 'as objects that have come into direct contact with the Buddha himself, they most logically fall into the *pāribhogika* [i.e., shrines by use] category (although these are clearly not objects that the Buddha used); however, since they serve to commemorate the Buddha's presence in a particular spot, they could also be considered *uddesika* relics [i.e., memorial shrines]'. In the case of the Toyikā story, however, the ground on which the Buddha stands falls into neither category. Though the Buddha comes into 'direct contact' with the ground beneath his feet, it is not considered to be an object 'that the Buddha used', and no mention is made of its status as a memorial shrine.

Now to return to the story once again:

After Ānanda has made a seat for the Buddha with his robe, the Buddha sits down and then asks the monks if they would like to see 'the undisturbed assemblage of remains of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa'.<sup>16</sup> They assent, and remark that 'at the sight of it, monks can cultivate faith in their minds'.<sup>17</sup> Some *nāgas* then raise the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa's undisturbed assemblage of remains. Thereafter, the Buddha tells the monks to grasp its appearance, and then it disappears.

Meanwhile, King Prasenajit hears that the Blessed One has raised up the undisturbed assemblage of remains of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa,<sup>18</sup> so he and a host of others set out to see it. Yet it disappears before they arrive. The people 'feel miserable and dejected',<sup>19</sup> and wonder whether their coming there has been in vain. A lay disciple of the Buddha then begins to circumambulate the place where the perfectly awakened Kāśyapa's remains had been.

And with his mind, he formed this thought: 'How much merit will I get from respectfully walking around [this place]?'

Then the Blessed One, knowing with his mind the thoughts of that lay disciple and that large crowd of people, uttered this verse so that they wouldn't have any regrets:

Hundreds of thousands of gold coins or nuggets  
are not equal to the wise man, faithful in mind,  
who walks around shrines of a buddha.

One of the lay disciples then offered a lump of clay at this place, and thus formed this thought: 'Elsewhere the Blessed One has explained how much merit is earned from respectfully walking around [shrines of a buddha]. But how much merit will there be from [offering] a lump of clay?'

Then the Blessed One, knowing with his mind his thoughts as well, uttered this verse:

Hundreds of thousands of gold coins or nuggets  
are not equal to one, faithful in mind,  
who places a single lump of clay  
at a shrine of a buddha.

After hearing this, many hundreds of thousands of beings placed lumps of clay there as offerings.<sup>20</sup>

The story continues with this style of exposition as the Buddha explains that hundreds of thousands of golden objects are not equal

to one, faithful in mind, who places heaps of pearls and lovely flowers at shrines of a buddha

... to the wise man, faithful in mind, who festoons with garlands shrines of a buddha

... to the wise man, faithful in mind, who makes a gift oil lamps at shrines of a buddha

... to the wise man, faithful in mind, who sprinkles perfume at shrines of a buddha;<sup>21</sup> and so on.

After the Buddha has sat down and transformed the site at Toyikā into a place made use of by two perfectly awakened buddhas, he then makes visible the remains of the perfectly awakened Kāśyapas so that they may be seen and their sight may be used to cultivate faith. This ritual practice of 'seeing' (*darśana*) is quite common in the *Divyāvadāna*, particularly in the following scenario: a being sees the Buddha, faith arises in him or her, and then the being makes an

offering to the Buddha. The Buddha, in turn, foretells the great karmic reward that the donor will accrue as a result of his or her gift.

Here, however, it is the skeleton of a previous buddha—not a presently living-and-breathing Buddha—that is seen and used to cultivate faith. Yet, as the Buddha later observes, after hundreds and thousands of beings have already performed a variety of ritual acts at the site where the Buddha Kāśyapa lies buried,

One may honour [a buddha] still living  
as well as one passed into final nirvāṇa.  
Cultivating faith equally in one's mind,  
here there is no difference in merit.<sup>22</sup>

As Schopen (1997: 132) rightly remarks, 'the implications here are that there is no distinction between a living Buddha and an assemblage of relics—both make the sacred person equally present as an object of worship, and the presence of either makes available the same opportunity to make merit'.

Yet, in the Toyikā story the remains of the Buddha Kāśyapa soon disappear, and this leads to the performance and explanation of a different set of efficacious ritual actions. These actions do not require one to see the object of veneration; one only need be in its presence. Furthermore, these actions are shown to be quite easy to accomplish, for 'many hundreds of thousands of beings' are said to have followed ritual protocol in offering lumps of clay there. Presumably, if a multitude of people could go to a shrine like the one at Toyikā, make offerings, and receive promise of great rewards, then such journeys should be emulated. The argument here is clear: those sites that have been made use of by a buddha should be visited, and in their presence offerings should be made. The results will be extraordinary.

Now, in addition to demonstrating that buddhas and buddha-relics are functionally equivalent and that efficacious ritual actions can be performed without great difficulty before even unseen objects of veneration, the Toyikā story also seems to have another purpose—the proverbial land grab.

John Strong argues that the various Toyikā stories may attest to a Buddhist project of using the cults of previous buddhas, such as Kāśyapa, to co-opt sites associated with other divinities into Śakyamuni's dispensation. As Strong (1999: 10) explains,

The cult of previous Buddhas, in fact, would seem to have been an ideal way for incorporating non-Buddhist, pre-Buddhist or brahmanical elements into the Buddhist fold. By identifying indigenous divinities and local sacred places with past Buddhas, Buddhists could effectively 'convert' them to Buddhism while still maintaining them at a distance.<sup>23</sup>

While this project of incorporation is somewhat vague in the Toyikā story in the *Divyāvadāna*—the sacralization of the 'place' in question merely creates a Buddhist site on an area that abuts a Brahmin's land—in other versions of the story, it is more explicit. The version of the story in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā*, for example, tells of a co-option of a Brahmanical site. As Strong (1999: 9) nicely summarizes:

The Buddha and his entourage, approaching the village of Todeyya (Skt., Toyikā), come to a shrine, a 'god-place'—devaṭṭhāna—that is apparently dedicated to some local divinity. The Buddha sits down next to it and sends Ānanda to summon the brahmin who is plowing a nearby field. The brahmin comes but instead of venerating the Buddha, he pays his respects only to the shrine. The Buddha then asks him about the place he has just venerated and the brahmin answers that the shrine (which he now calls a 'cetiyaṭṭhāna', 'a caitya place'), has long been there and that worshipping it is an old custom of his people. The Buddha then reveals to him that this shrine is actually the site of the golden caitya of the Buddha Kāśyapa, a replica of which he then fashions in mid-air, using his supernatural powers. This is enough to convert the brahmin and his shrine to Buddhism.

A similar co-option of Brahmanical phenomena can be seen in the incident that precedes the Toyikā story in 'The Story of a Brahman Named Indra'. The Buddha tells a haughty Brahmin named Indra that he should look underneath the pit in his home where the sacrificial offering is made, and that there he'll find a 'post' (*yaṣṭi*) made of *gośīrṣa* sandalwood that is the length of the Buddha's body. The Brahmin does so, and as a result becomes full of faith. He then goes to the Buddha and receives teachings, at which time he directly experiences the reward of the stream-enterer. The Brahmin then asks the Buddha if he can celebrate a festival with the *gośīrṣa* sandalwood post, and the Buddha gives his permission. Then,

in a remote place, with great respect, he raised<sup>24</sup> that post and a festival was celebrated. Realizing that this festival would be for the gaining of religious merit, other brahmins and householders as well bound kuśa grass [for

offerings]. The Brahmin Indra celebrated this festival with the post, and it came to be known as the Indramaha—the Indramaha ('Indra Festival').<sup>25</sup>

While the Indramaha is well known in Sanskrit sources as a Brahmanical festival that originated with the gift of a post by the great god Indra,<sup>26</sup> here the festival is given a Buddhist origin. Instead of the Indramaha being so called because it is in praise of the god Indra, the idea here is that the festival is actually in praise of the Buddha but named after the Brahmin Indra who originated it. With this etiological story, a Brahmanical festival not only becomes a Buddhist one, but good Brahmins are shown to be Buddhist. Though I can find no reference to a Brahmanical festival called Toyikāmaha, the parallels between these two stories in 'The Story of a Brahmin Named Indra' are unmistakable.

The most blatant aspect of this land grab at Toyikā, however, occurs through the ritual actions that are performed there—most notably, the offering of lumps of clay. Following the example of the lay disciple who offered lumps of clay at Toyikā, and bearing in mind the Buddha's words that 'hundreds of thousands of gold coins or nuggets are not equal to one, faithful in mind, who places a single lump of clay at a shrine of a buddha', many hundreds of thousands of beings place lumps of clay there as offerings. Though the site had been unmarked, it is now presumably piled high with an enormous mound of clay. In short, a stūpa has been created. As John Strong (1999: 17) observes,

This, to be sure, is a commemorative stūpa; its mode of construction makes it clear that the remains of [the Buddha] Kāśyapa are not enshrined in it. But it is exactly the way the stūpa at Toyikā is built in the Dharmaguptaka, Mahāśāsaka, and the Mahāsāṃghika Vinayas, except that in the latter, King Prasenajit eventually arrives with seven hundred carts filled with bricks and asks the Buddha for permission to 'enlarge' (and obviously to reinforce) the dirt stūpa.

The *Divyāvadāna*, to summarize, seeks to transform the Toyikā site into a recognized and recognizable 'shrine of a buddha' (and a doubly powerful one at that), and hence into a site of pilgrimage. The doctrine of presence necessitates that such sites would need to be visited in person but also that such sites may abound. They just need to be pointed out. One can be sure that there are more shrines yet to come.

## NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was given at the University of Pennsylvania in October 2003. It was presented at a forum entitled 'Sufis, Shrines, and South Asia', which was in honour of Simon Digby. My thanks to the participants of that event for their comments and suggestions.
2. For the 'Story of the Toyikā Festival', see *Divyāvadāna*, 76.10–80.10 and 465.10–469.19.
3. This image of the 'goad-post' occurs in both 'The Story of a Brahmin Named Indra' and 'The Story of the Toyikā Festival', but with different associations. Here, the associated image is the Buddha-sized post (*yaṣṭi*) that in the previous embedded story engendered a Brahmin's faith (*Divyāvadāna* 75.14–19). In the latter, the associated image is the goad (*pratoda*) that in the narrative that precedes it was used to beat and bruise oxen (*Divyāvadāna* 463.9–11).
4. *Divyāvadāna*, 76.18–25 (cp. 465.16–22).
5. *Divyāvadāna*, 76.25–77.3.
6. *Gilgit Manuscripts*, vol. III, 1, 74.9–15. For another translation of this passage, see Schopen 1997: 131.
7. *Manusmṛti*, II.120–26; Doniger and Smith trans., 1991: 30.
8. *Divyāvadāna*, 18.1, 18.22, 19.15, 21.3–4, etc.
9. *Divyāvadāna*, 77.3–7, and 465.29–466.4.
10. *Dhammapada-aṭṭakathā*, III, 252.
11. *Paramaramatthajotikā*, I, 221–222; cf. Nanamoli trans., 1960: 249–50.
12. Fausböll, 1877–96: vol. IV, 228–30; Cowell *et al.* trans., 1895–1913: vol. IV, 142–43. By contrast, however, in the last verses of the *Buddhavaṃsa* (101; Horner trans., 1975: 98–9), one of the latest additions to the Pāli canon, a wide array of 'relics of use' (*pāribhogika dhātu*) are enumerated. Among these objects are included the Buddha's almsbowl, walking staff, robes, bed covering, and drinking vessel, but it is only his 'sitting mat' (*nisīdana*) that was apparently activated by the act of sitting.
13. Richard Gombrich (2003: 430) considers the way that this doctrine of *paribhoga* allows merit to be detached from an actor's intention, and necessitates 'at least an amendment to the simple teaching that your karma is determined solely by your will'. Gombrich (2003: 436–37) concludes by dismissing its legitimacy: 'The detaching of karma from volition through the doctrine of merit consequent on use [*paribhogānvayaṃ puṇyaṃ*], which provides the only serious textual foundation for positing the non-communicator [*avijñāpti*], seems to rest on an absurdly over-literal interpretation of a little poem extolling

generosity, plus an illegitimate deduction from a text which is repeating the banal doctrine that it is best to make one's donations to holy monks—for that is analogous to sowing one's seed in a fertile field'. It is likewise rejected in the *Kathāvatthu* (VII, 5; Aung and Rhys-Davids trans., 1979: 200–3).

14. A similar example can be found in the *Sahasodgata-avadāna*. There *Sahasodgata* is said to earn merit by offering certain objects so that they can be made use of by the Buddha and the monastic community. As the Buddha explains, 'by providing bedding and seats to be made use of, you would be reborn among the gods—much less providing food and drink to be made use of' (*Divyāvadāna*, 307.14–16).
15. As Kern (1896: 91; cited in Schopen 1975: 151) noted more than a century ago, 'all edifices having the character of a sacred monument are *caityas*, but not all *caityas* are edifices'. What does constitute a shrine, at least to me, is still ambiguous.
16. *Divyāvadāna*, 77.9–10, and 466.6–7. What had been referred to as an assemblage of Kāśyapa's 'bones' (*asthi*) is now described as his 'remains' or 'relics' (*śarīra*). The former term seems to be used to describe Kāśyapa's deceased form in a dormant invisible state, while the latter term may suggest that Kāśyapa's form, once visible, can be used as an object of ritual activity. See, for example, Schopen's (1997: 99–113) discussion of *śarīra-pūjā*.
17. *Divyāvadāna*, 77.12–13, and 466.9–10.
18. According to the account in the story, however, the *nāgas* did it.
19. *Divyāvadāna*, 78.3–4, and 466.28.
20. *Divyāvadāna*, 78.6–18.
21. *Divyāvadāna*, 78.24–79.16.
22. *Divyāvadāna*, 79.19–20 (cp. 469.3–4).
23. Although there are indications, Strong (1999: 12) notes, that 'the veneration of previous Buddhas *apart* from Śakyamuni was potentially seen as schismatic, the cult of their relics *in conjunction* with that of Śakyamuni served to reinforce the charisma of the latter and give it chronological depth'.
24. In a parallel trope, here a post is 'raised' (*ucchrāpitā*) as an object of religious devotion, and later in the *avadāna*, in the *Toyikā* story, Kāśyapa's skeleton is 'raised' (*ucchrāpitaḥ* | *Divyāvadāna*, 77.20) for similar purposes.
25. *Divyāvadāna*, 76.5–9.
26. See, for example, the *Mahābhārata*, *Ādiparva*, 57.17–27. For a detailed account of this festival, see Agrawala, 1970: 49–66.

## 5

Nature as Utopian Space on the  
Early Stūpas of India

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Ideal form and natural shape, although distinct in principle, were not conceived as incommensurable, but rather as coincident in the common unity of the symbol (Coomaraswamy, 1934: 12).

The way in which nature has been depicted in Indian art, and its meaning, have occupied many scholars, including Ananda Coomaraswamy. It is not nature as landscape that is the topic of scholarly discussion, at least regarding ancient Indian artistic traditions. The focus on landscapes at several periods of western artistic production is largely absent in Indian artistic traditions. Even in Indian painting of the later periods (sixteenth century onward), nature is rarely the sole topic of a painting; a human or godly figure is usually present.

Coomaraswamy's quotation says that Indian artists regarded natural forms as symbols. I will open this out a bit below, including how this idea of 'art-as-symbol' has been elaborated by other scholars, but my focus in the paper will be very much narrowed to how natural forms were used on two of the earliest Indian stūpas—Stūpa I at Sanchi, and the Bharhut stūpa (these two monuments date to c. 100 BCE to 50 CE). My ultimate position (only suggested in this short chapter) is that the early Indian stūpas can be regarded as utopian spaces—highly organized, carefully structured, and visually decorated