

Sacred
Biography
in the
Buddhist
Traditions
of
South
and
Southeast
Asia

3
Edited by
Juliane Schober



University of Hawai'i Press
Honolulu

© 1997 University of Hawai'i Press
All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America

97 98 99 00 01 02 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Sacred biography in the Buddhist traditions of South and Southeast
Asia / edited by Juliane Schober.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8248-1699-4 (alk. paper)

1. Buddhist saints—Biography—History and criticism. 2. Gautama
Buddha. 3. Buddhist hagiography—History and criticism.

I. Schober, Juliane.

BQ843.S23 1997

294.3'6—dc20

96-21003

CIP

University of Hawai'i Press books are printed
on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines for
permanence and durability of the Council
on Library Resources

Designed by Angela Stanton

Contents

Preface

ix

Trajectories in Buddhist Sacred Biography

Juliane Schober

1

Part 1

Buddha Biography in Textual and Visual Narratives

Rebirth Traditions and the Lineages
of Gotama: A Study in Theravāda Buddhology

Frank E. Reynolds

19

The Biographical Imperative
in Theravāda Buddhism

Mark R. Woodward

40

Narrative as Icon:
The *Jātaka* Stories in Ancient Indian
and Southeast Asian Architecture

Robert L. Brown

64

v

Part 2

Extensions of the Buddha Biography in Texts

A Family Quest:

The Buddha, Yaśodharā, and Rāhula
in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*

John S. Strong

113

Nāgārjuna's Longevity

Reginald A. Ray

129

Stūpa, Story, and Empire:

Constructions of the Buddha Biography
in Early Post-Aśokan India

Jonathan S. Walters

160

Part 3

The Jātakas and Biographies of Kings

Painting the "Great Life"

Forrest McGill

195

From Prose to Poetry:

The Literary Development of *Samuttakote*

Thomas John Hudak

218

"Rationality" in the Biography of a Buddhist King:

Mongkut, King of Siam (r. 1851–1868)

Paul Christopher Johnson

232

Part 4

The Biographical Genre in Local Buddhist Cults and Practice

In the Presence of the Buddha:

Ritual Veneration of the Burmese Mahāmuni Image

Juliane Schober

259

The Textualization of a Monastic Tradition:

Forest Monks, Lineage, and the Biographical Process
in Thailand

James L. Taylor

289

The Biography of Modern Burmese Buddhist

Meditation Master U Ba Khin: Life before
the Cradle and past the Grave

Gustaaf Houtman

310

Index

345

About the Contributors

365

Color plates follow page

194

*Stūpa, Story, and Empire:
Constructions of the Buddha
Biography in Early
Post-Aśokan India*

Jonathan S. Walters

In "The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition," Frank Reynolds sketched out a dynamic conception of the Buddha biography in which Buddhist life stories are viewed, not as comparatively accurate or inaccurate reflections of the events in "the historical Buddha's" life, but as a locus for creativity and change within the streams of Buddhist history.¹ In this essay I want to develop Reynolds' view that Buddhist biographies both reflected and shaped the historical situations in which they were composed, by examining a set of three biographical texts in Pāli verse that were produced in Buddhist India during about the second century B.C. Reynolds has already pointed to two of these texts—*Cariyāpitaka* and *Buddhavaṃsa*—as especially important for a historical reconstruction of the cultural role that Buddhist biography played in the early post-Aśokan period.² Adding a third, closely related text called *Apadāna*, I intend to nuance Reynolds' account of this particular period within the general framework that he sets out. Specifically, I shall analyze these three texts in light of what Reynolds calls "the most crucial problems which are amenable to future investigation," namely, the

issues that "cluster around the identification of the various levels or stages in the development of the biographical tradition, the question of the structure of the various biographical fragments and texts, and the role which these fragments and texts have played within the broader tradition."³

These texts, in and of themselves, cannot reveal the historical situation that is to be reconstructed. They are poems about inconceivably ancient periods of time, not scientific histories. I make this fairly obvious point because it is not always grasped in Buddhology. The tendency in Buddhological studies to weave history directly out of literary remains, as though the authors of sacred texts were trying to describe objectively the times and places in which they lived, has elicited a devastating critique, in various forms over the last ten years, by Gregory Schopen, who has challenged fundamental pillars of the Buddhological construct—including various distinctions between monks and layfolk⁴ and the origin of the Mahāyāna⁵—with an appeal to epigraphic evidence that can be dated centuries earlier than the notoriously recent extant textual manuscripts. With good reason Schopen has insisted that, except for certain ancient manuscript finds mostly from Central Asia, epigraphy and archaeology provide us with the only objects for reconstructing the first two millennia of the Buddha era that actually survive intact from the periods they are supposed to be talking about.

I agree with Schopen that epigraphy must now take the lead in a critique and new construction of ancient Buddhist history; but I am equally convinced that epigraphy cannot do without the textual evidence entirely.⁶ Among other things, these texts have been vital to the project of reconstructing epigraphic languages and dating and identifying the kings in whose reigns the epigraphs were incised. Schopen's critique starts to reach fruition only when the epigraphs bring new questions to bear on the texts and, it is important to add, when the texts are then enabled to raise new questions about the epigraphs.⁷ Together, the work of epigraphers and historical linguists allows us to identify certain epigraphs and textual compositions as coeval; both textual and epigraphic studies are reenergized when we can see particular texts as products of particular ages that can be reconstructed on the basis of (epigraphic and archaeological) evidence that is partially external to the texts themselves. As Schopen's work so clearly shows, situating textual studies within epigraphic history opens whole new frontiers for Buddhology. This paper follows Schopen's lead in its attempt to situate the texts in question within the history that can be reconstructed on the basis of "hard" evidence. In fact, Schopen himself has treated the *Apadāna* and related *jātaka* texts as potentially valuable for the epigraphic and archaeological study of early post-Aśokan India.⁸

The three biographical texts that I shall discuss in this essay are especially well suited to the development of both Reynolds' and Schopen's methodological projects. In terms of Buddhist life stories, they are the only comprehensive canonical tellings of the Buddha biography that contain descriptions of previous lives in addition to the present life, a completeness that remained the *sine qua non* for all Buddhist biography until the nineteenth century, and that still remains dominant in large parts of the Buddhist world today. These texts constituted, in other words, the first crucial transformation of the Buddha biography in its long and varied history; these texts constituted the rules for post-Aśokan Buddhist anthropology. From the perspective of epigraphy, the period in which these texts were written is extremely rich: well over two thousand epigraphs from the last two centuries B.C., inscribed in varieties of the early Brahmi script that adapted Aśoka's Mauryan alphabet to new purposes, and discovered throughout the ancient Indic world, from Sri Lanka to Śrāvasti, have been published. As the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, and *Apadāna* eked out what was to become the foundation for all subsequent Buddhist biography, so the early Brahmi inscriptions of Sāñchi and Sāmāth, Anurāhapura and Amarāvati, effected the first major transformation—political as well as palaeographical—of that discourse in stone that, inaugurated by India's first emperor, Aśoka, was to dominate all subsequent Indian imperial practice.

But Buddhist India just after Aśoka is especially important for the light it potentially can shed on the *overlap* of textual and epigraphic/archaeological histories. Here more than anywhere else in the vast world of Buddhology, the work of epigraphers and textual specialists has closely overlapped for more than a century. The discovery of the labeled carvings at Bhārhut merely confirmed what had been obvious even to the earliest Orientalists: the Buddhist monuments from which the inscriptions come contain illustrations of biographical stories that are also told, always in greater detail, in the texts. Moreover, the language of the inscriptions and that of the texts is so close that until recently it was standard practice among epigraphers to call most inscriptional Prakrits "Pāli." The result has been an enormous industry in all countries that host Indological studies, an industry that has attempted to describe the carvings and interpret the inscriptions on the basis of the texts, on one hand, and that has attempted to describe the development of the textual tradition on the basis of the carvings and inscriptions, on the other.

Ironically, it is a rare thing that Reynolds and Schopen should consider the *Cariyāpiṭaka*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, and/or *Apadāna* especially important for a reconstruction of early post-Aśokan Buddhist history. The enormous industry that I just described has in fact largely ignored the texts that historical linguists actually date to the period under discussion. Almost with-

out exception these texts remain unmentioned in the works of even the best scholars concerned with this period, including the likes of Alexander Cunningham, Ananda Coomaraswamy, Albert Foucher, John Marshall, and Paul Mus. Instead, texts that postdate the early Brahmi inscriptions by centuries have been treated as though they had been the sources for the carvings that the inscriptions label: the most prominent texts cited in the scholarly discourse on the great *stūpas* and their carvings have been *Divyāvadāna* and *Lalitavistara* (ca. first century A.D.), *Mahāvastvavadāna* (ca. second century A.D.), *Jātakamāla* and (ca. fourth century A.D.), and *Jātakatṭhakathā* and *Dhammapadattṭhakathā* (after the fifth century A.D.).

This anachronism between text and epigraph obscures the historical position of the various biographies that Reynolds has called for scholars to reconstruct. For the early period, we are left with a catalog of biographical fragments cut off from the framework(s) in which they have meaning (for even if we accept that the narrative details belong to some timeless oral tradition,⁹ we surely cannot look to the later texts for the *ideological* frameworks of the earlier period). In terms of the later biographies, too, the project is undermined: the interpretations and ideologies that they exhibit are treated as though they belong, not to the times and places in which the actual texts were written, but to the timelessly ancient oral tradition! Despite these epistemological difficulties, to this day only the later texts have been examined for the reconstruction of the Buddha biography as portrayed in the earlier carvings.

There are two main reasons that this anachronism in the Buddhological construct has gone unnoticed, except by Reynolds (in an analysis of the development of biographical tradition) and Schopen (in an analysis of the relationship between literary and epigraphic remains). First, the biographical texts that date to the time of the inscriptions—*Cariyāpiṭaka*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, and *Apadāna*—do not tell the Buddha biography with all the sumptuous detail that is found in the later texts and that scholars like to see in the ancient carvings as well.¹⁰ The later texts have been privileged because only they tell the stories with enough detail to make the identification of the carvings believable.

A second major reason for the absence of the *Apadāna* and related texts in the vast scholarship on early post-Aśokan Indian Buddhism has to do with certain prejudices and scholarly presuppositions that have dominated the history of Pāli studies. Since the time of T. W. Rhys-Davids, founder of the Pāli Text Society (PTS), there has been widespread disdain for the texts in question. Their inclusion in the canon seems to mar an otherwise purely rational, secular humanist corpus. "The historical Buddha" is obscured, the standard argument runs, by the submission to "popular" needs for fairy tales, magic, ghosts, gods, and demons. The *Apadāna* and related texts represent

the beginning of the end of the pristine “early Buddhism” that scholars of Theravāda have until recently been exclusively interested in reconstructing. As a result, the *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyāpīṭaka*—although among the earliest PTS publications and available in translation for years—seldom appear in the extensive secondary work on the canonical period to which, in the eyes of the traditions that preserved that canon, they rightfully belong. The *Apadāna* has never been translated into a Western language, and the PTS (Roman script) edition of the Pāli is long out of print and hopelessly confused.¹¹ Dating these texts to the post-Aśokan period has had the effect of driving Pāli specialists to ignore them as late corruptions, rather than driving them to situate the texts in light of what else is known about the post-Aśokan period. Nonspecialists for whom the texts might prove relevant—such as epigraphers and art historians—are denied access to them as a result of their dependence on the work of textual specialists.

I hope to reconcile this anachronism by addressing the cotemporaneity of the texts (*Apadāna*, *Buddhavaṃsa*, *Cariyāpīṭaka*; henceforth “the ABCs”) and the epigraphic and archaeological remains (of the first stages in the development of the major Buddhist *stūpas* during the early post-Aśokan, i.e., Śunga and early Sātavāhana, period). This essay is, to this end, an extended demonstration of the fact that Reynolds and Schopen both were right in their suppositions about the relevance of the ABCs: there is a complex and remarkable correspondence between the two bodies of evidence, textual and archaeological, which my narrative will clarify in some detail. But my primary aim is to reconstruct the nature and cultural context of Buddhist biography in about the second century B.C., and to demonstrate that epigraphy and textual studies together provide an exciting basis for that reconstruction.

Picturing the Path

The *stūpas* (huge dome-shaped monuments that enshrine the corporeal relics of the Buddha and his most famous disciples) are well known, even outside professional scholarly circles, and they need little initial introduction from me. I shall focus upon the *stūpas* of Madhya Pradesh (especially Sāñchi and Bhārhut) and Andhra Pradesh (especially Amarāvati), which, perhaps constructed originally by Emperor Aśoka himself, survive as the most important evidence of early post-Aśokan sculptural and architectural excellence. Descriptions and photographs of these sites abound in even the most general studies of Indian art. The texts, however, as I have already stated, remain neglected in the scholarly tradition. So I shall begin with a few general words about the ABCs as a foundation for my discussion of their relationship to the epigraphic and archaeological remains.

There has been a consensus among scholars, who have studied the traditional accounts of the ABCs, their vocabulary, their grammatical and metrical structures, and their philosophical and mythological content, that these texts postdate Aśoka.¹² Indeed, the *Apadāna* makes reference to the *Kathāvatthu*,¹³ which is held by Theravādins to have been composed only at the Third Great Council, during the time of Aśoka. *Apadāna* incorporates verse after verse from pre-Aśokan works, including *Sutta-Nipāta*,¹⁴ *Dhammapada*¹⁵ and *Thera-Therīgāthā*,¹⁶ and even quotes large segments from other post-Aśokan texts, including *Buddhavaṃsa* and *Cariyāpīṭaka*.

In fact, there seems to be a direct line of appropriation and expansion from *Cariyāpīṭaka* to *Buddhavaṃsa* to *Apadāna*. *Cariyāpīṭaka* is a *jātaka* text, or biography of the Buddha that focuses almost exclusively upon his actions during (here thirty-five) previous lives. The colophon¹⁷ describes *Cariyāpīṭaka* as *Buddhāpadāni[ya]* (a “Great Story” or “legend biography” of the Buddha). Many of its *pādas* are incorporated into *Buddhavaṃsa*; *Apadāna* then quotes the concluding verses and colophon of *Cariyāpīṭaka*¹⁸ while it also quotes from *Buddhavaṃsa* extensively.¹⁹

This line of appropriation and expansion is not simply a matter of plagiarized verses and borrowed names. A central ideological theme was being appropriated and reworked in the process. I have already remarked that *Cariyāpīṭaka* is the earliest known complete biography of the Buddha on a cosmic scale, that is, the first that understands the Buddha’s present life as the result of actions performed in a series of previous lives. Whichever view scholars take on the ultimately unanswerable question of whether *jātakas* preexisted this period or not,²⁰ *Cariyāpīṭaka* is the earliest definite evidence we have that Buddhists conceived of the Buddha biography in such cosmic terms. The concluding verses of *Cariyāpīṭaka*, which reappear in *Apadāna*, state succinctly the single revelation that the whole text makes *in extenso*: during the Buddha’s previous lives, he cultivated some of the Ten Perfections (*dasapārami*)²¹ that fully developed, constituted in the present life his ultimate liberation.

This revelation was the answer to a major question that emerged for Buddhists only after the Aśokan impetus to universalism had created the new, cosmopolitan atmosphere that characterized post-Aśokan India. In the pre-Aśokan tradition, as far as we can know about it at all on the basis of the texts preserved in the rest of the Pāli canon, the paradigmatic Buddha biography, and the parallel early saints’ biographies (as in *Thera-Therīgāthā*), were conceived in noncosmic, this-life-only terms.²² The paradigmatic biography begins with renunciation of the world, continues with religious exertion, and concludes with the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. While such a biography is paradigmatic for renunciates (and lay people whose own religiosity is predicated on serving them), it leaves unaddressed the soteriological

potential of most human beings, who will not renounce the world in this life and attain the goal, but will instead continue to transmigrate in a time conceived according to a devolutionary cosmology. Surely if the Buddha's teaching was true, the Path he guided humanity along is wide enough to include more than the handful of humans who are already near its end; it must be wide enough for universal society to stand upon. And by a remarkable logic—that if the Buddha's present life is paradigmatic for being at the end of the Path, then his previous lives must be paradigmatic for being at the beginning of the Path—*Cariyāpīṭaka* starts to chart out this widened, cosmicized soteriology. It reveals that the Buddha, long ago when he was still just a king or a Brahmin or a trader (or even an animal), turned his lives into opportunities for cultivating, in increasingly profound ways, the Ten Perfections that, when fully cultivated, are equivalent to the end of the Path. And the concluding verses drive the point home: the Buddha's advice (*buddhānusāsani*) is that everyone start doing the same thing.²³

Buddhavamsa investigates the implications of this central revelation. It opens with a very familiar scene: the Buddha is beneath the Tree of Enlightenment and Brahmā Sahampati is there, begging him to preach the Dharma for the sake of those who have "little dust in their eyes." The Buddha consents, but wishing to show just how powerful a *buddha* is, he does not, as in the familiar early story, get up, seek out his teachers, find that they are dead, then proceed to Sārnāth in order to Turn the Wheel of Dharma.²⁴ Instead, the Buddha magically creates an enormous gem walkway (*ratana-camīkama*) that spans all of space, and he walks up and down on it without the passing of time. A magnificent festival ensues, in which all the beings in the universe praise the Buddha with songs, dances, perfume, musical instruments, flowers and, above all, delirious happiness. Those with little dust in their eyes, for whom the Buddha preached the Dharma, are not merely renunciates at the end of the Path. The Buddha preached his Dharma for everyone in the universe.

Sāriputta arrives and asks the Buddha to explain what the gem walkway symbolizes. The answer is that this universal soteriology is the cosmic Buddha biography itself: the Buddha proceeds to elaborate a cosmic autobiography along the lines of *Cariyāpīṭaka*, but greatly expanded. He reveals that he first took refuge in Buddhism one hundred thousand *kalpas* (eons) ago (*Cariyāpīṭaka* concerns only the present *kalpa*),²⁵ and that in the process of his transmigration across this unfathomable amount of time he participated in twenty-four previous Buddhisms before becoming Buddha and starting his own, which is the twenty-fifth "Buddha lineage" (*Buddhavamsa*). *Buddhavamsa* gives the biography of each previous Buddha in whose Buddhism "our" (*amhākaṃ*) Gotama Buddha performed acts that cultivated the Ten Perfections and culminated in his Enlightenment at Bodh Gayā, the

setting in which the *Buddhavamsa* is supposed to have been revealed. The Buddha's own biography becomes the most recent of a type. All Buddhas live for a certain period, attain *nirvāna* in certain ways, initiate certain numbers of people into various stages of Path-life, are treated postmortem in particular fashions, etc. The categories have become so stereotyped by the time *Buddhavamsa* gets around to Gotama's recapitulation of this paradigmatic biographical structure that they are referred to in a shorthand which is extremely cryptic unless one has already read the biographies of the previous twenty-four Buddhas.

Buddhavamsa, in the process of drawing this map of cosmic time, reveals with far greater specificity what the *Cariyāpīṭaka* revelation of Buddha's cosmic biography means for humanity. It is not just that people must cultivate the Ten Perfections now, in small ways, if they hope to achieve the fulfillment of the Ten Perfections at some future point in their transmigrations. That cultivation must occur within a specifically Buddhist context: the Buddha in the *Buddhavamsa* gives alms to Buddhists and worships Buddhas. It is this specifically Buddhist action that patterns people for cultivation of the specifically Buddhist achievement, *nirvāna*.

There are two levels of soteriological potential at work in *Buddhavamsa*. On the one hand, we are all still living in a Buddha era, a period in which a Buddha and his Buddhism are known and can be practiced, worshiped, and admired. Specifically, Buddhist acts performed in the present will bear fruit in the time of future Buddhas, just as Gotama's actions in the time of previous Buddhas culminated in his present Buddhahood. In the penultimate chapter, *Buddhavamsa* reveals that the next of these Buddhas, Metteya (Maitreya), has already been predicted by Gotama.²⁶ On the other hand, it is not only Gotama Buddha and the present Buddhism that are populating the soteriological march across cosmic time. All Buddhas reveal a *Buddhavamsa* and declare soteriology universal. People who entered the Path but did not attain its end in the times of previous Buddhas, too, may achieve the *summum bonum* in the time of Metteya. In fact, the two classes overlap: many people in the present, especially those who connect themselves with the Buddha and his dispensation, must already have been practicing Buddhists during previous eons (that will be remembered only after the end is achieved).

The Buddha of *Buddhavamsa* is quite explicit about the fact that his Buddhism, like all those previous ones, will eventually disappear. But, like those previous Buddhisms, this one will disappear only after the Path has been pointed out for "countless crores of other" beings who, transmigrating now, will attain the fruit of their Buddhist practices in the future.²⁷ A universally accessible teleology intersects the devolutionary cosmology at those rare moments in time—twenty-five of them in one hundred

thousand eons—when a Buddha has been born in the world; the universe brims with soteriological potential as a result. The *Buddhavaṃsa* was composed during such a rare moment in time.

The *Apadāna* utterly presupposes *Buddhavaṃsa*, for its actual verses as well as for its map of cosmic time, its Buddha biography, and its attempt at describing the specifically Buddhist acts that lead to eventual enlightenment. Here the expansion of the central *Cariyāpīṭaka* revelation is carried in new directions. The “Great Story” tells not only the biographies of the Buddhas, nor only of the Buddhas and *Pacceka* Buddhas. Those are tiny fragments compared to the entire corpus of five hundred-odd biographies of monks and about forty of nuns. These saints’ life histories, which incorporated and revised the verses of *Thera-Therīgāthā*, allowed the *Apadāna* author(s) limitless room for expansion of the *Buddhavaṃsa*’s (meager) catalog of *which* specifically Buddhist acts have *which* specifically Buddhist results. *Apadāna* provides such a catalogue, *in extenso*, with a completeness unknown in any other text of the period or earlier. The actual content of the biographies is fairly limited—most of the monks and nuns are known only by their acts, i.e. “Rev. One Lamp,” “Rev. Stūpa Worshiper,” “Rev. Bowl Filler,” “Rev. Flag Raiser,” etc.—it is the acts themselves that are elaborated, explored, explained, and valorized.

Apadāna begins with the *Buddhāpadāna*, named from the colophon of *Cariyāpīṭaka*. Here too we find a Buddha who enters the Path unfathomably many eons ago, cultivates the Ten Perfections, then attains the goal in the present and advises everyone else to do the same thing. But this time his original, root act, of which all the subsequent perfection is ultimately the fruit, is a simple imaginative endeavor: in an unfathomably previous life the Buddha thought about a universe populated with countless Buddhas and saints all interacting with each other.²⁸ The fruit of this mental action (*manasā patthanāphalaṃ*)²⁹ is realized when the Buddha, under the Tree of Enlightenment at Gayā, actually becomes part of this wonderful universe he had imagined so long ago. And this act is precisely what any thinking person does when he or she hears the *Buddhavaṃsa* (or the remainder of the *Apadāna*); imagining in one’s own mind the revelation of previous Buddhas and Buddhisms and their mutual interconnection is itself the ultimately salvific act. Those who are familiar with *Buddhavaṃsa* or who hear the *Apadāna* have already performed that act.

Additionally, the *Apadāna* listener—the texts are directed at a plural “you” enjoined to listen³⁰—learns in the process of listening that this mental action is only the first among many diverse kinds of specifically Buddhist and extremely efficacious acts that are possible so long as there exists a Buddha or the memory of him and his teachings, or his relics, or his monks and nuns. The texts assure listeners in no uncertain terms that all seeds of

karma will bear the appropriate fruit in the future,³¹ an assurance proved in the biographies of each monk and nun who attained the goal in the dispensation of Gotama as the fruit of actions performed eons earlier. And in all the *apadānas*, we find that this extremely gradual Path is at least pleasant: in the intermediate eons, the performers of pious acts revel in heavenly palaces, rule the gods or are married to the rulers of gods, and likewise are born as human Wheel-Turning Monarchs, time and time again.

In *Apadāna* the Buddha biography has become a full-blown revelation of universal soteriology. The Path that it pictures cuts across all of time; the acts that it catalogues occur throughout the Indian world and are performed by people of all castes, occupations, ages, sexes, social statuses; by animals and gods and demons as well as humans. The *Apadāna* demonstrates biographically what the Buddha’s “Gem Walkway” demonstrates symbolically: Buddhism is not only for renunciates; the Buddha’s life made it possible to direct every conceivable walk of life toward attainment of the soteriological goal, *nirvāṇa*.

Buddhas of Bricks

It is here that we begin to see the overlap between the ABCs and the famous *stūpas* of early post-Aśokan India. The *Apadāna* is replete with specific descriptions of *stūpa* construction and relic worship,³² always conceived within this cosmic soteriological framework, which to my knowledge are found nowhere else in the Pāli canon, yet which clearly parallel the actual practices at *stūpas* in early post-Aśokan India, as I shall demonstrate below. The inscriptions in turn are replete with indications that the patrons of these elaborate *stūpas* mirrored the universality of the *Apadāna*: kings and *śūdras*, artisans and Brahmins, householders and millionaires, men and women, young and old, monks and nuns contributed to the creation of these magnificent works of art. And the *stūpas* themselves are ornamented with the central conception that underlies the ABCs: carvings that illustrate a cosmic Buddha biography.

But the case is not so simple as it may appear. We cannot assume that the texts objectively reflect actual practice any more than we can assume that actual practice was a transparent enactment of the stories in the texts. The texts are traces of a particular way of thinking about the Buddha biography; the inscriptions and carvings are traces of particular human actions. The ideology and practice presuppose each other—why write a text about *stūpas* unless they exist, or build a *stūpa* without an idea of why that is a good thing to do?—and I have been trying to reconstruct the situation(s) in which they were, simultaneously, produced/used/thought about. In the present section I want to develop a few themes about the process by which

several post-Aśokan *stūpas* came to be constructed, which have emerged in my study of the early Brahmi epigraphs and which have special importance in this attempt of mine to reconstruct the context in which these biographical texts and those actual *stūpa* practices coexisted.

The first important topic that needs to be reconsidered is that of historical agency. It is well known that the inscriptions record information about donors, which has made possible analyses of the people who built and ornamented the early post-Aśokan *stūpas*: Bareau has talked about their sectarian orientation,³³ Schopen has talked about their religious status,³⁴ Chakravarti has talked about their social status.³⁵ But an analysis of the individual donors as individual donors only takes us so far. It cannot explain, for example, how all these donors of such diverse backgrounds came together to donate sculptures, pillars, or carved friezes that happen to match each other precisely, that even form links in a single stone railing. Nor can it explain the process by which the donors enabled themselves to make the donations (even extremely rich people belong to families, polities, and economic organizations that constrain the flow of wealth). In both these instances, it is useful to posit the existence of what R. G. Collingwood calls "complex agency," an agency that involves groups of people joining together for some common goal.³⁶

Many of the inscriptions make this complex agency apparent: the donors of certain objects are not individuals but networks of friends and families,³⁷ guilds,³⁸ committees,³⁹ villages⁴⁰ and mercantile towns,⁴¹ of which single individuals were often the representatives but certainly not the sole agents. Many of the monastic donors, too, were standing as representatives of such social groups.⁴² And these are only the donors who recorded the fact that they gathered together their friends, relatives, or whomever in order to finance the donation (which is a very common trope in *Apadāna* stories about *stūpa* worship);⁴³ we have no way of knowing how many of the supposedly individual donors also participated in complex agencies that were not mentioned in the epigraphic record.

Even this broader vision of the complex agency that erected and decorated the *stūpas* at Sāñchi, Amarāvati, or Bhārhut is incomplete. For we still must imagine a larger complex agency organizing these specific donors/complex agents into a unitary whole: building the Sāñchi railing or producing the Bhārhut medallions must have involved commissioning artists and financial overseers, organizing participant donors and allotting their shares of money (or whatever), then keeping track of that allotment in order to have the inscriptions carved properly (again, in matching scripts that cannot have been willy-nilly graffiti). In the *Apadāna*, many such major additions to Buddhist monuments are made in this way: a single individual organizes a festival (*maha*) in order to have the thing constructed or the *pūjā*

performed to it.⁴⁴ Each of the various spectacular additions to the great *stūpas* was probably produced as the result of such highly organized occasions in which the donors, for all their diversity (and differing personal motivations), came together and financed the project; festivals that occurred at least when the resources were first mobilized and when the specific project was declared complete. Illustrations of various sorts of royal festivals abound in the extant carvings, although they all have been considered representations of the same handful of historical stories: all royal processions are Ajattasattu's relic march, all royal tree worship is Aśoka's *bodhi pūjā*, etc. The truth may be far more straightforward than that: these are illustrations of the very festivals that have left as traces of their occurrence precisely the carvings, *stūpas*, and texts in question.⁴⁵

This leads me to the second major point about the epigraphs and other archaeological remains that I want to make. Although the *stūpas* in their final form appear as a wild hodge podge of carvings, inscriptions, rails, umbrellas, and pillars, it is important that we think of the finished product as a series of layers that resulted from very specific, organized additions to whatever already existed at a specific point in time.⁴⁶ For example, it is well known that the Sāñchi rail (around the Mahācaitya) was built later than the *stūpa* itself, and that the famous carved gateways were added later than the rail. Architectural and art historical study, as well as palaeography, confirm this point. So the finished *stūpa* is the composite creation of successive complex agents who organized smaller units of collective agency at different points in time. Much work remains to be done, distinguishing and collating these "layers." But the work is vital, because in the process of distinguishing stages it is possible to be precise about dating and situating particular conceptions of, among other things, the Buddha biography.

Let me suggest how this is the case, even though I am not yet entirely satisfied with my own thoughts on the subject (mostly because there is an enormous amount of material that needs to be classified differently than it is currently classified). I have already mentioned that the *Apadāna* catalogues a wide range of ritual acts. It includes many that are mentioned in pre-Aśokan sources such as the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*: alms-giving, listening to the *Buddhavaṇṇa*, thinking about the Triple Gem, and constructing *stūpas* and worshiping them with garlands, wreaths, paint, and *añjali*. But *Apadāna* adds to these a number of specific acts that are otherwise known only in the inscriptions: presenting lamp[-stands];⁴⁷ erecting stone pillars,⁴⁸ balustrades,⁴⁹ lion-thrones with footprint slabs,⁵⁰ ornamental umbrellas⁵¹ and *dharma-cakras*;⁵² participating in or organizing the construction of Buddhist rails;⁵³ and making reliquaries out of precious substances.⁵⁴ This catalog will be datable with a great deal of precision once the parallel development of the inscriptional technical discourse of pious acts has been

charted out. The palaeographic stages show certain characteristics: the Mauryan inscriptions at Sāñchi and Amarāvati know only of “pillar gift” or simply “gift”; subsequently new technical terms emerged: “cross-bar gift,” “rail gift.” With the passing of time more terms were added to this language: “lion-throne gift,” “*dharma-cakra* gift,” “lamp-stand gift,” “coping stone gift,” “carved slab gift,” “entrance pillar gift.”

My point in providing this detail is not to suggest that I have worked out the line of development of this language; I have not. In fact, the “line” will also have to include considerations of space, because certain terms in this lithic discourse occur first at different times in different places (e.g., a technical language of cave-gifts emerges first in the western cave temple sites; many *stūpa* ornamentation terms are unique to Andhra). My point is simply that the *Apadāna* is situated in the same discourse. It represents and participates in the development of the *stūpa* cult at a particular stage that can be discerned on the basis of “hard” evidence. For example, there are a number of specific donative gifts described in the *Apadāna* that appear as technical terms only in the inscriptions at Amarāvati, whereas a number of the characteristic terms of the later (Ikshvāku) inscriptions at that site do not appear in *Apadāna*: this gives us some indication of both the place (Andhra Pradesh) and time (post-Maurya, pre-Ikshvāku) in which the *Apadāna* was current.

Similarly, it should be possible to locate the subtle developments of the cosmic Buddha biography from *Cariyāpitaka* to *Apadāna* within a nuanced understanding of the art historical stages discernable in the hodge-podge of carvings. For example, at Bhārhut many of the rail carvings, dated to about the middle of the second century B.C., contain identified scenes of *jātakas* that line up, in part, with *Cariyāpitaka*, but which seem to be, given their inclusion with different sorts of labelled scenes, incorporated within a this-life biography of Buddha as well as an explicit chart of previous Buddha-time. *Buddhavaṃsa*, then, may be roughly coeval with the Bhārhut railing. But there is still much to be done before any definite conclusions can be reached, since art historians will have to reevaluate their identifications of certain scenes in order to assess the degree to which they correspond to the texts that actually belong to the periods in question. Simple questions, like do we see the *Buddhavaṃsa* version of the Buddha’s cosmic miracle illustrated in any of the carvings, have not even been asked. Again, my point is a general one: the texts and the carvings participate in the same story-telling tradition, the history of which will become clear only when they are examined together.

There is a third problem about the epigraphs that must be reckoned with, and that overlaps with the two points I have just made. Unlike the later Brahmī epigraphs that have been so masterfully analyzed by

Schopen,⁵⁵ the early Brahmī donative inscriptions that I have been discussing do not indicate a specific recipient. This goes deeper than an absence of that sectarian specification which began to characterize donative inscriptions only in about the first century A.D., under the Kushans and their Sarvāstivādin favorites. In the early Brahmī inscriptions we do not even have an indication of what it meant to give a gift, nor who was supposed to accrue the merit, nor how they were supposed to do so. The inscriptions are bare: generally just “the gift (*dānaṃ*) of (donor/s).”⁵⁶ How then do we go about reconstructing the epistemology according to which agents of various complexity considered it a good thing to join together in order to perform *stūpa* worship and other pious Buddhist acts known from the inscriptions of the day? What Buddhist ideology of gift-giving made giving Buddhist gifts rational? Considering the complex mobilization of resources and people that was required in order to effect any specific stage in the development of the great *stūpas*, it is reasonable to assume that there was such a shared understanding of the value of Buddhist piety, a shared understanding that united all these different agents (whatever their ulterior personal motivations) together in specific collective projects: giving Buddhist gifts.

My short answer to the problem of intent is that the *Apadāna* and related texts provide the ideological component or “insides” of human actions that left as their “outsides” wreaths of wilting flowers, remnants of oils and incense and food, and of course the actual pillars, cross-bars, etc., that still survive today. Among the many ways in which the language of the *Apadāna* parallels the epigraphs, it uses “*dānaṃ*” (gift) as a category unto itself, with all its subvarieties described and catalogued according to method and result in a self-referential discourse. In his or her *apadāna* each monk or nun states, paralleling the inscriptional remains, “I gave such-and-such gift (*dānaṃ*) during the time of such-and-such Buddha; I experienced no unpleasant states in subsequent transmigration; in the present I achieved arhantship: this is the fruit of that gift (*ṭṭype off dānassa idaṃ phalaṃ*).” A donative inscription that simply states “the such-and-such *dānaṃ* of so-and-so” is not at all ambiguous if we remember that the ABCs were coeval with the giving and inscribing of the gifts. The *Apadāna* tells in full detail what a *dānaṃ* means, and why and how it is done. The only questions left open in its karmically black-and-white world⁵⁷ concern the variety of gift and the identity of donor (which is precisely the information recorded in the inscriptions). The very nature of the *Apadāna* rendered further elaboration on stone redundant. Such elaboration of purpose appeared in epigraphic records only later, after the *Apadāna* had been displaced by subsequent revisions of its “Great Story,” starting with *Divyāvadāna*, that had different epistemological orientations.

So it is to the ABCs that we must look if we want to reconstruct the “insides” of the actions in question. I have already attempted to sketch out the general framework of meaning in which the ABCs set Buddhist action, the ideology of gift-giving reflected in and constituted by those Buddhist texts (i.e., the ABCs) that were being composed at the same time that the *stūpas* were being constructed and inscriptions inscribed. Positing this framework of meaning implies neither that the texts describe the actual practices nor that the actual practices were mere enactments of the stories in the texts. Instead, it implies that both overlapped at an “epistemic” or “archaeological” level of thought, to borrow Michel Foucault’s useful terminology. The ABCs, unlike their inscriptional counterparts, provide insight into the philosophical sophistication of this thought,⁵⁸ which attempted to increase the value of the Buddha’s legacy to humanity in light of new questions that emerged after Aśoka’s imperial unification of the subcontinent constituted, for the first time, a totality of which the various Indian kingdoms and other social groupings became parts.⁵⁹ This universalization of the Path consisted of a series of biographical analyses of the religious act, first with reference only to the Buddha but finally with reference to other people who represent an enormous cross section of cosmic time and space, of cosmic society. *Buddhas* and *arhats* share a virtue that ordinary people do not: they know their previous lives. This well-established canonical detail had immense ramifications for post-Aśokan Buddhist practice, after it had been realized that those previous lives encode a program for action here-and-now. It is within this epistemology that we should imagine the acts that produced the *stūpas*.

In the next section I want to elaborate upon a few of the many ways in which the *Apadāna* narratives inform the nature of the actions represented by the surviving ruins. I will focus on three topics: the relationship between *stūpa* and biography, the symbolism of the *stūpa*, and the nature of the complex agency that produced the great *stūpas* of early post-Aśokan India.

Biography as Empire

The connection between biography and *stūpa* is more direct than I have yet allowed. As Paul Mus has shown us,⁶⁰ the *stūpa* is more than a representation of the cosmic Buddha biography: it is the cosmic Buddha biography. The *stūpa* of the Buddha is precisely what the Buddha biography has become in the time between the *Parinirvāṇa* and today. The relic it contains is the material body (*rūpakāya*) of the Buddha-in-*nirvāṇa* or some Buddhist saint-in-*nirvāṇa*.⁶¹ The “stories” it illustrates are the teachings of Buddha, his body of Dharma (*dharmakāya*). According to Mus, at the *Parinirvāṇa* Buddha did not die in the way modern Westerners think of death; he was

merely transformed. His legacy in the present, that is his ongoing biography within *samsāra*, is the combination of bodily and linguistic relics that the *stūpa* literally constitutes. The participants in the *stūpa* cult thus participate in an unbroken continuation of the pious activities that Buddhists did before Gotama was transformed in *Parinirvāṇa*: give food, garlands, flowers, scents, fences, stairways, walkways, houses, umbrellas, seats, clothes, flags, service, worship, praise, and memory to the Buddha himself, conceived as a participant in the present.

The ABCs confirm Mus’ thesis entirely. Their language is rich with plays on the metaphors of Buddhism as the “inheritance” from the Buddha by his “children,” of Buddha as the sacrificial altar and fires, and of other perspectives that Mus labored to suggest. Most important for our purposes, the *Apadāna* texts about *stūpa* (and Bodhi tree) worship echo unmistakably Mus’ view that the worshiper regards the *stūpa* as though it were the Buddha⁶² or as the Buddha himself,⁶³ who never died but was transformed into a *samsāric* collection of bones and books and an (unknowable) *nirvāṇic* state (all the ABC biographies, like those Mus actually studied, “end” with the Buddha alive and establishing his “estate”).

Remarkably, Mus apparently came up with his analysis largely on the basis of intuition; it is notoriously difficult to develop (or even understand) his work because he seldom had actual textual passages to support his conclusions. Following Foucher, Mus discussed certain canonical suttas and then the usual range of later Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit texts, but he did not discuss the ABCs. He was, as a result, forced (unnecessarily) into intellectual gymnastics in order to make the Buddhist texts reveal the ideology (that he had discerned through his creative reading of the *Brāhmanas* and *Upanishads*). For, it is only in the ABCs that this ideology is actually stated, described, and constituted. That is because the ABCs were composed in the critical period of transition between the canonical suttas and the Buddhist Sanskrit texts, and so they alone spell out in detail the process by which an ideology (of the cosmic Buddha/universal soteriology) that is absent (though perhaps foreshadowed) in the earlier suttas came to be simply presumed (and reworked) by the Buddhist Sanskrit authors. At the same time that the ABC authors were thus changing, embellishing, and praising the Buddha’s *dharmakāya*, the participants in the *stūpa* cult were changing, embellishing, and praising his *rūpakāya*. These two groups overlapped; they participated in a single episteme: the *stūpa* is the union of the texts and the donative inscriptions, the union of ideology and practice.

Just as the *stūpa* does not *symbolize* the Buddha and his biography but actually *is* the Buddha and his biography, so too the *stūpa* is not the symbol of a universal society but the product and project of a universal society. *Apadāna* is the story of one enormous biographical web, in which Buddha

and the saints in his dispensation knew each other and the same previous Buddhas, lived in the same ancient cities under the same ancient kings, and attended the same festivals or funerals or dharma-talks. Sometimes this is explicit: the Buddha's aunt reached *nirvāna* with 500 nuns who were her kinfolk and companions, *en masse*, throughout her previous lives.⁶⁴ Rāhula transmigrated with his sister;⁶⁵ many groups of monks transmigrated together;⁶⁶ the seven ancient daughters of Kiki King of Kāsi ended up sisters in the same convent;⁶⁷ marriages (including that between Buddha and Yaśodharā) are bonds for eternity.⁶⁸ The trope of the cotransmigration of social units (homologous to the complex agents in the inscriptions) is always implied, due to the basic epistemological position that the biographical web is still being spun by those who are part of it but have not yet escaped it. The *Apadāna* describes a series of Buddha eras in which large numbers of people, participating in the then-ongoing Buddha biography together, move on together through cosmic time until they are born together in the time of Gotama Buddha and achieve together the goal of his dispensation. The biography of the Buddha himself is indistinguishable from the biographies of all those who were involved in the complex agencies that provided the context for his (and their) actions throughout time. As the biography is ongoing, so too is the series of complex agencies that continues in this Buddha era to treasure a Buddha's legacy by caring for his earthly "bodies." His biography is their biography; *Apadāna* is part of the biography of a cosmic society still moving on together toward *nirvāna*: a universal society whose members are the participants, past and present, in the *stūpa* cult.

There are other ways, too, in which the ABCs drive home this point that the *stūpa* cult is the ongoing cosmic Buddha biography *qua* universal soteriology. In the *Apadāna* the participants in the *stūpa* cult are superhuman in addition to human: *devas*, *yakkhas*, *nāgas*, and other mythical beings are described as present at and active in the construction and festivals of worship of *stūpas*. This does more than provide insight into the presence of these beings at the *stūpas*, which was constituted by the *stūpa* sculptures and carvings (usually understood as "influences" on Buddhism of the fertility goddesses and animistic spirits that haunt the timelessly dreamy Indian mind). It allows us, more importantly, to understand that the universality represented in the *stūpa* cult is more than theoretical or symbolic: the entire universe really was centered around the *stūpa*, around the Buddha. The universally attended and extremely joyous festival in which the Buddha reveals the *Buddhavaṃsa* (a common trope in the self-understanding of later Mahāyāna sutras) is, in the *Apadāna* and the *stūpa* cult, homologous to the actual, then present-day, world. The actual festivals that effected the various stages in the development of the *stūpas* (and even the ideology of com-

petitive one-upmanship is spelled out in *Apadāna*)⁶⁹ constituted the continuation of a Buddha biography that was simultaneously the continuation of a universal society, namely the congregation of all those donors (and the supernatural beings) under one complex agency that organizes and sponsors the festival.

Likewise, as I have already indicated in part, this extension of the Buddha biography across time (pre-Siddhartha lives and post-Gotama lives) was complemented by an extension of the Buddha biography across space. *Buddhavaṃsa* treats the "spreading out of the relics" (*dhātuvitthārikam*)⁷⁰ of a Buddha as one among its many categories for telling Buddha biographies: just as it asks of each Buddha "how long did he remain an ascetic?" or "what was the name of his father?" so it asks, "were his relics 'spread out?'" It turns out that the answer is "no" for sixteen Buddhas, "yes" for the remaining nine (including Gotama). The 'spreading out' of Gotama's relics—i.e., the distribution over space of his ongoing biography—is well known in Buddhological circles. *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* contains a famous account of the distribution of relics after Gotama's funeral, which constitutes a geopolitical map of Magadha (northeastern India). *Buddhavaṃsa* not only categorically defines this "distribution" as part of the ongoing Buddha biography; it appropriates the actual verses out of *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* and incorporates them within its own greatly expanded enumeration of the relics and their subsequent journeys.⁷¹ In *Buddhavaṃsa* this is not just a map of Magadha; it is a geopolitical map of an India conceived on a scale that was possible only after the imperial unification of the subcontinent (under Aśoka).⁷²

Again, this is not "popular legend" but extremely sophisticated thought about the then-real world. For the "cosmic" and "universal" society that I have been describing is, as I have already suggested, constituted by the people who actually participated in the *stūpa* cult (whether in the second century B.C. or one hundred thousand eons ago). The Buddha biography, extended in both time and space by the ABCs and the diffusion of *stūpas*, is the biography of a then-real, complex sociopolitical organization, namely the post-Aśokan Indian imperial formations of the Śungas and the Sātavāhanas. The inscriptions alone make it clear that the *stūpa* cult developed within the post-Aśokan imperial process.⁷³ And in light of the fact that the earliest "hard" evidence for the existence of any lithic record or the construction of any *stūpas* is Aśokan, that is imperial; in light of the improbability that anyone other than an emperor would have had the power to hold a festival and build a *stūpa* on the scale that we are talking about, and at major intersections of major land and water routes throughout the empire(s); in light of the certainty that subsequent additions to these *stūpas* by the later Sātavāhanas and Ikshvākus were decidedly imperial acts, it does

not seem remarkable that the inscriptions should bear the names of emperors. It is the world-conquering Buddhist monarch, the *cakkavattin*, who is the agent organizing the pious work/festival that gathers together people from all those places (the extension of the Buddha biography in space) and all those walks of life (the extension of the Buddha biography in time) in order to constitute the continuing biography of the Buddha, cosmic society, and the empire: the *stūpas* are the constitutions of polities, the inscriptions the signatures of representative citizens, and the texts political philosophy.

As I have already mentioned, each *Apadāna* actor experiences in his or her cosmic biography a period of transition between the first performance of a Buddhist action—often a trivial gesture or fleeting recollection—and the final attainment of *nirvāna* in the time of a Buddha (Gotama). This period of transition lasts for countless eons, but it is entirely pleasant: only birth in heaven or on earth, and always in a state of luxury that vastly magnifies the original piety. These descriptions contain as a matter of course enumerations of the times that each monk or nun was a Wheel-Turning Monarch or his homolog the King of Gods (or their analogs, those kings' queens); the number of times that they attained "local kingship" within a larger empire is, when stated at all, sloughed off as "beyond reckoning."⁷⁴ The point is that the political and religious ideologies, which we tend to treat as distinct, are utterly entwined and presuppose each other: the *cakkavattin* is *cakkavattin* because he was once a pious Buddhist; *cakkavattins*, in order to demonstrate that they are *cakkavattins* (and because it is the very nature of *cakkavattins*) are pious Buddhists today.⁷⁵ The citizens of the empire, from "local kings" on down, participate in the ongoing biography (that the *cakkavattin* constitutes: the empire itself) because they are where they are today—human, after all—only having already participated in this biography during previous lives, and because the texts tell them how participation in it during the present life will assure future, greater blessings and eventual *nirvāna*.

Everyone benefits from the *cakkavattin's* festival, with the exception of those who do not, at least with an approving glance, participate. From the lowliest villager to the headman whose name goes on the pillar, from the offerer of a flower that he found on the highway⁷⁶ to the wealthy *setthi* or *vanija* who singularly makes a contribution equal to what others can give only if they rally together, all participants are assured a part in the Buddha biography, the cosmic story of their own salvation. All these people—even the workmen who clean the *stūpa* and the grounds,⁷⁷ the dyers,⁷⁸ the plasterers,⁷⁹ the musicians,⁸⁰ the onlooking children,⁸¹ and the people there who speak words that praise the *Apadāna*⁸²—can be certain that they will one day be local kings and world emperors themselves, will one day possess

minds so enlightened that they will remember the moral acts of previous lives (including participation together in these very festivals) and will one day sing *apadānas* of their own beatitude in order to encourage others to perform these same actions.

Conclusion

The festivals for constructing, improving, and worshiping a *stūpa* (or a Bodhi tree, or a place sacralized by a Buddha's presence,⁸³ or the *sangha*) were the historical situations in which text, inscription, and carving came together. Festivals were the actions constitutive of the Buddha's then-present biography. Early post-Aśokan Indian Buddhist emperors, equating that biography with their empire(s),⁸⁴ constituted those empires by organizing such festivals: mobilizing people and resources in common projects that left as their effects the architecture and carvings, that claimed as their major (already complex) agents the donors, and that proceeded according to the ideological framework of the texts. I want to suggest that the texts were actually recited or performed during the festivals. There is plenty of reason to assume that they were composed for performance;⁸⁵ there is also every reason to think that they would be "festive additions" to such an occasion. The ABCs are all written in light and delightful Pāli verse, full of alliteration and rhyme, suspense and drama, pathos and humor.⁸⁶

The purely entertainment value, however, is overshadowed by the relevance that these texts had for the festival as its ideological basis: it is the story that justifies the donor's participation in these particular forms of piety, that provides directions and specifications for that piety, that assures him or her of future bliss. It is the story that makes those present at the festival feel good about their participation.

In the end, feeling good—about one's actions, about the Buddha, about the empire—is what the texts, inscriptions, and carvings are all about. The texts and carvings produce aesthetic and religious pleasure at the same time that they narrate certain ideas about the nature of the world, the empire, and the Buddha; the happy willingness with which the donors participate is reflected in the act of carving their names in stone, for all to see at the festival. The *Buddhavaṃsa* account of the prototypical biography festival, in which the text itself is proclaimed amid throngs of human and supernatural beings, develops an almost untranslatable language of mental pleasure—laughing a huge laughter (*hasati mahāhasitaṃ*), horripilating with delight (*tutthahattha*), pleased with mental pleasure (*cittapasādena pasanna*), having a mind of delight (*tutthamānasa*), satisfied (*santusita*), overjoyed (*pamodita*), thrilled (*udaggacitta*), good-minded (*sumana*)—repeated over and over again. That is the state of all the people who participate in the paradigmatic biog-

raphy festival, who listen to the *Buddhavaṃsa*. And they respond with song and dance and reflection and devotion. The happiness that makes the festival happen is excelled only by the happiness that it generates.

And it is precisely this mental act—being happy in a Buddhist context—that in the *Apadāna* defines the efficacy of ritual. It was “because of that deed well done *with intention and resolve*” (*tena kammaena sukatenā cetanāpanidhihi ca*), or simply “because of that mental pleasure” (*tena citta-pasādena*) that monk after monk, nun after nun, and even the Buddha himself experienced lifetimes of pleasant existence, universal rulership, and material wealth, until finally they realized the ultimate happiness, the true perfection of mind, *nirvāṇa*. The festival, with its melodic chanting and pretty pictures, its crowds of people in the presence of big shots, the flowers and dancing, the lamps and the incense, constituted *that* happiness and was in turn constituted by it. That mental act was performed by the participants in the festival, who simultaneously acted as citizens in the empire and as characters in the ongoing Buddha biography.

Notes

1. In *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion*, ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Donald Capps, (Mouton: The Hague, 1976), pp. 37–61, esp. p. 57.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
4. Gregory Schopen, “Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit,” in Georg Buddruss et al., trans., *Studien Zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10 (Reinbeck: Dr. Inge Wezler Verlag für Orientalistische Fachpublikationen, 1985), pp. 9–47.
5. Gregory Schopen, “Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 21 (1979), pp. 1–19; cf. “The Inscription on the Kushān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 10, no. 2 (1987), pp. 99–137.
6. Schopen occasionally treats the textual evidence as though it were largely irrelevant (e.g., Schopen, “Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism,” pp. 9–23, esp. pp. 14, 22–23; cf. the treatment of textually based reconstructions of the “origin” of the Mahāyāna in “Mahāyāna and Indian Inscriptions”), although his work generally is directed at textualists, that is at evaluating the nature of texts on the basis of the inscriptions. Underrepresented in his work is the potential value texts have in confirming the points he makes about the epigraphic record (but cf. in this regard Schopen’s use of *vamsa* texts for confirming epigraphic readings in “On the Buddha and His Bones: The Conception of a Relic in the

Inscriptions from Nāgārjunikoṇḍa,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108, no. 4 [October–December 1988], pp. 527–537). More important, Schopen has done little work from the other side: that is, allowing textual data to challenge and nuance the epigraphic conclusions just as the epigraphic conclusions challenge the texts.

7. My own perspective owes much of its substance to the combined work of my colleagues and teachers, especially Ronald Inden, in the ongoing Seminar on Text and Knowledge in South Asia at the University of Chicago. We have been developing and nuancing a “constitutivist” method, which in this context is a view that text and epigraph are mutually constituting discourses in time, constitutive of each other and also of the historical situation(s) in which they were produced. For examples of the new knowledge that such a reading of text-and-epigraph makes possible for all periods, see Inden’s “Imperial Formation, Imperial Purāna,” forthcoming in *Post-Orientalist Approaches to the Study of South Asian Texts*, ed. Inden, and my own contribution to that volume, “Buddhist History: The Sri Lankan Pāli Vamsas”; cf. Inden’s *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), especially chap. 6, “Reconstructions.” The “constitutive” method builds on the work of modern critical thinkers including Michel Foucault, Antonio Gramsci, and Edward Said, upon the basis of the late R. G. Collingwood’s systematic philosophy; for an introduction to Collingwood’s philosophy, see his *An Autobiography* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1939) and *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1933).
8. Gregory Schopen, “The Stūpa Cult and the Extant Pāli Vinaya,” *Journal of the Pāli Text Society* 13 (1989), p. 96; cf. “Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism,” p. 13.
9. Underlying this anachronistic scholarship is an assumption that the authors of the later texts merely repeated ancient oral traditions in which the stories already preexisted, full blown. But the evidence for that assumption is limited, in the early post-Aśokan period anyway, to the conclusions of scholars about what is represented in the carvings at Bhārhut and Sāñchi! This gets very slippery because most of the carvings from this period do not actually have labels at all, and reconstructing the stories they tell has largely been a matter for guesswork.
10. The fact may be that the carvings gave shape to the later texts that seem to correspond to them, rather than the other way around.
11. Mary E. Lilley, ed., *The Apadāna of the Khuddaka Nikāya* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1925, 1927), 2 vols. My citations are to Lilley’s edition throughout, but there are much better editions available in Sinhala (I find the Hewawitarne Bequest edition reliable), Devanāgarī, and Thai scripts. I cite Lilley’s edition because I assume that despite its difficulties, it is more accessible to readers of English than (superior) editions in Asian scripts.
12. Definitive work on the dating of these texts remains to be done (my own work herein on the epigraphic evidence is meant as a contribution to this

project), but no scholar to my knowledge has suggested that they were composed before the time of Aśoka; the question is how long after Aśoka they were composed. A. K. Warder argues on the basis of meter that the texts belong to the second and first centuries B.C. (*Pāli Metre* [London: Pāli Text Society, 1967], pp. 303, 136; compare his statements in *Indian Buddhism* [Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970], p. 298), and I believe that this can be demonstrated on other grounds as well. In addition to my arguments in this essay about the overlap of these texts with the early Brahmī inscriptions that are dated to the same two centuries, the study of intertext further clarifies the point. *Apadāna* quotes *Cariyāpitaka* and *Buddhavaṃsa* in addition to many earlier texts (as discussed below); this gives some indication of how late it is. But *Apadāna* was known by the authors of early (Sarvāstivādin) Buddhist Sanskrit works, including *Divyāvadāna* (compare Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 6 v. 77 [*Buddhāpadāna*] with E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, eds., *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886], p. 469 [note the loss of the syntactical integrity of the Pāli when it is translated into Sanskrit]; *ibid.*, p. 533 [*ājñātāni ca satyāni kṛitāṃ Buddhāya śāsanam*] is apparently a [poor] translation of the typical concluding statement of virtually every *apadāna* [*chadabhiññā sacchiketaṃ ketaṃ Buddhassa śāsanam*]; *ibid.*, p. 195–196 [*prahāya mānushhān kāyān divyān kāyān upāsate*] is similarly a Sanskritization of a very familiar *apadāna* refrain and *Anavataptagāthā* (see K. R. Norman, *Pāli Literature* [Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983], p. 92); this gives some indication of how early it is. For an extended review of the evidence that the ABCs postdate the Buddha by “several centuries,” see Oliver Abeynayake, *A Textual and Historical Analysis of the Khuddaka Nikāya* (Colombo: Tisara, 1984), pp. 164–182, 214–215. Heinz Bechert has tried to date the text considerably later than most scholars (as late as the third century A.D., even though he allows the possibility of second or first century B.C.—see his “Buddha-Feld und Verdienstübertragung: Mahāyāna-Ideen im Theravāda-Buddhismus Ceylons,” *Bulletin de la Classe des Lettres et des Sciences Morales et Politiques* 5e. série, vol. 62 [Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1976], p. 48), but his argument is based on an understanding of both “Theravādin orthodoxy” and “Mahāyāna ideas” that is extremely problematic; see, for an initial critique, Schopen, “Two Problems,” esp. pp. 46–47.

13. Lilley, vol. 1, *The Apadāna*, p. 37 v. 6 (Puṇṇa-Mantāniputta Thera), and vol. 2, p. 550 v. 90 (Khemā Therī).

14. Compare V. Fausboll, ed., *The Sutta-Nipāta* (SN) (London: Pāli Text Society, n.d. [1885]), pt. 1, pp. 6–12 (*Khaggavisāṇasuttaṃ*) with Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, pp. 8–13 vv. 8–49 (*Paccakabuddhāpadāna*); the commentarial tradition on SN also attributes these verses to *Paccaka* Buddhas.

15. See H. Bechert, “Über das Apadānabuch,” in E. Frauwallner, trans., *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ostasiens und Archiv für Indische Philosophie*, vol. 2 (Vienna: Verlag Brüder Hollinek, 1958), pp. 7–9.

16. The connection of these early saints’ verses to the *Apadāna* is most intimate: many of the *apadānas* take up and incorporate the same monk’s or nun’s verses in *Thera-Therīgāthā*, continuing the process, evident even in the latter texts, of adding biographical “rubrics” to the core verses. See Norman, *Pāli Literature*, pp. 89–90, who goes as far as saying that *Apadāna* is “almost an appendix to the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā” (p. 89). It might be better to think of *Apadāna* as “almost a commentary” on those texts. It, like another *Khuddaka-nikāya* text that is a “commentary” on *Sutta-nipāta* (*Niddesa*), represents a crucial stage in the development of commentarial thought within Theravādin history. In terms of *Apadāna*, the process is continued by Dhammapāla, who comments on the *Thera-Therīgāthā* by quoting the *apadāna* of each monk or nun after providing a prose account of it. It is thus the case that the biographical details in C. Rhys-Davids’ famous translation of the *Thera-Therīgāthā* (*Psalm of the Sisters and Psalm of the Brethren*) owe their origin to the *Apadāna* stage in the commentarial process.
17. Rev. Richard Morris, ed., *The Buddhavaṃsa and the Cariyā-Pitaka* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1882), p. 103 (*Ittham sudam . . . abhāsittihā ti*).
18. Compare *ibid.*, p. 103 with Lilley *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, pp. 5–6 vv. 69–77 plus colophon.
19. Compare Morris, *ibid.*, p. 3 v. 23 with Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 20 v. 79 (Sāriputta Thera), vol. 2, p. 364 v. 38 (Udena Thera), and p. 422 v. 9 (Nānathavika Thera); vol. 2, p. 429 vv. 1–6 (Dhammaruci Thera) presupposes *Buddhavaṃsa*, employing its typical prediction (rather than the alternate form typical of other *apadānas*) and making obvious reference to the *Buddhavaṃsa* account of Sumedha (compare Morris, *The Buddhavaṃsa and the Cariyā-Pitaka*, p. 10 vv. 66ff); for examples of other *Buddhavaṃsa* verses quoted in *Apadāna* see Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 2, p. 479 vv. 2–6 (Mahākotthika Thera) = p. 481 vv. 2–6; p. 484 vv. 2–6; p. 486 vv. 2–6 [etc.]. A listing of *Buddhavaṃsa* *pādas* that appear in *Apadāna* would be even more extensive than a similar list of *Cariyāpitaka* *pādas* in *Buddhavaṃsa*.
20. See Reynolds, “The Many Lives of Buddha,” pp. 42–43 for a discussion of various perspectives in the scholarly tradition.
21. They are giving (*dāna*), moral discipline (*sīla*), turning away from the world (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), exertion (*viriyā*), patience (*khantī*), truthfulness (*sacca*), resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), love (*mettā*), and even-mindedness (*upekkhā*).
22. Even the one sutta that would seem to contradict this statement, *Mahāpadāna Sutta* of the *Dighanikāya*, supports the contention I am making. It is true that it details the lives of previous *buddhas* and indicates that the Buddha made good *karma* then, which at least hints at the full-blown cosmic biography. And there is no doubt that the details of this sutta are a major basis for the *Buddhavaṃsa* (and consequently for the *Apadāna*) account, including the name, *Apadāna*, that defines the genre to

- which all three ABCs self-consciously belong. But in *Mahāpadāna* the problematic frame is not universal soteriology; the question of the sutta is about whether Buddhas remember their own previous lives or learn about them from gods, not about the universality of Buddha's messages. Thus *Mahāpadāna Sutta* lacks the essential revelation that each *buddha* laid the foundation for all people, even those who did not achieve the goal there-and-then, to achieve it sometime. The stark contrast between *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Buddhavaṃsa* is best seen in a comparison of their respective tellings of the "Brahmā begs Buddha to preach" mytheme. In the former text this characterizes other *buddhas'* lives too (showing a stage in the development of the *Buddhavaṃsa*) but otherwise stays close to the original myth, in sharp distinction to *Buddhavaṃsa* itself, as described below.
23. Morris, *The Buddhavaṃsa and the Cariyā-Piṭaka*, pp. 102–103 vv. 8–14 (also quoted as the conclusion to *Buddhāpadāna*, Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, pp. 5–6 vv. 69–75).
 24. See T.W. Rhys-Davids and Hermann Oldenberg, trans., *Vinaya Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), part 1, pp. 84–88 (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. 13); V. Trenckner, ed., *The Majjhima-Nikāya* (London: Pāli Text Society, 1888), vol. 1, pp. 167–169 (*Ariyapariyesanasuttam* [no. 26]).
 25. Morris, *The Buddhavaṃsa and the Cariyā-Piṭaka*, p. 74: *Aññakappe caritaṃ thapayitvā bhavābhavā/imamhi kappe caritaṃ pavakkhissam suñohi me*.
 26. *Ibid.*, p. 67 v. 19: *ahaṃ etarahi sambuddho Metteyo cāpi hessati*.
 27. *Ibid.*, p. 67 v. 20: *Etesaṃ dhammarājūnaṃ aññesaṃ nekakoṭṭinaṃ/ācikkhitvāna taṃ maggaṃ nibbutā te sasāvakā ti*.
 28. Specifically, the Buddha magically creates (*nimmināti*) with his mind a gem-studded palace and then imagines all the Buddhas and disciples of cosmic time together, in that palace. The palace itself bears a striking similarity to the *stūpa*, for in it the Buddha "provides" to the previous Buddhas precisely what people in this period provided to the Buddha (in his present "palace," the *stūpa* itself): wreaths, precious substances, incense, lamp-stands, banners, lion-thrones, musical instruments, celestial songs, rails with *toranas*, etc. The situation created in the Buddha's mind is also homologous with the cosmic festival of the *Buddhavaṃsa*, and thus with the ancient festivals recorded in *Apadāna* as well as the then-modern festivals of the Śungas and Sātavāhanas in which, as I argue below, the texts were performed and the *stūpas* were built.
 29. Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 4 v. 50; cf. v. 48: *manasā dānaṃ*.
 30. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 1 v. 1; cf. p. 7, p. 15, vol. 2, p. 512: *Atha buddhāpadānāni [etc.] sunātha*.
 31. E.g., *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 153 v. 4: *anupadinnā Buddhena sabbesaṃ vijasampadā* ("the fulfillment/growth of seeds [of karma] is assured by the Buddha for everyone").
 32. We can include at least Lilley's numbers 3, 11, 15, 22, 38, 48, 61, 71, 116, 119, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 159, 193, 236, 239, 247, 253, 277, 291, 293, 331, 333, 373, 374, 394, 413, 426, 455, 456, 457, 458, 459, 483,

- 484, 495 and 538 (*ibid.*) of the *Therāpadāna* in a list of *apadānas* of monks whose root pious act was directly connected with the cult of *stūpas*/relics.
33. André Bareau, *Les Sectes Bouddhiques du Petit Véhicule* (Saigon: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1955), p. 36 (et passim: see p. 36 n. 1); cf. Étienne Lamotte, *History of Indian-Buddhism: From the Origins to the Śāka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin (Louvain-la-neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1988), pp. 523–526.
34. Schopen, "Two Problems."
35. Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988).
36. Collingwood's most extensive description of "complex agency," situated historically and defined philosophically, is his *The New Leviathan or Man, Society, Civilization and Barbarity* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1971 [1942]). Collingwood begins with action motivated by the human passions, "personal motivations," but demonstrates that human agency always extends beyond the passions because people act simultaneously as members of social units from families right up to civilizations. All human action thus has collective, societal dimensions characterized by rational activity aimed at constructing, defining, maintaining, improving, and/or regulating the social formations of which individuals are constitutive. The passions may still play a role in action, but collective action—"complex agency"—implies and necessitates overlapping "collective motivations" in the form of an epistemology that is shared and thereby constituted as the arena in which consensus is produced. Because epistemology is, for Collingwood, created in time and space by the human thought that also produced the texts (or inscriptions or monuments) that survive today as evidence of it, rather than some essence (e.g., collective consciousness, cultural proclivity, sociopolitical "context") that exists outside of and is merely expressed by actual texts, its recovery is a strictly historical problem that requires an imaginative reconstruction, based upon a learned reading of the evidence itself, of the relationships between human thoughts and sociopolitical formations in any given historical period. "Collective motivations" (e.g., ideologies, soteriologies, Buddhologies) and collective agencies (kingdoms, caste groups, religious sects) are recovered in the single act of interpreting the primary evidence that was constituted by and constitutive of both theory and practice. Inden has made brilliant use of Collingwood's ideas about "complex agency" in his *Imagining India*, especially the idea of "caste as citizenship." Compare here Lamotte (*History*, p. 414), who recognizes (as have other scholars) the *fact* of complex agency (although not in those terms) but does not then explore the ramifications of such a view.
37. E.g., C. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures in the Madras Government Museum*, *Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, New Series, General Section*, vol. 4 (Madras: Tansi Press, 1977), "Inscriptions," pp. 271–304 nos. 17, 42, 48, 52, 75, 97, and 120 (members of immediate family); nos. 35,

- 41, 44, 124, and 126 (friends, family, and relatives); cf. H. Lüders, *A List of Brahmi Inscriptions (Epigraphia Indica 10, pp. 1-179)*, nos. 1214, 1278.
38. E.g., Lüders, *List*, no. 1180 (guild of corn dealers: *damūḥkaseṇī*).
39. The best example is the famous set of inscriptions on the Bhattiprolu *stūpa*'s relic caskets: see G. Bühler, "The Bhattiprolu Inscriptions" (*EL2*, pp. 323-329). Here, the richness of "complex agency" in the construction of *stūpas* is apparent. A king called Kubera[ka] organized at least two committees (*goṭhi*) and a mercantile town (*negamā*), the members of which are listed at length on the actual caskets and which themselves already represent complex agencies, into a single complex agency that effected the enshrinement of the three caskets together in a single *stūpa*. Compare in this regard Lüders, *List*, no. 234 (Sāñchi; "Buddhist Committee" [*bodhagoṭhi*] from Dharmavardhana: *ibid.*, no. 351), no. 273 (Sāñchi, a *goṭhi* from Vidisā). Cf. further no. 782 (Bhārhut, a group of *dāyakas* from Purikā); no. 214 (Sāñchi; *upāsikas* from Navagrāma) and others.
40. Lüders, *List*, no. 195 (Sāñchi; the village of Vejaja), no. 401 (Sāñchi; village of Aśvarāvati), no. 625 (Sāñchi; village of Chumvamoragiri (?)); cf. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures*, no. 22 ("of the Paḍipudīa community").
41. Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures*, nos. 12, 16 (?), 58 (*dhañakataka nigamasa*; cf. Lüders, *List*, no. 1261 (Amarāvati, *bhadanigama*, no. 705 (Bhārhut, Karahakata *nigama*)).
42. E.g., *ibid.*, no. 69 (a nun, herself a pupil of the monk who is overseeing the repairs at Amarāvati, acting as the representative of her daughters), no. 80 (nun acting for her siblings); Lüders, *List*, no. 163 (Sāñchi, groups of nuns); at Bhattiprolu (Bühler, "Bhattiprolu Inscriptions" p. 328 no. 5) it would appear that Kuba's technical title was "Monk of/for the Committee" (*goṭhisamaṇo*).
43. A beautiful example of complex agency in the *Apadānic* understanding of *stūpa* construction is Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, pp. 70-74 (Upavana Thera). Compare *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 33 v. 2 (Mahākassapa Thera; "calling together my relatives and friends [*nātimitte*]"); and vol. 2, p. 425 (Dhātupūjaka Thera; "calling together my relatives"), p. 89 v. 2 (Ayāgadāyaka Thera; "having addressed the people in charge of repairs I gave the capital").
44. E.g., Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 59 (Pilindavaccha Thera; organizes an alms-giving to the *sangha* in conjunction with *thūpapūja*; *ibid.*, p. 171 (Vedikāraka Thera; holds a rail-festival [v. 2: *vedikāya maham katvā*]); *ibid.*, p. 172 (Saparivāriya Thera; participates in a group *pūja*); *ibid.*, p. 172 (Ummāpupphiya Thera; participates in a "great *stūpa* festival" [v. 1: *mahāthūdpamahō*]); *ibid.*, p. 249 (Dhammasaññaka Thera; participates in a "great Bodhi tree festival" [*mahābodhimahō*]); vol. 2, p. 391 (Ekasamkhiya Thera; participates in a *mahābodhimahō*; *ibid.*, pp. 513-514 (Mekhaladāyikā Therī; gives a 'girdle' [at the festival] to finance a *stūpa* then another [at/for the festival] when it is finished).

45. Art historians have been very conscious of the fact that the ancient carvings that contain pictures of *stūpas* illustrate them as they appeared at the time of the illustration, and thus encode a history of the development of the form of the *stūpa*. It is thus remarkable that scenes portraying kings and queens have always been identified with scenes from some sort of collective historical memory (the texts that are supposed to embody these tales are, remember, considerably later than the actual carvings), rather than with the actual practices of the then-present monarchy; likewise festival scenes illustrate archetypal stories rather than the *stūpa* worship, *bodhi pūjā*, singing and dancing and above all happy times that probably built the rails or gateways on which the illustrations are actually displayed. Sometimes the same historical scene is said to appear several times in a single set of carvings! Moreover, even if these *are* historical scenes, it is important to ask why they should have been represented at all, hundreds of years after their purported occurrence. In the texts, different tellings of the tales often reflect the different historical circumstances in which they were composed, because the authors of those texts thought about their own pasts in light of a homology to the present. Thus even if it could be demonstrated that all the illustrations are of famous kings such as Aśoka over and over, they may simultaneously illustrate the less-famous kings who, being Aśoka's imperial successors, coordinated the construction of these edifices.
46. A splendid illustration of the ideology behind ever-improving upon the predecessor's *stūpa* construction, a characteristic example of Indian imperial one-upmanship, is Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, pp. 70-74 (Upavana Thera). Subsequent emperors would appropriate (in various ways) their predecessor's monuments, religious practices, etc., just as they appropriated their empires.
47. Compare *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 4 v. 40 (*ḍiparukkhā*—et passim: "Rev. Lamp Giver" is a very popular name in the *Apadāna*) with Lüders, *List*, no. 9291 (Sārnāth: *pradīpa*); Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures*, no. 118 (*divakhabho*—a late inscription?).
48. The pillar-gift (*tham]bhadānam*) is easily the most common and certainly one of the oldest technical terms in this lithic discourse. Cf. Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 172 (Thambhāropaka Thera; erects a pillar [*thambha*] at the Buddha's *ceṭiya* [here, as elsewhere in *Apadāna* and extremely common in the inscriptions, "*ceṭiya*" is clearly synonymous with "*thūpa*"]).
49. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 213 (Alambanadāyaka Thera; gives a balustrade [*ālambana*] for a Buddha[*'s* *ceṭiya*(?)]), with Lüders, *List*, no. 921a (Sārnāth).
50. E.g., Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 55 (Sihāsanadāyaka Thera; gives a lion-throne with 'foot stool' after the Buddha had reached *nirvāna* [i.e., for him as a relic, in a *stūpa* (?)]); *ibid.*, pp. 188-189 (Sihāsanadāyaka Thera [2]; gave a *sihāsana* after the Buddha had died). It is of course very common to see people worshipping an empty lion's throne, and/or a 'footstool' containing footprints of the Buddha, in the carvings of early post-Aśokan Buddhist India. Such carvings (also carvings of people

worshipping Bodhi trees [= Enlightenment], of people worshipping *dharmacakra* pillars [= First Sermon], and of people worshipping *stūpas* [= *Parinirvāṇa*] are considered “aniconic” representations of the various stages in the Buddha biography. But this view is not sufficiently nuanced in the scholarly literature. All of these objects are known to have been just that—actual objects of worship at the *stūpas* where the illustrations were displayed—on the basis of archaeological, epigraphic, and textual (i.e., *Apadāna* evidence. The carvings thus contain straightforward illustrations of the actual practices that constituted and were constitutive of the *stūpa* cult. For epigraphic confirmation of this point, see e.g., Lüders, *List*, no. 1223 (Amarāvati, *sihaṭhāna*; nos. 1217, 1219, 1225, 1286 (Amarāvati, footprint slab/foot stool). However, there is truth in the aniconic theory to the extent that people did worship these objects as symbols or representations of the Buddha and/or the important events in his life. So we need not go as far as Susan and John Huntington (*The Art of Ancient India* [New York: Weatherhill, 1985]) in denying aniconism altogether. My own view, however, has an advantage over “symbolist” studies of ancient Buddhist aniconism in so far as it puts aniconic thought at the level of actual practice rather than leaving it an abstraction redundantly represented by the artists and the patrons of the *stūpas*. I am grateful to Michael Rabe and Robert Brown for clarifying to me the complexity of the issues surrounding the aniconic theory.

51. Compare Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 170 (Adhicchattiya Thera; had an umbrella with covering [*chattāhichattam*] made for a Buddha's *stūpa* and ibid., pp. 244–245 (Chattadāyaka Thera; put a white umbrella on a *stūpa*) with Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures*, no. 92 (*cediyasa chata*, “an umbrella for the *cetiya*”). Actual remnants of stone *stūpa*-umbrellas have been discovered (e.g., M. M. Hamid, et al. *Catalogue of the Museum of Archaeology at Sanchi, Bhopal State* [Archaeological Survey of India] [Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1982 (1920)], nos. 72, 77, 78, 79, 80, etc.) and it is of course very common to see umbrellas (even umbrellas that are themselves covered, as in *Apadāna*) adorning the *stūpas* that are illustrated in the carvings. The presence of umbrellas, given their significance in Indian royal practice and ideology, provides a constant reminder that these *stūpas* were constructed within a political world.
52. Compare Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 90 (Dhammacakkika Thera; placed a well-constructed *dharmacakka* in front of a Buddha's lion-throne) with any number of contemporary carvings that illustrate the worship of such objects at *stūpas* and other Buddhist sites (and cf. note 50, above, about the problems of seeing these carvings as “aniconic representations” of a Buddha from the past rather than as illustrations of Buddhist practice in the then-present). Cf. also Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Sculptures*, no. 51 (*dharmacakam*); Lüders *List*, no. 866 (*bodhicakra*).
53. The importance of rails (*vedi*, *vedika*, *veika*, *vetika*) around the *stūpas* of this period hardly needs to be documented; the illustrations as well as the ruins

abound in them, and the term is an old and common one in the lithic discourse. The idea of putting up rails is also common in *Apadāna* (e.g., Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 171 [Vedikāraka Thera], and p. 172 [Saparivāriya Thera]). The equally common lithic term for cross-bar gift (*sūci dānam*), however, appears to retain only its original meaning (“needle-gift”) in *Apadāna*; that text uses the term “leg” (*jamghā*) to refer to the parts of a rail. This may further indicate the specific situation in which *Apadāna* had meaning, although I would have expected, given the antiquity of *sūci* as a lithic term for cross-bar, to find it so used in *Apadāna*. Perhaps we can detect here the interest of the *Apadāna* authors in clearly distinguishing the various subvarieties of *dānam*: it does not allow for a confusion of “cross-bar” and “needle,” as does the lithic record.

54. See Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, pp. 70–74 (Upavana Thera). Such reliquaries—gold inside of silver inside of precious stone, etc.—have actually been discovered in the *stūpas* of Andhra Pradesh (see Alexander Cunningham, [*The Bhilsa Topes; or Buddhist Monument of Central India*] [London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1854] and A.H. Longhurst, *The Buddhist Antiquities on Nāgārjunikoṇḍa Madras Presidency* [Delhi: Manager of Publications, 1938] [Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, no. 54] on Nāgārjunikoṇḍa excavations.)
55. E.g., Schopen, “Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions”, cf. his “Filial Piety and the Monk in the Practice of Indian Buddhism,” *T'oung Pao* 70 (1984), pp. 110–126.
56. There is of course the embarrassing possibility, given the structure of the epigraphic Prakrits (i.e., the indistinguishability of the dative and genitive cases, sometimes even the ablative), that we should translate all these inscriptions “the (*dānam*) for (recipient of the merit).” It is long-established practice not to view the inscriptions this way, but it makes a degree of sense for certain ones among them.
57. In other work I have been exploring the legacy of *Apadāna*'s karmic absolutism. My article “The Buddha's Bad Karma: A Problem in the History of Theravāda Buddhism” (*Numen*, June 1990) explores the long debate in later Theravādin history over the *Apadāna* position that even Buddhas must suffer the effects of previous bad *karma*; “A Voice from the Silence: The Buddha's Mother's Story” (*History of Religions Journal*, May 1994) explores the “feminist” response to the *Apadānic* certainty that in the long process of transmigration men remain male and women remain female.
58. On the basis of purely epigraphic records, Schopen too has insisted that the development of the *stūpa* cult in this period involved the finest minds of the day, scholar-monks who, we cannot doubt, were of the same status as (or actually were) the composers of the Pāli *Abhidhamma* and the preservers of the texts of “early Buddhism” (see “Two Problems,” esp. pp. 24–26).
59. For standard historical accounts of Aśoka Maurya—of which there are many—see e.g., V. A. Smith, *Aśoka: The Buddhist Emperor of India*

- (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909); A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That Was India* (New York: Grove Press, 1959 [1954]); B. M. Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions* (Calcutta: New Age, 1946); B. G. Gokhale, *Asoka Maurya* (New York: Twayne, 1966); and R. Thapar, *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961). A handy translation of the epigraphic remains from Aśoka's reign is N. A. Nikam and Richard McKeon, eds. and trans., *The Edicts of Aśoka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978 [1959]). On the importance of Aśoka in later Buddhist thought, see Frank Reynolds, "The Two Wheels of Dhamma: A Study of Early Buddhism," in *The Two Wheels of Dhamma: Essays on the Theravāda Tradition in India and Ceylon*, ed. Bardwell Smith (Chambersburg, Penn.: AAR, 1972), esp. pp. 23–30; cf. John Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
60. Paul Mus, *Barabudur: Esquisse d'une histoire du Bouddhisme fondée sur la critique archéologique des textes* (Hanoi: Imp. d'Extrême Orient, 1935), preface.
61. Schopen has confirmed this point in a creative reading of the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions, which, grammatically at least, equate the terms "relic" and "Buddha" ("On the Buddha and His Bones"). But Schopen, who does not seem to be aware of Mus' theory, reads into this fact a foreign dualistic incarnationalism: the Buddha is somehow a "living presence" in the relic (p. 537). As Mus has demonstrated, the "indigenous Indian logic" at work in the *stūpa* cult is more complex than this, and decidedly nondualistic. The relic is the material face of a Buddha whose teachings on *nirvāna* makes the (gnostic) description of his "livingness" highly problematic (even though this sort of positive "gnosticism" does eventually emerge in Sanskritic Buddhist thought). Instead, Mus says, it is precisely the message, constantly driven home, that the Buddha's graspable (*samsāric*) biography is today only the biography of bones (and texts = *dharmakāya*), which "projects" the devotee into the extradiscursive realm of the Buddha as he really is today, that is *nirvāna*. Still, Schopen's point is an important one, and the *Apadāna* confirms his reading, as do many other texts that Schopen talks about in this context (add to his [single] *Apadāna* reference the texts cited below, n. 62 and n. 63).
62. Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 108 v. 2 (Dhajāyaka Thera; "As though face to face with the Buddha I worshipped the unexcelled Bodhi Tree" [*sammūkhā viya sambuddham avandiṃ bodhiṃ uttamam* = p. 149 v. 3 [Ekāsanīya Thera] = p. 290 v. 3 [Bodhivandaka Thera]); *ibid.*, p. 111 v. 2, vol. 2, p. 388 v. 5, p. 439 v. 27 (worshipping *stūpas* "as though face to face with the Buddha").
63. Schopen's argument about the meaning of "relic" in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions is that the word for relic ("*dhātu*") stands in grammatical apposition to words for Buddha, hence relic = Buddha. By this logic, all except the last text among those cited in n. 62 shares the same epistemology: the Buddha is the Bodhi tree or *stūpa* that is being worshipped (*sambuddham . . . thūpaṃ*). This connection is explicit in Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 224 (Dhātupūjaka Thera; *Tāhaṃ dhātum gahetvāna . . . paricariṃ tittṭham taṃ va naruttamaṃ* [which can be read: "taking the relic . . . I looked after it (which was) the Best of Men (Buddha) remaining (in the world)" or "(which was) the firm/solid Best of Men (Buddha)"]). We also find "Supreme *Stūpa*" (*Cetiyaṃ Uttamaṃ*) as an epithet of the living Buddha at *ibid.*, p. 255 v. 1.
64. Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 2, pp. 529–543 (Mahāpājāpati Gotamī Therī).
65. *Ibid.*, pp. 551–557 (Uppalavaṇṇā Therī).
66. E.g., *ibid.*, p. 473 vv. 33–34 (Dabbamallaputta Thera).
67. E.g., *ibid.*, p. 546 vv. 31–34 (Khemā Therī) et passim.
68. E.g., *ibid.*, pp. 584–592 (Yaśodharā Therī); pp. 578–584 (Bhaddā-Kāpilāni Therī).
69. See for example *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 70–74.
70. The term is used in a similar technical sense in *Apadāna*, see *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 172 v. 2 (Saparivāriya Thera; a "diffusion [*vitthārika*, *vittharita*] of stupas").
71. See Morris, *The Buddhavaṃsa and the Cariyā-Piṭaka*, pp. 68–69.
72. Its focus, however, remains northern, which confirms my own view that *Buddhavaṃsa* belongs to the period of the Bhārhut railing, i.e., the Śūngas, whereas the *Apadāna* belongs to the period of special importance for Andhra, i.e., the early Sātavāhanas.
73. On the Śūngas at Bhārhut, see Lüders, *List*, nos. 687 and 688; on the early Sātavāhanas at Sāñchi see *ibid.*, no. 346. There are many more examples of explicit references to the emperor(s) who created the context(s) in which the construction of *stūpas* took place. Such lithic references to emperors as agents of Buddhist change actually increase in number after the beginning of the Christian era, when the emperors themselves were increasingly Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava in personal practice. But these inscriptions are well known, and this is not the place to review them.
74. E.g., Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 2, p. 378 v. 7 (Mañcadāyaka Thera; "there was [as a result of my karma] much local rule, incalculable by counting" [*padesarajjaṃ vipulaṃ gānaṇāto asaṅkhiyaṃ*]). Compare *ibid.*, vol. 1, no. 22 v. 43.
75. This "Cakkavattin King" ideology must not be treated as some transcendent essence nor as part of Aśoka's own explicit imperial ideology. The sources that describe such an ideology, and that treat Aśoka as having such an ideology, are considerably later than the Aśokan period. This ideology was first being constituted (in the textual and political traditions) only during the early post-Aśokan period, i.e., the time of the ABCs. The sources in which it, and Aśoka, loom so large, were produced in self-conscious revisions/reworkings of the ABC tradition, in Kashmir and Sri Lanka. The ideology as a "new" idea should thus be treated within the early post-Aśokan period; the ideology as a "given" should not be dated before these textual revisions in Kashmir and Sri Lanka.
76. An allusion to the lovely *apadāna* of Nāgasamāla Thera, Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 119.

77. E.g., *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 198 (Kaṇḍaphullīya Thera); pp. 269ff. (Paḥaṃkara Thera).
78. E.g., *ibid.*, p. 220 (Vaṇṇakāra Thera).
79. *Ibid.*, p. 237 (Potthadāyaka Thera).
80. *Ibid.*, p. 151 (Citakapūjaka Thera).
81. It is a common trope in *Apadāna* that children “tagging on with father” participate in some pious activity (to which father is going), which becomes the guarantee of their own salvation.
82. Lilley, *The Apadāna*, vol. 1, p. 241 (Apadāniya Thera; “I praised the *Apadāna* of Well-Gone-Ones, the Great Sages, and I worshipped their feet with my head, pleased by these hands [that had performed *añjali*]. In the ninety-two eons since I praised the *Apadāna* I experienced no ill-state, that is the fruit of praising. I experienced the four analytical knowledges, the eight deliverances, the six super-knowledges; the Buddha’s *sāsana* is achieved!”).
83. E.g., *ibid.*, p. 183 (Desapūjaka Thera).
84. It is of course possible that the emperors who organized the *stūpa* cult conceived of this Buddha biography only as *part* of their empires, and that their practices constituted other “Great Stories” (like the epics) as other “parts” of those empires, simultaneously. However, in the early Brahmī period, as far as I am aware, there is no direct inscriptional evidence to confirm such a view; there is only proof that the emperors were, in various ways, involved with Buddhist cultic activity. By the time of the later Śātavāhanas (first–second centuries A.D.; e.g., Gautamīputra Satakarni et al. at Nasik and Amarāvati) and especially under the imperial Ikshvākus of Andhra, (second–third centuries A.D.), on the other hand, it had become standard practice for non-Buddhist emperors to command the development of Buddhist history by empowering queens/vassals/ministers to act as the (organizing) agents of change.
85. I have already mentioned that the texts are addressed to a plural “you,” an audience, that is enjoined to “listen.” There are also internal reasons for making his supposition: unmarked changes of voice that would be unintelligible without separate performers, indeed the very style in which the texts are written (colloquialism, additions of entertainment value, and the like.) This is not the place for an extended discussion of the performative dimensions of the ABCs, which I plan to address in a later work. For initial reflections on performative context and its centrality to the historical interpretation of *apadāna* texts, see my “A Voice from the Silence.”
86. Given the dating, we see here the prototype for the Indian epics, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*, which are written in Sanskrit verse exactly paralleling the style of the ABCs, which tell “Great Stories” that bear obvious similarity to those in the ABCs (cosmicized “maps” of both time and space; India as a single web of interconnection, frame, and *karma*; the centrality of kingship), and which, during the Gupta period, emerged as the kind of imperial discourse that the ABCs had been shortly after the time of Aśoka. If I am right about the “festive” context of the ABCs, a great deal of light is also shed upon the performance history of the epics.

Part 3



The Jātakas and Biographies of Kings

Among more than five hundred stories of the Buddha’s former lives, known as the *jātaka* tales, several identify the future Buddha as a king. The history of Theravāda Buddhism in Southeast Asia, where such stories are widely known, provides ample examples of royal rulers who self-consciously sought to emulate in their own lives the ideal of future Buddhahood. Cultural representations of the future Buddha as king and of the king as a future Buddha are therefore common themes in the sacred biography of Buddhism in Southeast Asia.

McGill’s essay presents a discussion of a set of paintings depicting the Buddha in his penultimate life as King Vessantara. Through stylistic and epigraphic analysis, McGill links these visual narratives painted on canvas to the production of a particular Thai artistic genre in the service of popular ritual performances and recitations of the same narrative, the *Vessantara Jātaka*, as a royal occasion for making merit in order to encounter the future Buddha, Maitreya. His exploration of “Painting the ‘Great Life’ ” uniquely links the production of a particular art genre to ritual performances centered on a common biographical theme, namely the story of King Vessantara.

Hudak describes the development from prose to poetry of a classical example of Thai literature. The narrative structure of this *jātaka* story underwent changes by multiple authors and conflates in its intentionality