BUDDHIST STUPAS IN SOUTH ASIA

Recent Archaeological, Art-Historical, and Historical Perspectives

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An Introduction

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Buddhist stūpas, the often massive hemispherical mounds built for the veneration of the Buddha and his disciples, were undoubtedly the most magnificent religious monuments that appeared in the Indian subcontinent during the early historic period. The origins of the stūpa are not entirely clear, but in Buddhist contexts they would seem to have appeared at some point around 400–300 BCE. The practice of building them became prevalent throughout South Asia between c. 200 BCE and 300 CE, and soon spread to other parts of Asia. Although the Indian Buddhist tradition does not survive today, a considerable number of early stūpas are still visible in many places, and their remains testify to the nature and widespread presence of Buddhism in early India.

As is widely known, Buddhist stūpas in India were largely abandoned after the demise of Buddhist monastic practice, and were re-discovered by European colonial officials in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The subsequent study of these monuments and their associated remains has been central to many aspects of the study of South Asia's ancient past, providing as they do some of the earliest examples of religious architecture, stone sculpture, and inscriptions in South Asia. Despite this, however, our understanding of this important class of monument, and the ancient past to which they belonged, remains seriously limited. In many respects, this is due to the ways they have been studied. At the time of their re-discovery, knowledge of the ancient Buddhism to which these monuments

largely pertained was only very hazy, and there was neither the archaeological expertise nor academic knowledge to facilitate their effective study. Over the course of the next two centuries, the study of Buddhist stūpas has been defined by the evolution and development of various academic disciplines, including archaeology, art history, history, and religious studies. The development of these disciplines has generated particular trends in the ways that stūpas are studied, and still influences many of our current views of the monuments.

The Western Discovery of Indian Buddhism

The study of stūpas has been closely connected to the evolution of the European understanding of Buddhism itself. As early as the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries CE, fragmentary accounts of Buddhism in Asia began to reach Europe through the records and personal accounts of travellers and explorers. One example is a fairly detailed summary of the life of the Buddha that was recorded by Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveller, who stayed in China between 1275 and 1291 CE (Benedetto trans., 1994: 319–20). From the sixteenth century, European encounters with contemporary Buddhist worship throughout Asia greatly increased with the direct contacts established by merchants and missionaries. Over the next two centuries, a considerable amount of ethnographic material was written about the beliefs and practices of Buddhism in various Asian contexts.[2]

These various (and invariably unsystematic) encounters with Buddhist practices, however, did not immediately result in the identification of the existence of Buddhism in ancient India. At first glance this would seem a bit odd, especially when we consider that early European travellers had also visited a number of ancient Buddhist sites in India. The rock-cut caves at Kanheri, for example, received much attention (Mitter, 1977: 34–40; Chakrabarti, 1988: 3–11). At the same time, however, these early travellers seem to have had little idea as to the nature of these monuments. One of the main reasons for this may have been that in India, unlike other countries in Asia, Buddhism was no longer visible as a living religion. Buddhism in India had largely disappeared before the Islamic conquest of the lower Gangetic valley in the early thirteenth century.[3] By the eighteenth century, many of the Buddhist monuments were either dilapidated or

had been turned into shrines devoted to Hindu or other forms of local worship.[4] In addition, the Hindu Brahmins, who would have been the main informants of Indian culture for the Europeans, understood any form of religious practice associated with the Buddha as a part of Hindu worship. It would, therefore, have been difficult to recognize the monuments as the remains of the ancient Buddhist religion, as distinct from contemporary Vaiṣṇavite practice. Moreover, it should be noted that Europeans observed contemporary Buddhist practices in different countries throughout Asia, without having a comprehensive understanding of Buddhism as a pan-Asian religion. Due to the long history of Buddhism in each part of Asia, the Buddhist monasteries and practices that were observed had already developed highly divergent forms. It was hardly an obvious conclusion that they were all part of the same religion, let alone connected to the dilapidated ruins encountered in a largely Hindu India.

Around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, this situation began to change. During this time, coinciding with an increasing colonial interest in India's ancient past (through which contemporary Indian culture could be better understood, and thus more effectively ruled), the reconstruction of the religions of ancient India became a major academic issue. Central to this endeavour was the study of the ancient texts in Sanskrit and to a lesser extent Pāli, which started to become available for European scholars. In many respects, and as is widely recognized, the primacy attached to the study of these texts was rooted in the influence of the European classical tradition, for which written texts were the established, and indeed the only, objects of study in scholarly approaches to ancient history, religion, and philosophy.[5]

The textual studies of ancient Indian religions led to a significant development in the understanding of Buddhism. Combined with various ethnographic accounts of the beliefs of Futo, Hotoke, Bodo, Booddhu or Bauddha observed in the larger part of Asia, studies of the ancient texts revealed that these seemingly diverse styles of worship were in fact manifestations of the same religion that had its origins in ancient India (Almond, 1988: 10–11). Based on this larger historical canvas, Eugene Burnouf wrote the first comprehensive study of ancient Indian Buddhism using the Sanskrit manuscripts acquired by Brian Houghton Hodgson in Kathmandu, Nepal (Burnouf, 1844).[6] Through

the gradual accumulation of textual knowledge, western scholars were able to sketch the broad historical framework of Buddhism, and, in doing so, 'authorized' the study of the texts as a means of enquiry into ancient Indian Buddhism and the history of the period to which it belonged, as a serious academic pursuit (Almond, 1988: 25). This 'discovery' of Buddhism also enabled the identification of the ancient remains of Buddhism in India, which had not always been so clearly differentiated from Brahmanical or Jain monuments (Erskine, 1823: 494–537).

The Study of Buddhist Stūpas

Early Encounters: the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries)

It was in precisely this context that the remains of Buddhist stūpas were first encountered. The first recorded discovery and study of a Buddhist stūpa was in 1798 when Colin Mackenzie Found the remains of the Amaravati stūpa and made a brief survey (Mackenzie, 1807). Shortly thereafter, in 1800, a local doctor excavated the stūpa at Vaiśālī (Stephenson, 1835: 130–1). The stūpas at Sanchi were discovered by a British officer named General Taylor in 1816, and subsequently explored by Captain Edward Fell in 1817 (Fell, 1834: 490–4; Burgess, 1902: 29–45). In the northwest, Ranjit Singh excavated the stūpa at Manikyala in 1830 (Prinsep, 1834: 315–20), and throughout the 1830s, Alexander Burnes and Charles Masson opened a large number of stūpas throughout the Gandhāran region.

   It should be noted, however, that these earliest explorations of stūpa monuments were in no sense professional archaeological surveys as we have come to understand them today. At best, they may be described as antiquarian endeavours, at worst they were the result of blatant treasure hunting. Because the early surveyors of the stūpas were largely government officials or else private individuals with an amateur interest in old ruins, their understanding of what was being surveyed or excavated varied considerably. Mackenzie's extensive excavations at Amaravati (1816–17), for example, were to obtain sculptures for the embellishment of a monument that had been built by a local British officer (Howes, 2002: 59–65). Mackenzie did not fully understand the nature of this monument, but knew enough to surmise that it was used for religious worship by a different sect

from the Hindus (Mackenzie, 1823: 469). Similarly, while Fell was able to note the presence of Buddha images at the Sanchi stūpas in 1819, he also misidentified many of the Buddhist figures as Jain 'Jinas' and Hindu deities (Fell, 1834: 490–4). Burnes and Masson even assumed the stūpas they excavated to be the royal tombs of Greek kings, due to the large number of Greek coins and other precious objects from found (Burnes, 1833: 310; Gerard, 1834: 321). In many cases, the casual style of the excavations of these monuments resulted in the inadvertent yet serious destruction of the sites. The tragic history of the excavations at the Amaravati stūpa is perhaps the best known example of the poor and unprofessional nature of the early surveys of Buddhist stūpas (cf. Singh, 2001; Howes, 2002; Shimada, 2006). As a result of such practices, many of the objects yielded by stūpa monuments were permanently separated from their original archaeological context, becoming mere 'antiquities' to be exhibited in museums.

The Emergence of Academic Disciplines: The Mid-Nineteenth–early Twentieth Centuries

From around the mid-nineteenth century, however, this unsophisticated approach to the study of Buddhist stūpas began to change, as they were increasingly viewed as valid objects of academic study. There were two main developments that laid the foundation for this change. First, throughout the mid-nineteenth century there was a growing colonial and Indological concern with the study of ancient Buddhism, which took on new importance. As has been well documented elsewhere, through the study of a Buddhism increasingly defined in opposition to the Hindu practice encountered in the present day, colonial rule was further legitimized (cf. Chakrabarti, 1988, 1999; Almond, 1998; Leoshko, 2003). The study of ancient Buddhism was thus seen as an important concern. Second, between 1834 and 1837, James Prinsep, an Assay-master of the East India Company, had deciphered the Brāhmī and Kharoṣṭhi scripts, which had been found on an increasing number of coins and inscriptions from Buddhist sites throughout the Indian subcontinent.[7] This discovery paved the way for the rapid translation of a vast amount of numismatic and epigraphic material, which in turn facilitated the first chronological understanding of many of the early Buddhist sites.

It was in this context that Alexander Cunningham invigorated the archaeological examination of Buddhist stūpas, and in doing so pushed them to the forefront of academic study for the first time. As is widely known, Cunningham's main focus was fixing the locations of the main ancient sites by following (primarily) the accounts of the journeys of two Buddhist pilgrims in India—Faxian (Fa-Hien), and Xuanzang (Hiuen-Tsang)—which had recently been translated into French and had been published earlier in the 1830s.[8] Of primary interest to Cunningham (informed as he was by the main scholastic focus on ancient Buddhism) were the ancient Buddhist sites, and as such he explored a number of stūpa sites. One of the earliest of these was his exploration, in 1851, of the various stūpa remains in the Sanchi area (cf. Cunningham, 1854a). After the foundation of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in 1861, this was followed by a number of others—most notable among which was the discovery and excavation of the Buddhist stūpa site of Bharhut in 1873–76 (cf. Cunningham, 1879a, 1879b). Under the direction of Cunningham, these sites were studied for the first time with a clear recognition of their archaeological value in terms of contributing to the wider study of ancient history and Buddhism. This is certainly reflected in the published report of the work at Sanchi (Cunningham, 1854a), which marks a significant departure from earlier writings on Buddhist stūpas, including as it did reasonably detailed site plans, descriptions, and illustrations of architectural remains and their associated carvings, as well as extensive written accounts of the excavation. In this work, much of the stūpa material was understood with reference to the written sources. The stūpas, for instance, were dated and the relics identified with reference to recent translations of the Sri Lankan Buddhist chronicles, *Dīpavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa*. Concrete archaeological data was in turn then used to verify textual accounts of ancient Buddhist history.[9]

Cunningham's work was of profound importance to the establishment of archaeology as a valid pursuit in general, at the forefront of which was the study of Buddhist stūpas. A significant number of stūpas continued to be explored and excavated after Cunningham's retirement in 1885. Importantly, all of these were carried out from within the institutional framework provided by the ASI, meaning that a greater degree of professionalism and more systematic methods

of survey and excavation could be maintained.[10] Some of the main stūpas to have been excavated during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included Amaravati, which was repeatedly excavated in 1882, 1888–89, and 1905–06 (Burgess, 1882, 1887; Rea, 1909, 1912), Bhattiprolu in 1892 (Rea,1894), Ghantasala in 1892 (Rea, 1894), Mirpur Khas in 1909–10 (Cousens, 1914), Sanchi in 1912–19 (Marshall, 1940) and many others in Gandhāra such as Thakht-i-Bahi in 1907–08, and 1911–12 (Spooner, 1911; Hargreaves, 1914a), Sahri-Bahlol in 1909–10 (Spooner, 1914; Stein, 1915) and Shaji-ki-Dheri in 1907–08 (Hargreaves, 1914b).[11] The institutional framework governing the archaeological examination of Buddhist stūpas also brought with it an effective means of disseminating research. The results of the explorations and excavations were published in the various *Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India*. These, which had originally begun with Cunningham's annual reports of his surveys, continued with the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Imperial Series* (1904–), and the *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India* (1904–). Through this system of government publication (which survives even today), archaeological work was systematized and authorized for the first time.

The material that resulted from the discovery and excavation of these sites soon became firmly imprinted on many different aspects of the study of ancient India. Coins found in association with stūpas, for example, continued to be relied upon by the immediate successors of Prinsep (after his untimely death in the 1840). In addition to Cunningham himself (whose additional contributions to the fields of numismatics and epigraphy should not be under-rated), these included scholars such as Edward James Rapson and John Allan. For these scholars, the study of this material was important in order to identify the rulers who issued the coins and to fix their chronology, in support of the historical aim of the establishment of the political history of India. Similarly, the large number of inscriptions found at stūpa sites across India soon came to occupy a central place in the growing field of epigraphy. On the one hand, the texts of these inscriptions were studied by scholars such as John Fleet, Eugen Hultzch, Heinrich Lüders, and Sten Konow in the hopes that they would provide important information on the ancient dynastic history of India in general and Buddhist stūpas in particular. At

the same time, the epigraphic material from Buddhist stūpas was also incorporated into the emergent field of palaeography by scholars such as Georg Bühler, for whom they provided evidence of some of the earliest scripts in India. The growth and increasing specialization of this field is reflected by the establishment of two main publication series, *Corpus Inscriptionun Indicarum* (1877–) and *Epigraphia Indica* (1888–), which dealt exclusively with epigraphic material.

The remains of Buddhist stūpas also assumed a prominent position in the emerging studies of art and architecture. Important to all such studies were the sculptural scenes that adorned the architectural remains of Buddhist stūpas, which were defined according to their iconographic identification. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, we can identify two main thrusts in this research. On the one hand there was a large tradition of scholarship that viewed the main goal of studying carved architectural and sculptural remains to determine a chronology of stylistic development.[12] For those works, stūpa remains provided some of the earliest examples of Buddhist art and architecture in South Asia. The earliest stylistic analysis of stūpa art and architecture was provided by James Fergusson, who dated the Amaravati sculptures by comparison with sculptures at Kanheri and Nasik (Fergusson, 1873). This was then followed by a number of other surveys of 'Buddhist' and 'Indian' art, central to which were the remains of Buddhist stūpas. In this regard one can mention the works of Albert Grünwedel (1893), Vincent Smith (1911), Alfred Foucher (1905–51, 1917), William Cohn (1926), John Marshall (1922), and Kenneth Codrington (1926). But other scholars approached the architectural and sculptural remains of Buddhist stūpas in the light of the 'psychology' and 'meaning' of art as expressed in the philosophical and aesthetic traditions that gave birth to them. The works of Edward B. Havell (1908, 1911, 1913, 1920), and the early writings of Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1908, 1909), held that as Indian art was 'intimately bound up with the social and religious life of the people', it was only through an understanding of 'Indian thought' and the 'Indian point of view' that an understanding of Indian sculpture could be arrived at (Havell, 1908). For these works, the sculptures that adorned many of the early Buddhist stūpas, such as Bharhut and Sanchi, were lauded as some of the earliest examples of the Indian art tradition. Ultimately, these two approaches to the study of art

and architecture were synthesized in the 1920s by Coomaraswamy (1927) and Ludwig Bachhofer (1929), both of whom produced comprehensive treatments of the architectural and sculptural remains of a number of stūpas, and together helped define the field of the history of Indian art as we know it today.

In addition, the remains of Buddhist stūpas were also relied upon by a number of textual scholars, of both Buddhism and ancient history. Within textual studies of Buddhism, the approach typified by scholars such as Bournouf—the reconstruction of ancient Buddhism through the critical reading of ancient texts—was further elaborated throughout the later nineteenth century on the basis of an increasing number of available Sanskrit and, especially, Pāli texts.[13] A central concern for such studies was the reconstruction of what was perceived to the 'authentic' Buddhism as it existed during the time of Buddha and his direct disciples. This was to be differentiated from the later forms of Buddhist worship which were deemed corruptions of an originally philosophically pure religion. Fixing the chronology of the various Buddhist texts was integral to this project. Buddhist stūpa remains were instantly seized upon in this endeavor, because the sculptures at a number of stūpas depicted narrative scenes that appeared to correspond with episodes found in particular texts. Sculptural representations provided visual evidence of the popularity of certain stories at the time the sculptures were carved and thus 'proof' of the existence of the corresponding texts (S. Oldenburg, 1893). Scholars such as Ivan P. Minayeff (1894), Sergey F. Oldenburg (1893, 1895, 1897), and Thomas W. Rhys-Davids (1903), devoted much attention to the identification of the sculptural scenes.

In a similar way, certain sculptures from Buddhist stūpas were also used by textual historians to provide visual proof of wider social and economic practices identified in the texts (cf. Fick, 1897, 1920; C. Rhys-Davids, 1901). Because, for instance, various narrative episodes appeared to represent certain social hierarchies or commodities of production and trade, they 'proved' the historical existence of those things. That the sculptures, and to a lesser degree inscriptions, were recognised as providing proof for such historical realities very quickly became an important aspect of the study of the carved remains, and is reflected in the works of early historians as well as those concerned with the study of art and architecture (cf. Smith, 1911; Rapson, 1922;

C. Rhys-Davids, 1922; Thomas, 1922). As mentioned above, such work was aided by the contemporary developments in epigraphy.

The Crystallization of the Disciplines from the Early Twentieth Century

By the early twentieth century, the stūpa remains had become one of the most important subjects in the study of early Buddhism and South Asia's ancient past. Buddhist stūpas were no longer the object of interest for adventurous surveyors and curious antiquarians, but had, instead, become the objects of study for an increasingly academic audience with many more specialist areas of interest. While the wider field of scholarship was still largely dominated by textual study, Cunningham's work had firmly imprinted the value of archaeological remains and the pursuit of archaeology onto the wider academic consciousness. Within the increasingly more institutionalized study of archaeology, the excavation of Buddhist stūpas had become a legitimate archaeological concern. In addition, the various different remains of stūpas (including coins, inscriptions, and sculptures) had by now become firmly incorporated into a number of emerging areas of study including numismatics, epigraphy, and art and architectural history. The findings of these different areas of study provided many valuable contributions to the wider (though still largely textually defined) study of ancient Indian history and religion. Throughout the twentieth century, interest in Buddhist stūpas continued—and as the various academic disciplines treating them have developed, so too has our knowledge and understanding of these important monuments and their associated remains.

In textual studies, the narrative sculptures of Buddhist stūpas have continued to be cited as supporting evidence in the endeavour to understand the date and geographical dispensation of the Buddhist narrative texts (cf. Warder, 1970). In addition, the carved remains have continued to provide visual 'proof' of the existence of Buddhist practices, and of other social and economic realities (cf. Dutt, 1941, 1945; Gokuldas, 1951). Over the course of the twentieth century, we may also chart the development of certain ideas within textual studies concerning stūpa worship in Buddhism. To wit, a number of scholars have picked up the now famous passages in *Mahāparinibbāna sūtta* (chapter 5.10), which appears to prohibit Buddhist monks from

involvement in the worship of Buddha relics (see Rhys-Davids trans., 1995: vol. II, 154). It was also noted that there is no rule on the construction and worship of stūpas in the *Pāli Vinaya* (Bareau, 1960: 229). There thus, developed a sort of consensus that stūpa worship was not supported by the traditional monastic Buddhism, but only by the laity (S. Dutt, 1962: 183; N. Dutt, 1945: 250–1; Roth, 1980: 186). This view, in buttressing the traditional notions of an 'original' and 'authentic' ancient Buddhism that was philosophical and non-cultic, has been widely assumed among textual scholars. The theory was further extended by Akira Hirakawa (1963: 57–106, 1968: 617–18), who linked the practice of stūpa worship with the foundation of Mahāyāna Buddhism by the lay community.

In other disciplines, including archaeology and art history, Buddhist stūpas have continued to be important objects of study. In archaeology, the survey and exploration of stūpa sites extended into new areas, including the stūpas and monasteries of Tibet and Nepal. Here, particular mention must be made of the pioneering and tireless of work of Giuseppe Tucci, whose numerous expeditions to Tibet and western Nepal between the late 1920s and 1940s resulted in much of our current understanding of these regions (see further Tucci, 1932, 1988). Methodologically, the early twentieth century was also witness to the development, over time, of more systematic methods of excavation. This was largely due to a general shift in the perception of archaeology in Europe as a mode of 'scientific' enquiry. This may be seen in the introduction, for instance, of more accurate methods of stratigraphic recording by Mortimer Wheeler in the 1940s (cf. Chakrabarti, 1988: 175–8). Such developments have greatly benefited the further excavation of stūpa sites throughout India and Pakistan, as at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa in 1954–60 (*Indian Archaeology—A Review*, 1954–55, 1955–56, 1956–57, 1957–58, 1958–59, 1959–60, 1960–61), Butkara in 1956–62 (Faccenna, 1962–64), Devnimori in 1960–63 (Mehta and Chowdhary, 1966), Pauni in 1969–70 (Deo and Joshi, 1972), Sanghol in 1971–72 and 1984–85 (Gupta, 1985), Amaravati in 1954–56 and 1977–78 (*Indian Archaeology—A Review*, 1958–59, 1973–74) and Ranigath in 1983–92 (Nishikawa, 1994).

In numismatic studies, coin deposits from stūpas have continued to be classified and catalogued, and incorporated into increasingly comprehensive numismatic frameworks (for example, Mitchiner,

1973; Gupta, 1979). Ultimately, the purpose of such studies has been to provide chronological markers in the construction of ancient Indian histories. In the field of epigraphy, the transcription and translation of inscriptions from Buddhist stūpas has continued to be a major pursuit, and the results of this work continue to be published in several journals. In addition to such individual reports, some major collections of epigraphic material have also been produced. In this connection one may cite the eventual completion of the catalogue of Bharhut inscriptions (Lüders, 1963), and Masao Shizutani's (1979) corpus of Indian Buddhist inscriptions, which is in many respects a comprehensive revision of Lüders' (1912) earlier catalogue. Inscriptions from Buddhist stūpas have also continued to occupy a significant role in studies of palaeography (cf. Dani, 1963).

The continued importance of architectural and sculptural remains from Buddhist stūpas is reflected in the production, throughout the twentieth century, of a series of catalogues of the sculptures from a number of the larger stūpas, all of which have concentrated on defining various stylistic features and identifying the subject matter of the sculpture (cf. Barua, 1934–37; Marshal and Fourcher, 1940; Sivaramamurti, 1942; Kala, 1951; Barrett, 1954; Coomaraswamy, 1956; Knox, 1992). In more general studies of Indian art, the sculptures from early Buddhist stūpas have been further classified according to the larger art-historical framework in terms of their style, iconography, origins, development, and cultural background (Kramrisch, 1933; Spink, 1958; Stern and Bénisti, 1961; Huntington, 1985; Nath, 1986; Harle, 1986). In studies of architectural history too, stūpas have continued to be cited as examples of early Indian architecture. In 1942, P. Brown published his systematic survey of the history and development of architectural practice in India. This work has been joined by that (most notably) of Mitra (1971), Pant (1976), Grover (1980), and more recently Tadgell (1995)—in all of stūpas are being placed within ever more refined understandings of the development of Buddhist and Indian architecture.

The Notion of Symbolism

Without wishing to detract from the undoubted advances to knowledge that have been made in the field of art and architectural history, it must be admitted that, for the most part, these studies

tended to concentrate on the meaning of sculptures and architectural forms solely with reference to the Buddhist tradition. One significant departure from this approach that is worthy of special mention, however, has been the study of symbolism. Over the course of the twentieth century, a number of scholars have sought to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of Buddhist stūpas, and have attempted to identify certain fundamental principles of the symbolism of stūpa architecture through the incorporation of wider archaeological, textual, and anthropological evidence. The origins of these studies may be traced back to the 1930s and a number of works that sought to explore the metaphysical meanings of the Buddhist stūpa (Hocart, 1924; Mus, 1932, 1933; Combaz, 1933, 1935, 1937; Pryzluski, 1935; Longhurst, 1936). Especially influential among these were the works of Paul Mus, and his examination of Borobudur. Unsatisfied with the prevalent understanding of the stūpa as a funerary monument, Mus drew a number of analogies between the architectural features of the stūpa and various pre-existing religious symbols, such as the cosmic mountain (Mount Meru), cosmic pillar (*axis mundi*), and Indra's palace (cf. Mus, 1932, 1933, 1998).

This approach had a strong impact on many studies of stūpas from the 1950s onwards. F.D.K. Bosch, for example, sought to identify the stūpa with lotus-roots (*padmamūla*), as the fundamental principle governing its shape, ornamentations and development (Bosch, 1960: 167–76).[14] At an international seminar held at the University of Heidelberg in 1978, which sought to bring together the most recent approaches to the study of Buddhist stūpas, the symbolism of the stūpas was a key topic of discussion (cf. Chandra, 1980; Franz, 1980; Gail, 1980; Irwin, 1980; Roth, 1980). John Irwin, perhaps the most well-known protagonist of this branch of study, interpreted the holes pierced at the centre of the early stūpa as evidence for the erection of cosmic pillars (*axis mundi*), which, according to the Vedic texts, functioned to release the cosmic water and fix the earth. Thus, he opined, the stūpa was an architectural microcosm whose origin dated to the pre-Buddhist period (Irwin, 1979, 1981, 1982, 1984, 1987). More recently still, Andrew Snodgrass (1985) completed an extensive and highly ambitious work on the symbolism of stūpas through a comprehensive survey of textual, architectural, and archaeological evidence in South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Japan.

Problems and Limitations

In many respects then, it may be seen that the continued development of the study of Buddhist stūpas over the course of the twentieth century has not only improved our knowledge of these monuments and their associated remains, but has also greatly benefited the study of ancient Buddhism and ancient Indian history in general. At the same time, however, for all of the methodological and theoretical developments that have taken place within these disciplines, Buddhist stūpas and their remains have continued to be studied in very traditional ways. As will be remembered, during the earliest phase of scholarship (within which the monuments themselves only came to be valid objects of study largely through the colonial and Indological interests), stūpas were studied primarily in order to provide supporting evidence in text-based studies of Buddhism and ancient history. Coins and certain inscriptions, for instance, were studied in order to supplement our understanding of political histories. Similarly, the texts of other inscriptions and the subject matter of sculpture (when not used to refine various chronological typologies) were studied in order to fill important gaps in the understanding of ancient Buddhism defined by the texts. Despite the development of the various academic disciplines, it is still these questions which by and large continued to be applied to Buddhist stūpas and their associated remains. As has been pointed out elsewhere (Chakrabarti, 1988, 1999; Ray and Sinopoli, 2004), such has been the dominance of the textual approach on archaeology and other disciplines that the questions asked of the evidence in these disciplines have largely remained the same. The study of coins, for instance, still largely extends only as far as improving our knowledge of political and economic histories, while sculptures are still looked at largely with a view to the formal iconographic identification of subject matter. Other questions that the various remains of stūpas are better suited to answer have, by and large, been ignored.

At the same time (and due to the limited ways in which the various remains of stūpas have traditionally been studied), as the disciplines that have sought to study Buddhist stūpas have developed, the remains of Buddhist stūpas have become ever further entrenched as objects of study in these disciplines. The study of coins, for instance, has become the sole preserve of numismatists. Similarly, inscriptions are only

studied by epigraphers, sites are only excavated by archaeologists, and sculptures only studied by art historians. Together, this has meant that scholars from these different disciplines have come to regard these evidentiary objects as the only ones relevant to their research questions. Archaeologists, for example, rarely engage with sculptural material because it is perceived to exist more properly within the realm of art history, and vice versa. Further, because the academic interests of these diverse approaches have been considerably different from each other, the specific findings of these studies have not been well integrated with one another. The unfortunate effect of all of this is that our knowledge and understanding of Buddhist stūpas, and by extension those aspects of ancient Buddhism and the ancient past to which they pertain, has become increasingly fragmented. In short, while past studies have undoubtedly increased the level of detail pertaining to various aspects of the remains of Buddhist stūpas, the findings of this work have rarely been combined to achieve an integrated understanding of the stūpa.

Potential ways around this have been suggested by a number of studies over the course of the twentieth century. In this connection, studies on symbolism created a new perspective for the examination of the stūpa in terms of the wider religious and visual tradition of South Asia, and were extremely innovative by attempting to incorporate such a breadth of evidence. Indeed, it should not be forgotten that such approaches still have considerable influence in many current academic writings. Yet, at the same time, these approaches have not been without problems. Recently, a number of scholars have pointed out fundamental problems with the unthinking application of the 'symbolism theory' (cf. Conze, 1960: 14; Fussman, 1986: 41–4; Brown, 1986: 219–20; Skilling, 1997: 579–80). What all of these criticisms share in common is that in order to delineate the fundamental logic governing all stūpa architecture and art, many 'symbolism' arguments have drawn on archaeological, art-historical, and textual examples from widely different areas and periods. As a result, while many of the identifications of symbolic meaning might appear to extend to all Buddhist stūpas, in actual fact they are extremely theoretical, and do not necessarily pertain to any one stūpa in any particular place and time. Instead, the varieties of local historical contexts in which

individual stūpa sites are situated are largely dismissed. In this sense, the methodology of these studies has been highly decontextualized and ahistorical.

Due to their deep-rooted and widespread nature, the wider problems identified in the study of Buddhist stūpas have largely still remained, and in many respects, the study of Buddhist stūpas (both as discreet objects and as subjects of study) has yet to realize its full potential. For the most part, the questions that are asked of Buddhist stūpas continue to be limited to the broad historical and formal-religious concerns received from traditional scholarship. Knowledge continues to be fragmented between the various disciplines that have laid claim to the various aspects of the study of South Asia's ancient past.

Points of Departure: Recent Developments in the Study of Buddhist Stūpas

Over the last twenty years, a number of developments have taken place in the study of South Asia's ancient past and Buddhism in general, which have begun to open up many exciting new areas of research, and which together highlight a variety of ways around these problems in the study of Buddhist stūpas. On the one hand, these have developed from a growing awareness that the ways research has been carried out in the past may affect our knowledge and understanding in the present day. Thanks to a number of recent studies on orientalism, imperialism, and colonialism, scholars are now fully aware that our notions and perspectives of the historical past of the non-western world have been deeply influenced by the colonial discourses created in the west. In order to highlight the problem in the context of South Asia, and to seek a better understanding of its history, there has been a growing number of critical-historiographical approaches to both the study of India's ancient past in general (cf. Lorenzen, 1982; Inden, 1990; Thapar, 1993) and ancient Buddhism and Buddhist archaeology in particular (cf. Almond, 1986; Lopez, 1995; Shimoda, 1997; Guha-Thakurta, 1998; Leoshko, 2003; Singh, 2004). The results of these studies have provided valuable insights into the ways in which various archaeological, art-historical, and textual-historical approaches have been defined and shaped as disciplines, with important implications for current studies. The most recent general histories of Indian art

(Dehejia, 1997b; Mitter, 2001), for instance, devote many pages to the descriptions of the colonial and the post-colonial periods, which have been largely neglected or treated separately in the historiography of Indian art. Gary Tartakov's (1997) study of the Durga temple in Aihole, and Jennifer Howes' (2002) study of the Amaravati stūpa both show effectively that the ways in which these monuments have been studied in the past have caused certain specific problems for their future examination. Historiography, in short, has become an indispensable component for any enquiry into India's ancient past.

The upshot of such a critical historiographical awareness in the general approaches to the study of South Asia's ancient past has been a rather self-reflective re-appraisal throughout the various disciplines (of archaeology, art and architectural history, textual history, and textual studies of Buddhism) on the ways we have sought to examine this past. One of main effects of this is that studies are starting to take inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches, taking into consideration other types of evidence usually relegated to the expertise of other disciplines, and with this, are asking new questions about Buddhist stūpas. As far as the study of Buddhist stūpas is concerned, this has meant that many studies of ancient stūpas in particular, and Indian Buddhism and Indian history in general, have started to become highly interdisciplinary in nature.

These developments have created new questions in many of the traditional disciplines. In textual studies of Buddhism, for instance, scholars have begun to realize that a number of problems surround the exclusive focus on texts in the reconstruction of ancient Indian Buddhism and the uncritical application of the text-based notion of a pure Buddhist religio-philosophical system as the originary inception of the Buddhist religion. Studies have thus begun to explore the avenues opened by more archaeological evidence, and have expanded their concerns to include Buddhist worship and practices that are not necessarily the main topics in canonical texts. One of the most significant results of this has been the revision of a number of traditional theories concerning the fundamental importance of relic worship and the role of stūpas in early Indian Buddhism. As already discussed, through the literal reading and interpretation of the canonical texts, especially the Pāli canon, Buddhist studies have traditionally defined ancient Buddhism as a philosophically 'pure'

religion. Within this intellectual framework, relic worship was not defined as an authentic practice for the traditional Buddhist Sangha, but as a practice developed by lay Buddhists or Mahāyāna worshippers. An increasing number of works, however, have convincingly argued that such an understanding is actually a rather distorted picture that owes more to textual bias than historical 'fact' (Schopen, 1997: 1–55; Trainor, 1997: 1–23). Such studies have re-addressed the issue of relic worship through a much more comprehensive and critical re-examination of the available textual, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence (Schopen, 1997: 30–4, 86–113; Shimoda, 1997: 124–8; Trainor, 1997: 54–65; Willis, 2000; Shaw, 2000). According to these studies, relic worship should not be regarded as a later development to pure monastic Buddhism as the result of some external (and non-traditional) influence. Instead, it has been shown that relics and stūpas were regarded as physical embodiments of the Buddha himself, and were indispensable components of Buddhist monastic practices from the earliest times. The topic of relic and stūpa worship has thus become an important issue in recent studies of Buddhism.

    In archaeological and art-historical studies which have traditionally concentrated on the detailed chronological, architectural, and iconographical classifications of monuments and excavated objects, scholars have started to explore the wider religious and social contexts in which the sites and objects were situated. Arthistorians no longer exclusively see Buddhist sculptures as the mere visual representations of particular Buddhist legends and iconography described in written texts. Instead there is now a growing concern with how individual sculptural scenes fit in with wider architectural and sculptural programmes of embellishment (Behrendt, 2006; Shimada, 2006) and what they can tell us about the actual religious practices that took place at these monuments (Brown, 1997; Dehejia, 1998; Williams, 1998; Brancaccio, 2006).[15] In the field of archaeology too, scholars have revised the traditional approach that concentrated on the vertical excavation of the stūpa and monastic remains, and have begun to situate monastic sites and objects within their comprehensive survey of archaeological landscapes (Chakrabarti, 1995b; Shaw, 2002, 2004; Fogelin, 2004). For the first time, the various remains of Buddhist stūpas have been considered in relation to the wider archaeological and geographical realities of their surrounding areas. This has reinvigorated

the examination of the archaeological evidence from both the stūpa sites themselves, which in many cases have been largely neglected since their initial discovery, and from the wider areas surrounding those sites, which have never been examined at all. Importantly, such an approach has also provided a framework within which new questions may be asked that are better suited to the archaeological evidence itself. These include issues like the administration of stūpa sites by the local monastic communities, the relationships between Buddhism and local cults, the nature of Buddhist pilgrimage, and the social roles of Buddhist monasteries.

In addition, aided by the increasing textual and non-textual data on the legacy of early Indian Buddhism, scholars also started exploring the detailed relationships between the Buddhist Sangha and the society within which it existed. The traditional view of this relationship, based on the canonical descriptions of monastic life, was that the Sangha, as the respected group of social renouncers, sustained their existence simply by collecting numerous gifts from pious donors. By combining different sources of evidence, however, current studies have begun to argue for a more dynamic and complex relationship between the Buddhist Sangha and the various social elements with which it would have interacted. Himanshu Prabha Ray's now classic work (1986) on early Buddhism in the western Deccan, for example, demonstrates how the Buddhist Sangha undertook the crucial role of historical agent for the political, economic, and social development of this region on the bases of a comprehensive survey of epigraphic and archaeological evidence. Xinru Liu's study on trade and Buddhism (1988) has stressed the important economic role of the Buddhist Sangha as a consumer of precious goods from long-distance trade. Systematic surveys of the donors in the inscriptions at Sanchi by Upinder Singh (1996) and Kumkum Roy (1998) have revealed much about the pattern of patronage to the Buddhist monastic community and the construction of Buddhist stūpas. As we will see later, Jonathan Walters' essay on the patronage of the stūpa construction (1997), included in this volume, has proposed a sophisticated theory for the motivations behind donations to the monastic community reflected on the inscriptions on stūpa monuments, by combining textual and archaeological evidence with modern historical theory. In short, current studies of Buddhist stūpas have started to become much more

comprehensive, including almost all major disciplines of historical studies, and in doing so many new questions have generated.

Contents of this Volume

It is with these developments in the study of Buddhist stūpas in mind that this edited volume, coming, as it does, two centuries after the Mackenzie's first report of the Amaravati stūpa and three decades after the Heidelberg conference, aims to present the latest approaches to Buddhist stūpas in the fields of archaeology, history, history of art, and textual studies. Each of the remaining fifteen chapters contained in this volume not only significantly improves our understanding of stūpas, but also reflects the range of new approaches from within all of these different disciplines. In order to highlight the main features of these approaches, the chapters have been divided into five main sections, each devoted to key thematic areas of interest.

In the first section, two chapters take up the study of Buddhist stūpas during the colonial period. First, in Chapter 1, Himanshu Prabha Ray considers the archaeological study of Buddhist stūpas, viewing the history of their examination in terms of the construction of Buddhist identities in the colonial period.[16] Specifically, she explores the discovery and early study of the Buddhist stūpas during the nineteenth century, highlighting the role of Alexander Cunningham. Ray shows how Cunningham's work on Buddhist sites had a large impact on the consolidation of Buddhist religious identity in the colonial period, coinciding as it did with the negotiation, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of a modern Buddhist identity based on the oriental translation of ancient texts and the historical figure of the Buddha. This essay provides many useful details in the history of this formative period in the study of stūpas, and shows just how one key 'moment' in the colonial study of Buddhist stūpas set the parameters for generations of scholars to come, all of which needs to be factored into any future study and understanding of stūpas.

In Chapter 2, Jennifer Howes explores another equally important aspect of the history of the study of stūpas: the much more immediate question of how the remains of Buddhist stūpas have physically been treated as objects of study. Howes looks at the details of the early excavations at and subsequent movement of sculptural material from

the stūpa site at Amaravati. She tells the story of five sculptures, tracing their movement since their discovery using the records, manuscripts, drawings, and photographs gathered during the nineteenth century. We are shown how the sculptures were used by various individuals and institutions under whose domain they fell over time, and the unfortunate physical effect that this had on some of the pieces. This provides a valuable insight into the variety of factors that have shaped and defined the ways in which stūpas have been studied over the last two hundred years, and compels us to consider the extent to which the extant materials bequeathed to us today reflects only what was found upon discovery (let alone in what existed in antiquity).

The second section focuses on the religious context of Buddhist stūpas—their significance as structures that were built to house the relics of the Buddha (and later those of his disciples).

In the first chapter in this section, Michael Willis provides a useful overview of the meaning and significance of the relic shrine in ancient Indian Buddhism. Through a review of the textual evidence, he examines the different types of relics as they were understood within ancient Buddhism, and reveals a complex system of symbolic meaning, ritual, and philosophical significance pertaining to the relic shrine. Before the making of images became widespread, the presence of the Buddha was understood to be a shrine, usually in the form of a stūpa, containing relics. It was through the use of these relics and relic shrines that the Buddhist community solved the problem of the Buddha's physical absence after his passing. With relics being so central to religious practice, Willis shows how the spread of the Buddhist dispensation in the early historic period went hand-in-hand with the movement of relics, leaving little doubt of the importance of stūpas in early Buddhism. The spread of Buddhism is not simply reflected in, but was actually facilitated by the construction of new stūpas.

Thinking about how the geographical spread of Buddhism through the proliferation of relic-shrines would have worked in practice, the second chapter in this section by Andy Rotman considers fundamental questions of exactly how it was that these relic shrines were created and venerated in the early historic period. Through an examination of the texts, specifically various versions and redactions of the story of Toyikā, Rotman reconstructs the aspects that marked and defined

a Buddhist site as sacred. Of primary importance in this regard was a notion of an engagement with a specific place by the Buddha. Relics, as the embodiment of the Buddha, not only reflected the presence of the Buddha, but as such also lent the location of the relic-shrine some of that same sacredness. With this understanding, the significance of these sites was then established by the merit gained by visiting the locations associated with these shrines. Further, Rotman makes a convincing argument that over time, this dynamic was expanded to include locations associated with past Buddhas, and suggests that in this way new Buddhist sites became associated with locations of pre-existent sacred significance and co-opted these locations into the Buddhist sacred geography.

Whereas the above two essays explore the religio-philosophical meanings of the relic and relic-shrine within early Buddhism and its importance in the expansion of the religion, the final chapter in this section examines the way in which sculptural elements in the carving surrounding the relic served to construct the appropriate religious space. Robert Brown concentrates on the use of representations of natural forms on two of the earliest Indian stūpas—Stūpa I at Sanchi and the Bharhut stūpa—and argues what it meant to represent natural forms (already imbued with a pre-existent symbolism) in a patterned form, on stone. According to Brown, central to the symbolic meaning of these forms would have been their representation as growing and alive. Despite being abstracted, these representations of nature that appeared on the stūpas would almost certainly have been thought of as living forms in nature by the original viewing audience. Taking into account the psychological and cognitive aspects of the use of pattern in art, and the fact that these patterned natural forms made up a considerable part of the overall sculptural programme, Brown argues that the representation of these abstracted but living forms helped to create a new kind of religious space. This space was carefully structured, and visually decorated in order to impart a notion of a perfected, protected, and separated social space, operating according to the ideals of a perfect world.

Following these approaches to the religious contexts of Buddhist stūpas, the chapters in the third and fourth sections of this volume reflect a number of recent approaches to early Buddhist stūpas and monasteries that have, in their various ways, sought to examine the

wider social contexts of Buddhism. The third section is composed of four chapters that provide excellent examples of how recent archaeological and art-historical studies have sought to address wider questions by integrating the variety of material (epigraphic, sculptural, and archaeological) at stūpa sites, and examining it with reference to its wider contexts.

In the first chapter in this section, Kurt Behrendt casts new light on the approach to the study of one of the most 'classical' aspects of early Buddhist stūpas: the narrative sculptural reliefs that adorned stūpa monuments. Specifically, Behrendt focuses on the narrative reliefs from Gandhāra. As readers may notice, however, he differs significantly from traditional approaches to this material. Instead of treating narratives as separate entities and decoding them by comparison with written texts, Berhendt tries to reconstruct the original sequence of the narratives which worshippers at Gandhāra 'read' while engaged in religious practice at the stūpas. Although the full results of this research are still forthcoming, the chapter points out some significant patterns in the Gandhāran narratives, which give us new insights into the development of the Buddhist narrative and the appearance of Buddha images as icons in the Gandhāran region.

In the next chapter, Robert DeCaroli looks at the complex meaning of *nāgas* in the inscriptions and sculptures at Amaravati, exploring how the Buddhist institutions would have gained a degree of social legitimacy through their purposeful and conscious association with nāgas. He traces the history of the ideas surrounding nāgas in literature, and re-assesses the inscriptions and sculptures from the Amaravati stūpa in light of these interpretations. By offering a convincing argument as to the symbolic meaning of nāgas with reference to Amaravati, DeCaroli demonstrates that nāgas were a vital and dynamic component to religious and social life in early South Asia. DeCaroli also suggests that the deliberate associations of nāgas and Buddhism may have been even more far-reaching, and posits the idea that a similar dynamic may also have been true for other religious institutions and even the ruling dynasty itself.

In the ninth chapter, Julia Shaw highlights the full extent of the potential of 'landscape' approaches to the examination of Buddhist stūpa sites by presenting her own research in the Sanchi area. Shaw proposes a number of stimulating and useful hypotheses on the ritual

and social settings of Buddhist monastic complexes in this area, on the basis of her extensive field exploration and active 'reading' of the site. Based on her observations of different types of monastic residences in the Sanchi area, for example, Shaw challenges the received views on the process of the domestication of the Sangha. In explaining the hilltop locations of monasteries in the Sanchi area, Shaw raises a number of important social and religious issues pertaining to the nature of early monastic Buddhism, including security concerns of monasteries, the formation of Buddhist sacred landscapes, and the relationship between the Buddhist monastic community and pre-existent religious cults in the area. Further, Shaw contests the prevalent idea that Buddhism marginalized nāgas in the process of adopting the local cult, but stresses the positive role of Buddhism in elevating the cultic status of these figures. It is readily apparent that Shaw's approach to the stūpa site is significantly different from that of traditional archaeological studies—her arguments directly address important questions that have been largely posed by textual studies of Buddhism, and effectively challenge some of the received assumptions.

In the tenth chapter, Jason Hawkes focuses on the Buddhist stūpa site of Bharhut. Despite its famous sculptures and inscriptions, this site has never really been comprehensively examined after Cunningham's collection of the sculptures and the disappearance of most of the architectural remains from the site. Looking at the archaeology of the landscape surrounding Bharhut, Hawkes demonstrates how it is possible to identify the broad social, political, and economic processes that were operating in the Bharhut area and how they changed over time, through a consideration of archaeological sites dated to the later centuries BCE throughout the region. Hawkes further examines how the site of Bharhut was related to these wider sacred and secular spheres, and reveals some of the ways in which the Buddhist community at Bharhut was related to those processes. Not only does this examination yield important conclusions pertaining to the monastic community at Bharhut, but it also highlights one or two interesting variations in the wider contexts of Bharhut that do not tally in every respect with the received understandings for the major stūpa sites. Viewed with Shaw's contribution, this work demonstrates how current archaeological writings have greatly expanded their fields

of interest, and have begun to address wider questions that can be shared with textual studies.

The chapters in the fourth section, on the other hand, all take broader perspectives, and seek to explore the wider political, economic, and social contexts in which Buddhist stūpas and monasteries were situated. In the first chapter in this section, Xinru Liu examines the parallel developments of Buddhist ideology, stūpa or relic worship, and trading activities in Kuṣān India. Although this work first appeared as a book chapter in 1988, Liu's argument remains stimulating and continues to be extremely helpful for our understanding of how the flowering of long-distance trade contributed to the development of stūpa worship. Liu shows how, as Buddhism gained a strong foothold among the wider classes of people in the early centuries CE, its ideology significantly transformed from the one that originally addressed renouncers to one that encompassed lay people. This ideological transformation led to the authorization and further development of particular religious practices, especially donating precious objects and worshipping stūpas, for gaining great religious merit. By exploring the representative Buddhist texts, ranging from the *Milindapañhas* to the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, as well as archaeological evidence, Liu convincingly argues for a close link between the authorization of such practices and the growth of Indo-China trade, which brought precious objects for use in relic deposits and which also helped develop a commercial ethos in Buddhist ideology.

In Chapter 12, James Heitzman explores the urban context of Buddhist stūpas by tracing some of the main socio-spatial features of early urbanization in South Asia, and identifying the ways that Buddhist sites, usually stūpa-sites, formed significant features in this landscape.[17] He begins by reviewing the salient socio-political and economic features of the process of urbanization that occurred across northern and central South Asia during the first millennium BCE as revealed by the archaeological and textual evidence. Within this framework, Heitzman reviews the ways in which the Buddhist monastic institution was related to these wider social processes, and highlights strong links between Buddhist sites, inter-city trade, and newly emerging economic groups. It is against this backdrop that Heitzman then looks at the three-way relationship between urban sites, trade, and Buddhist sites in several key areas across the

subcontinent. In each and every example, he identifies the existence of settlement site-ranking and site-specific specializations that appear to have been closely related to Buddhist monastic institutions. In the process, the Buddhist monastic complex emerges as a key part of the established 'urban order' in the early historic period. This relationship is then seen to continue for some centuries.

Following on from this, Akira Shimada adds a new insight into the relationship between the Buddhist monastic institution and urban centres during the early historic period with special reference to the remains of the stūpa at Amaravati. Shimada notices that one of the distinct features of this site is its close proximity to the ancient city of Dhānyakaṭaka, located less than one kilometre from the monastery. Although this proximity does not fit well with canonical references, Shimada's survey reveals similar geographical relationships between Buddhist edifices and ancient cities in central and south India. Interesting is the fact that these monasteries are not in the centre of the cities, but at the fringes. Shimada points out that this feature accords well with the layout of a fortified city (*durganiveśa*) in the *Arthaśāstra*. Based on archaeological and textual evidence, Shimada also argues that areas outside the cities accommodated places for funerals and commercial exchanges, which ancient *dharma* literature defined as 'impure'. Buddhist monasteries, the major component of 'outside' spaces, could help in organizing and vitalizing such 'outside' activities. Shimada's model thus highlights the importance of peripheral spaces in the urbanization of early India.

The last chapter in this section is a reworking of Jonathan Walters' important article on Buddhist stūpas and the biographical tradition in ancient Buddhism. By examining the cosmological biographies of the Buddha in three *Avadāna* texts compiled in the post-Aśokan period, Walters persuasively argues that these cosmological biographies intend to show a soteriological path in which all beings may attain *nirvāṇa*. Since the stūpa is not the remains of the Buddha but Buddha himself, the construction embellishment and worship of stūpas would have been a way to become part of the Buddha's biography, and in so doing join the path to salvation. The flourishing of the construction of Buddhist stūpas during the immediate post-Aśokan period, which is well attested by archaeological and epigraphic evidence, may thus be understood in this context. Since these early stūpas were constructed

on the basis of donations from a variety of donors, Walters also addresses the ways in which such collective patronage was organized. He explains the construction work of the stūpa with reference to the theory of 'complex agency', in which the donation and construction of stūpas would have involved the complex arrangement of a variety of human agencies joining together for that common goal. The most powerful of these, if we are to understand the authorizing factor in this relationship, would have been imperial kingship. Walters has succeeded in establishing a useful model for understanding why and, perhaps more importantly, how the numerous stūpas were constructed during the post-Aśokan era.

Finally, the fifth section focuses on a growing and welcome trend in modern scholarship that seeks to examine the many different dimensions of Buddhist stūpas as they appear in modern contexts. Thus far, most of the studies on Buddhist stūpas in India have concentrated on the historical reconstruction of stūpas and their wider contexts as they appeared in the ancient past. However, Buddhist stūpas did not, and indeed do not, exist only in this ancient past. Despite the decline of Buddhism as an active religion in India, many of the ancient stūpas have continued to be very visible in local society, and have been used in different religious and social contexts. In addition, after the re-discovery of Buddhism in the nineteenth century, the remains of Indian stūpas have been imbued with a variety of new meanings within modern Buddhist traditions, now a global religion. As shown by the recent development of historiographical studies, we must be conscious that our understanding of the stūpa is continually aware of such contemporary discourses.

This section, therefore, includes two cutting-edge studies that explore how the ancient past is being manipulated in a number of ways in the constant negotiation of modern Buddhist identities and the construction of modern Buddhist sites. In one of these papers, Catherine Becker explores the manipulation of the carved remains from the Amaravati stūpa in modern times, and the ways in which this has changed their meanings, investing them with an entirely new sense of sacredness. In early January 2006, the stūpa at Amaravati once again became an 'active' Buddhist monument, with the performance of a Kalachakra (Kālacakra) Initiation by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Through her own personal account, Becker vividly recreates

the ways in which the site was visually reanimated for the ritual; and shows how the ancient remains of the stūpa site were re-used together with an abundance of new imagery in order to create a new sense of sacredness at the site. Central to this was not just the dusting down and re-use of the ancient remains themselves, but the incorporation and use of these remains together with other more ephemeral modern objects of devotion, and the installation of more permanent remembrances of the event. Through examination and consideration of the ways in which all of these various trappings were used with one another, Becker identifies how a lasting Buddhist landscape around the stūpa was, in effect, recreated, and has highlighted how the ancient stūpa was manipulated and used in the evocation of 'sacredness', in both religious and political agendas.

Leading on from this, in the final chapter in this volume, Jinah Kim focuses on a modern revival of stūpa construction in India, and looks at the appropriation of the stūpas in the negotiation of modern Buddhist identity in India. Kim identifies two main directions in the building of stūpas in contemporary India. The first of these, defined as 'collage' stūpas, are modern stūpas built at ancient sites that are made from, or contain, actual remains from the sites at which they are built. The second programme of building is the construction of Peace Pagodas, or 'Shanti Stūpas', throughout India by the Japanese Nipponzan Myohoji religious group. Through examination of the underlying ideology behind, and actual practice of the construction of these stūpas, Kim shows how both programmes of building involve physical and visual references to ancient Buddhism, and have contributed to the legitimization of Buddhist identities in contemporary India.

Postscript

Thus far, we have seen how studies from a variety of different disciplines have fundamentally changed the way that stūpas are approached within the hitherto narrow foci of their respective areas of study. We have also seen how these studies, in looking at the evidence in novel ways, have provided important new levels of understanding for further study, or else have begun to explore new and previously unconsidered questions of the past in which these stūpas existed. The range of works collected here in this volume reflects the great

breadth and diversity of recent approaches to Buddhist stūpas. Not only have the essays in this volume improved our understanding of stūpas, but each marks a significant departure in existing academic approaches to stūpas, Buddhism, and South Asia's ancient past in general. We hope that this anthology is not only of value to a reader, but that it also provides a re-appraisal of the 'state play' in the study of Buddhist stūpas. We also hope, as it must be obvious now, that the collection here will encourage and promote further inter-disciplinary researches.

Notes

1. This volume uses diacritical marks for ancient Indian names and speical terms in Sanskrit and Prākrit, with some exceptions (such as Sangha) which are commonly included in English. As far as place names are concerned, the volume follws the by now well-established system (see, for example, Mitra 1971) in which modern place names are spelled without diacritics; whereas diacritical marks are used for historical place names recorded in ancient texts and inscriptions, such as Kauśāmbī, Kusiñagara, Pañcāla, and Dhānyakaṭaka.

2. For further details of early European accounts of Buddhism, see De Jong (1987: 8–13).

3. One or two exceptions to this rule do appear to have existed. For instance, the Buddhist monastery at Nāgapattinam, an important seaport in coastal Tamil Nadu with maritime trade links to Southeast Asia, seems to have survived until at least the sixteenth century (and possibly the late seventeenth) as indicated by the discovery of later Buddhist sculptures at the site (Dehejia, 1988: 64–73).

4. For instance, Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu was originally a flourishing Buddhist centre, as attested by the record of Xuanzang (Beal, 1969: 229). The presence of Buddha statues inside later Hindu temples suggests that Buddhism was then assimilated into Hinduism (Dehejia, 1988: 58). Similarly, parts of the rock-cut Buddhist monasteries in the western Deccan, such as those at Junnar and Nasik, were used as the shrines to local deities in the later period, as evidenced by associated carved remains.

5. This is not, however, to deny the influence of other Indological ideologies that stimulated and maintained an academic interest in textual studies.

6. For the history of collecting Buddhist manuscripts in Sanskrit and Pāli and the development of the early textual studies of Buddhism, see De Jong (1987: 13–23), and Trainor (1997: 5–23).

7. It must be emphasized, however, that Prinsep, while undoubtedly key to this development, was by no means the only figure in this important endeavour; and his work owed significant debt to findings of a number of other scholars (such as C. Wilkins, Captain A. Troyer, W.H. Mill, and the Revd. J. Stevenson), which altogether contributed to the eventual deciphering of these scripts (Singh, 2004a: 13). Prinsep's articles, originally published in various issues of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, were later compiled and published posthumously by E. Thomas (see Prinsep, 1858).

8. Though in northwestern areas, Cunningham also followed a number of other ancient Greek accounts.

9. Influential though Cunningham's work was, many of his findings were not entirely accurate. For instance, his identifications of relics, which still affect scholarly writing on Sanchi, have since been significantly revised. See Willis (2001).

10. It should be admitted, however, that not all stūpas were excavated in a professional and systematic manner. For instance, A. Fuhler's excavations of stūpas at Kankali Tila and Katra in 1890–91, and 1895–96 respectively were carried out in an extremely unsystematic way, yielded no significant results, and were never properly finished. Fuhler is also recognized to have forged a number of Aśokan inscriptions (Chakrabarti, 1988, 109–12).

11. For further references of these stūpa excavations as well as the other excavations of the same period, see Chakrabarti (1988: 106–72).

12. The European tradition of looking at art and architecture in terms of style can be traced back to the seminal works of Winckelmann and Rickman in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (cf. Winckelmann, 1765, 1766; Rickman, 1817).

13. The *Dhammapada*, edited and translated by Fausböll, was published in 1855. Fausböll published the first volume of the *Jātaka* in 1877. Oldenberg's edition of *Vinaya Piṭakaṃ* then appeared between 1879 and 1883. At the same time, the Pāli Text Society was founded for the study of the Pāli texts in 1881 by T.W. Rhys-Davids. For further details, see De Jong (1987: 24).

14. Although not focusing on the Buddhist stūpa, another important study on the symbolic meaning of Indian art is Zimmer (1946).

15. Such approaches have by no means been limited to the study of Buddhist stūpas. Among similar such studies of Hindu sites, we may note Dass and Willis (2002) as an important attempt to reveal the specific religious meaning of sculptures at Udayagiri.

16. Other recent studies of the same topic include Guha-Thakurta (1998) and Singh (2004).
17. Heitzman has published his idea on this issue some two decades before (Heitzman, 1984). The essay in this volume is, in this sense, an updated study of his early paper.

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