Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism

ROBERT DECAROLI

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Haunting the Buddha

This page intentionally left blank

Haunting the Buddha

Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism

ROBERT DECAROLI

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2004

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford New York
Auckland Bangkok Buenos Aires Cape Town Chennai
Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi
São Paulo Shanghai Taipei Tokyo Toronto

Copyright © 2004 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

www.oup.com

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
DeCaroli, Robert.
Haunting the Buddha : Indian popular religions and the formation of
Buddhism / Robert DeCaroli.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-19-516838-0
1. Buddhism—India—History. 2. Art, Buddhist—India. 3. Gods,
Buddhist, in art. 4. Art and mythology. I. Title.
BQ336 .D43 2004
294.3'0934—dc22 2003019860

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

For my parents

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

This work, which deals with supernatural beings of immense generosity and insight, owes its creation to beings who, although perhaps less divine, are equally remarkable in their generosity. This book is the culmination of a long process and over the years it has undergone many phases and incarnations. None of it would have been remotely possible if not for the guidance, patience, and support of Robert L. Brown and Gregory Schopen. No doubt any matter of interest or merit in the following chapters is in some way attributable to their instruction and advice. I am also grateful for the careful reading and helpful comments made by Susan Downey, Katherine Harper, Lewis Lancaster, Hartmut Scharfe, Walter Spink, and Lothar von Falkenhausen, all of whom were instrumental in shaping the early stages of this project.

I wish to thank the Asian Cultural Council and the Edward A. Dickson Fellowship committee for providing the monetary support that made all of my fieldwork in India and the subsequent period of writing possible. I also wish to acknowledge the support of the George Mason University Research Grant, which facilitated my work in Southeast Asia, and the Mathy Junior Faculty Award, which afforded me the time needed to incorporate my new research into the manuscript.

Over the years many individuals have been kind enough to read various portions of this project; their comments have helped rescue me from many overlooked errors, and their suggestions have been a

welcome source of inspiration. In particular, I would like to recognize Kurt Behrendt, Pia Brancaccio, Joan Bristol, Michael Chang, Steven DeCaroli, Jeffrey Durham, Bindu Gude, Santhi Kavuri, Paul Lavy, Janice Leoshko, John R. McRae, Tobie Meyer-Fong, Randolph Scully, Akira Shimada, Monica Smith, and Ellen Todd. Each of these individuals took the time to make suggestions or offer critiques that ultimately served to strengthen the work. For their efforts and their insights, I am deeply grateful. I am also very appreciative to Sylvia Fraser-Lu, Alexandra Green, and Donald Stadtner, all of whom were willing to share with me their expertise on Burmese art and history. Their knowledge and advice has proven to be an invaluable resource.

I would like to express my gratitude to the skillful editors at Oxford University Press (USA). In particular, I would like to thank Cynthia Read, Theo Calderara, Christi Stanforth, and Margaret Case for all of their good advice and persistent efforts in seeing the book through to production.

Likewise, I wish to thank the Archaeological Survey of India under the guidance of Director General R. S. Bisht and Director of Monuments R. C. Agrawal, who generously gave me permission to photograph the numerous and spectacular sites that were relevant to my project. I also wish to express my gratitude to the curators at the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Mumbai, who kindly made photographs of their excellent collections available to me.

And, ultimately to my family and friends who provided an unlimited source of encouragement, support, and welcome diversions, I give my heartfelt gratitude.

Contents

1. Coming to Terms, 3

2. Making Believers, 31

3. Set in Stone, 55

4. Ghost Stories, 87

5. The Politics of Enlightenment, 105

6. Policing the Monastery, 121

7. Passage from India, 143

8. Confronting Their Demons, 173

Notes, 189

Bibliography, 211

Index, 221

Haunting the Buddha

This page intentionally left blank

I

Coming to Terms

I shall ask you a question, ascetic. If you do not answer me, I shall either strike down your mind, or split your heart or seize you by the feet and throw you over the Ganges.

—The *yakkha* Sūciloma speaking to the Buddha
(*Sutta Nipāta* II.5)

I do not see anyone, sir, in the world, including the devas, Māra and Brahmā, among beings including ascetics and brahmans, devas and men, who could strike down my mind, or split my heart or seize me by the feet and throw me over the Ganges. Nevertheless, ask what you wish.

—The Buddha speaking to the *yakkha* Sūciloma
(*Sutta Nipāta* II.5)

Historiography

When a student is introduced to the art of early Buddhism in a university course, a description of the Buddhist teachings usually precedes any examination of the art. In this summary the student is told how the Buddhist monks separate themselves from society, and practice poverty and chastity while pursuing the independent goal of enlightenment. As true as this may be, none of it even remotely prepares the student to understand the vibrant, often cacophonous, im-

agery that decorates the earliest Buddhist monuments in India. Voluptuous goddesses draped in diaphanous garments and clinging like vines from the limbs of trees; stout, kingly *yakṣas* dressed in royal garb and flanked by sacks of gold; fierce mythical creatures locked in combat; immense, multiheaded, snakelike *nāgas,* and other such beings dominate the architectural space of these early monuments. There is a discrepancy, therefore, between the texts that are commonly used to define Buddhist practice (at least in the West) and what the art informs us about the actual Buddhist monastic world. It is within this rupture between the physical and the textual, the worldly and the monastic that this work finds its origins.

To a large degree the seeming disjuncture between textual Buddhism and early Buddhist art is a byproduct of the way Buddhism has traditionally been studied in the West. Many of the most commonly held assumptions about what is appropriately Buddhist can be traced back through the history of Buddhist studies, which is closely intertwined with the history of political relationships between India and the West.

Gregory Schopen has drawn attention to the discrepancy between the textual and material evidence in the study of Buddhism and the primacy that has unquestioningly been granted to the textual sources, despite their rarefied and often polemic nature.[1] He implicates some of the most important names in Indian and Buddhist history as being instrumental in perpetuating this bias and points to clear examples in which such preferential considerations given to textual sources have led to either incorrect or needlessly tempered conclusions.[2] The root of this bias can be seen in the earliest levels of Western historical practice and the writings of such scholars as J. W. de Jong and E. Burnouf. The former states:

> Undoubtedly this literature is the most important source of knowledge of Buddhism. Buddhist art, inscriptions and coins have supplied us with useful data, but generally they cannot be fully understood without the support given by the texts.[3]

The blame for biased notions in regard to Buddhism cannot, however, be placed solely at the feet of the historians and textual scholars. In the fields of art history and archaeology there also exists a core set of biases stemming from the work of several seminal scholars. Unfortunately, these biases, formed through ignorance or spurious reasoning, have often become unquestioned and embedded aspects of the disciplines.

Henry Cole, writing in the late nineteenth century, was the first scholar to claim that the simplicity of early Buddhist art was superior to the art produced

by later Hinduism.[4] Although this simple preference may seem innocuous, it contributed to a dialogue that desired to read Indian history in terms of decay from a distant, more glorious past and, in this way, to help justify the colonial project. Cole writes that "the power of delineating human and other forms was formerly greater than is now evinced by the modern Hindu sculptures," and he felt that the craftsmanship at Sāñcī could "testify to the superior skill then possessed by native sculptors as compared with the native productions of modern times."[5] Through this sort of scholarship a political claim could be made justifying the colonial presence in India as a civilizing force, shoring up the fallen remains of a once-great people.

This "decline" was often linked to nineteenth-century ideas of racial determinism. This theory sought to explain the gradual decline in Indian civilization by linking it to a watering down of the racial purity of the hypothesized Aryan invaders. In this scheme, Cole was willing to accept the Buddha as non-Aryan primarily because Buddhism was a non-Western religion.[6] This was considered acceptable reasoning by some, because racial ideas of the time linked such things as artistic creation and religious choice directly to a group's or individual's racial background.

James Fergusson, who began his career in India as an indigo merchant, became a hugely influential voice in the establishment of Indian art history and archaeology. Like Cole, he strongly espoused ideas of racial determinism. Fergusson and many of his contemporaries believed the term "Aryan" had more than simply linguistic or cultural connotations and frequently employed it as a racial designation. Interestingly, Fergusson considered the Buddha himself to be purely Aryan, despite the fact that he felt that it could "safely be asserted that no Aryan race, while existing in anything like purity, was ever converted to Buddhism, or could permanently adopt its doctrines."[7] He makes this odd argument for a few specific reasons. Fergusson clearly seems to have had an appreciation for the rational aspects of Buddhist philosophy and praises what he sees as Buddhism's repression of ancestor and serpent worship (both abhorrent to Fergusson's Protestant background).[8] The primary reasoning behind his desire to make the Buddha purely Aryan stems, however, from his desire to read Indian history in terms of decay. For this sort of historical reading to work one first needs to postulate a golden age from which to decline. For Fergusson, this age was found in the earliest Buddhist art.

Unlike the textual scholars, the early scholars of material culture had no Vedic (that is, Aryan) art to point to as a "golden age." It therefore became necessary to identify one within the later material record. Cole and others, such as V. A. Smith, tried to locate this high point of Indian culture in the art

of Gandhāra, due to its stylistic links with Greece.[9] But as more became known about the art of India, the limited range and impact of this style rendered further claims about its centrality moot.

For Fergusson this golden age needed to be as early as possible so as to coincide with his ideas of an Aryan invasion and the gradual intermarriage of these invading Aryans with other Indian races. For this reason, Fergusson insists that Bhārhut represents the pinnacle of Indian artistic achievement despite the fact that this *stūpa,* dating from 100–70 BCE, is among the very earliest Buddhist monuments. He writes that Bhārhut "is thoroughly original," its narrative scenes are represented "with a distinctness that never was surpassed," the architectural features are "cut with an elegance and precision which are very admirable," and the human forms are "truthful to nature."[10] He ultimately states that "for an honest purpose-like pre-Raphaelite kind of art, there is probably nothing much better to be found elsewhere."[11] Coinciding with this praise of Bhārhut was Fergusson's need to denigrate later Buddhist monuments such as Sāñcī and Amarāvatī so as to lay the foundations for his teleology of decline. He felt that Sāñcī had breadth but neither delicacy nor precision, and he cleverly explained away Amarāvatī by labeling it a product of foreign intervention.[12]

Underpinning Fergusson's histories is a pervasive reference to "that curious Indian peculiarity of being written in decay" in which "[t]he Indian story is that of backward decline, from the sculptures of Bhārhut and Amarāvatī topes to the illustrations of Coleman's 'Hindu Mythology.' "[13] In this teleology, Brahmanism (Vedism), the most pure religion, over time gives way to Buddhism, which eventually declines into serpent-loving Mahāyāna systems that pave the way for modern Hinduism. In this schema, and due to the lack of Vedic material remains, it was vital that the Buddha be an Aryan so that the most praiseworthy art would also be seen as racially "pure."

Cole and Fergusson are not alone in reading Indian history in this way. James Burgess, a student of Fergusson's, also participated in this dialogue. Burgess revised Fergusson's notion of a golden age, not by eliminating it but simply by locating the golden age a bit later, in the arts of Amarāvatī, and denigrating the earlier periods as less elegant.[14] Similarly, W. H. Sykes, Sir George Birdwood, and William Hunter were all mired in this conception of Indian art seen in terms of a gradual lessening of quality. For example, Hunter says about the Buddhist caves at Kānheri:

> From the simplicity which reigns through the whole of the caves at Canara, and the total want of those monstrous figures which we meet with in the others; I think it probable that the former are the

most ancient of the whole, and that the others have not been constructed till both the taste and the mythology of the people began to be corrupted.[15]

These ideas were prevalent, powerful, and linked intimately with colonial authority. By separating religious change into a simplified, value-laden, linear sequence, invented concepts of devolution could be maintained. In the process of organizing Indian religious and artistic change according to preconceived notions of decline, however, many complex aspects of religious and intellectual borrowing were effaced. Even Indian scholars such as Hirananda Sastri, writing in 1942, were influenced by these ideas. In one work he argues that a figure found at a Buddhist site, which depicts a man under serpent hoods, must be a representation of Nagarjuna because "Buddhists would not worship nāgas along with the deities of their own faith."[16] Sastri, like the rest of us, had inherited notions about what is appropriate to a Buddhist context, and too often we are willing to dismiss or make excuses for evidence that does not conform to these notions. Even long after we have discarded nineteenth-century racial theories and have moved beyond the simplistic, teleological notions of Indian history that they generated, the conclusions derived from this rejected evidence still exert some influence.

Although these inherited biases impact many areas of study, one repercussion from them, in particular, is central to the project of this current work. Specifically, one of the consequences of telling Indian history in terms of decline is that Buddhism could in no way be portrayed as dependent on or derivative of the popular religious practices that pervaded a great deal of life in ancient India. All evidence of contact between Buddhism and popular spirit religions[17] of the time (seen as even more degraded than Hinduism in the eyes of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century European academics) had to be explained in terms of conflict or reluctant concessions to the masses. It was impermissible for Buddhism to be seen as coexisting or interacting with these spirit religions in any favorable or symbiotic manner. To this end the Buddhist texts, written by a rarefied and erudite intellectual elite, were seen as the appropriate means by which to gain an understanding of Buddhist history. Yet the primacy of the textual evidence was achieved at the expense of the frequently more problematic physical evidence.

Relatively few academic works have been written on the topic of Indian popular religion. Among these texts, arguably the most important and influential is a collection of essays written by Ananda Coomaraswamy that was given the collective title *Yakṣas*. The Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections first published this material in two parts, in 1928 and 1931, and since then it has re-

mained one of the most canonical works on the subject, for good reasons.[18] Much to his credit, Coomaraswamy was the first scholar to treat Indian popular religion as a topic worthy of its own study. By applying his remarkable knowledge of Indian literature and art to the topic, Coomaraswamy managed to compile an impressively comprehensive, albeit brief, look at the beliefs and practices of early Indian popular religion. Despite the important insights provided by this text, however, Coomaraswamy fails to break with many of the problematic nineteenth-century views and thereby perpetuates some of the earlier, unfounded assumptions about the nature of spirit religions in India.

Speculation over the racial origins of various aspects of popular terminology and practice constitutes a large portion of Coomaraswamy's text. Although one might question the relevance of such inquiries, he manages to undertake this analysis in an even-handed manner while avoiding explicit value judgments. Even though he is able to nuance nineteenth-century notions of race, however, he still firmly situates popular religion in opposition to monastic Buddhism. At various points throughout his work, Coomaraswamy posits a consistent tension and deep incompatibility between Buddhism and spirit religions. He speculates that the presence of popular deities on Buddhist sites provides evidence of moments in which the public's desires, rather than monastic interests, held sway. He suggests that ultimately the inclusion of popular deities at Buddhist sites arose due to complications in the Buddhist's desire to completely subvert these earlier, "animistic" practices.[19]

Benefiting from the work of scholars such as Coomaraswamy, this book positions itself as an attempt to reopen the question of early Buddhism's relationship to spirit religions and to reconsider past characterizations of early Buddhist practice. The following chapters will employ both physical evidence and textual sources in an effort to propose an alternate understanding of Buddhism's role in early Indian society that will, it is hoped, avoid the pitfalls and biases characteristic of earlier assessments. Before this task can be undertaken, however, certain terminology must be clarified.

Terminology

The nomenclature surrounding the myriad types of Indian popular traditions and spirit religions needs to be addressed. This has traditionally been a very difficult subject in which to gain any sure footing due to the complex and often contradictory nature of the textual evidence. Part of the problem stems from the fact that these religious practices were often local in nature and varied greatly from region to region. Moreover, these popular traditions have been

practiced in some form for thousands of years, and the nature of those practices undoubtedly changed over that long history.

Although Coomaraswamy and others argue that types of spirit-deities, specifically *yakṣas,* find their origins in the Vedas, I disagree somewhat with their conclusions. In Ananda Coomaraswamy's essay on the occurrences of the word *yakṣa* in the Vedas and Upaniṣads, he identifies the term as being brahmanical and as referring to a "single spiritual principle which assumes a multiplicity and diversity of aspects by its immanence in all things; being at the same time essentially invisible, and at the same time always manifesting, and in this sense recognizable."[20] Although this may be true for the word *yakṣa,* we must not confuse the origins of the word with the objects or beings that it later comes to signify. In short, although *yakṣa* may be a Sanskrit word associated with brahmanical cosmology at the time of the Vedas, the spirit-deities to which the term was later applied need not be considered part of that same brahmanical system. These spirit-deities are chthonic creatures and are intimately associated with specific features in the physical landscape, such as a particular tree or certain pool of water. It is therefore unlikely that such beings could have been imported. It is even less likely that Vedism, which had its origins in a nomadic culture, would have originated a belief system in which divinity is contained within a localized natural feature and delimited by boundaries. It would seem then, that *yakṣa* was a Vedic term that may originally have been applied to an ephemeral and transcendent spirit inhabiting the physical world, but later was used to identify a type of spirit-deity worshiped by the non-Vedic-speaking populations.

To complicate matters further, these spirit religions did not produce texts of their own, leaving us dependent on the writings of other religious and philosophical groups who were often in competition with, or even openly hostile to, the popular practices in question. For all of these reasons, religious practices that center on the worship of spirits and demigods are poorly understood and have unfairly been given secondary importance by scholars.

Almost without fail, every attempt to explain the presence of imagery associated with spirit religions on early Buddhist sites has been cast in pejorative or judgmental terms. For example, Coomaraswamy states that:

> At first sight these figures [tree and dryad] seem to be singularly out of place if regarded with the eyes of a Buddhist or Jaina monk. But by the time that the necessity had arisen for the erection of these great monuments, with their illustrations of Buddhist legends and other material constituting a veritable *Biblia Pauperum,* Buddhism and Jainism had passed beyond the circle of monasticism, and be-

> come popular religions with a cult. These figures of fertility spirits are present here because the people are here.[21]

Similarly, Gail Hinich Sutherland writes:

> an important dialectic is set up between the morality and spirituality of the perfected Buddha and various nonhuman deities such as yakṣas (Pāli, yakkhas) and the serpent deities, the *nāgas*. On the one hand, the Buddha incorporates and presides over a preexistent mythology of nature. In so doing the new religion of Buddhism is able to more readily meet the needs of an unlettered laity.[22]

Rather than simply dismiss these spirit religions as reluctant concessions to the masses, however, it is essential that we try to understand them and the nature of the beings upon which they focus. Although the two authors just quoted do excellent jobs of exploring aspects of these spirit-deities, my main objection to the positions embedded in their texts is that they deny the possibility that these spirit-deities were important to the literate, the elite, and the *saṃgha* (the Buddhist monastic community) itself. By setting up a dialectic between the monastic community and the spirit-deities, this position runs the risk of viewing the *saṃgha* as clever manipulators playing the public for the sake of greater donations. I believe that such a view greatly oversimplifies the process and fails to recognize that the monks and nuns themselves were participants in the culture that surrounded them.

Nevertheless, I am indebted to both of these scholars, and others, for their research and their attempts to determine the exact nature of these spirit-deities, a task that is more difficult than it may at first appear.[23] Even attempting to list the types of spirit-deities that fall under the purview of these spirit religions is bewildering. Such beings as *yakṣas, nāgas, guhyakas, bhūtas, pretas, gandharvas, pitṛs, kumbhāṇḍas, piśācas, vṛkṣadevatā (rukkhadevatās), vetālas, mahoragas, devaputras, vidyādharas, kiṃpuruṣas, apsarases, rākṣasas, kinnāras, assamukhīs,* and *asura* populate the texts. The confusion surrounding this panoply of beings is compounded by the fact that many of the ancient authors use the names interchangeably, and nowhere is there a delineation of explicit differences between the various types.

Although some texts attempt to organize these beings by rank or classify them according to their qualities, no two classifications systems are the same, and rarely, if ever, do the narratives conform to these rubrics. In one Jain classification system, the *yakṣas, rākṣasas, piśācas, bhūtas, kinnāras, kiṃpuruṣas, mahoragas,* and *gandharvas* are all identified as being Vyantara gods.[24] Vyantara is the second of four categories used by the Jain authors to classify and rank

divine beings. In this case, the Vyantaras are ranked lower than the Bhaumeyika gods, whose members include the *asuras*, *nāgas*, *vidyuts*, and *suvarṇas*, among others, and above the Jyotiṣka category, which comprises mainly astronomical principles like the sun, planets stars and lunar houses.[25]

In the *Manusmṛti* we are presented with an alternative organizational system for conceptualizing the divine hosts. In this system, the divine beings have been grouped according to which of the three *guṇas* (qualities or attributes) is prevalent in their personality. Vagrants, birds, hypocritical men, *rākṣasas,* and *piśācas* are the highest course, resulting from darkness (*tamas*: dullness or inertia).[26] *Gandharvas*, *guhyakas*, *yakṣas,* and all those who are attendants of deities, such as the *apsarases*, are the highest rank, among those resulting from passion (*rajas*: passion or activity).[27] The first level of beings, which arise from lucidity (*sattva*: brightness or intelligibility), include the troops connected with the palatial chariots of the gods, the stars and the *Daityas*; the second level comprises the sacrificers, seers, gods, the Vedas, the constellations, the years, the manes, and the *Sādhyas*.[28] A close parallel to this classification system is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata,* where it states that *sāttvika* men worship the *devas*, *rājasika* men worship the *yakṣas,* and *tāmasika* men worship the *bhūtas* and *pretas*.[29] But even this schema varies from the one set forth by Manu insofar as *bhūta* and *preta* are not mentioned in the *Manusmṛti*.

Occasionally, these spirit-deities are differentiated and ranked in stories that deal with their creation. In the Purāṇas we are told that that after creating the gods, demons (*asuras*), ancestors (*pitṛs*), and humans, Brahmā became hungry, and from this hunger *yakṣas* and *rākṣasas* arose. They began to eat him, and in his displeasure his hair fell out and became *nāgas*. This, in turn, made him angry, and this emotion gave rise to the fierce, man-eating *piśācas*.[30] In the *Rāmāyaṇa* a very different creation story is told. In this version, when Brahmā needed to create beings to guard the cosmic waters, those who said "let us guard" (*rakṣāmaḥ*) became *rākṣasas,* and those that said "let us eat" (alternately: "let us sacrifice" or "let us be quick") (*yakṣāmaḥ*) became *yakṣas*.[31] In both cases, the attempt is being made to categorize and define preexistent beings that had long thrived as part of the Indian religious landscape. The difficulty of the authors in finding a consistent framework within which to locate these spirit-deities is a testament to the mercurial and often contradictory natures of these elusive beings.

Beyond the well-delineated systems mentioned above, frequently occurring collective terms used in reference to broad, albeit ill-defined, groups of spirit-deities hint at other systems for the classification of divine beings. In the *Atharvaveda*, the term *itarajanāḥ* (other folk) is used in reference to minor deities in general, whereas the *Paippalāda* version of the *Atharvaveda* refers to

them as *puṇyajanāḥ* (sacred folk).[32] The term *devatā* is also one that frequently occurs in the literature. It is usually translated as "god" or, more specifically, "demigod." This word has a second meaning of "image" or "idol," however, and this correlation between minor gods and images may provide an insight into the nature of the rituals surrounding such beings.[33] Similarly, the term *bhūtāni* is used in the *Palāsa Jātaka* in reference to tree-dwelling spirits.[34] *Bhūtāni* in its most general sense means "beings" but in this context its meaning may be more precisely translated as "in-dwelling being" or "animate nature."[35] This relationship between spirit-deities and aspects of nature points to an important and intimate connection between these beings and the physical world.

Occasionally the term *naivāsika* is used in reference to a category of gods who are "local genii" or "dwelling deities"; it suggests the limited authority and range of influence possessed by such terrestrial beings.[36] Further insight into the nature of some spirit-deities can be garnered from the word *amānussa*, which is usually translated as "ghost" or "nonhuman" but refers to a category of beings that are above humans but not quite full-fledged gods.[37] (The connection between spirit-deities and ghosts will be more fully explored in later chapters.) This collection of terms provides us with important clues into the nature of the spirit-deities by pointing to associations with nature, sculpted images, ghosts, and limited regions of influence. These qualities are central to defining and understanding the nature of these beings. Unfortunately, these collective terms are rarely used in conjunction with the names of specific types of supernatural beings and, even then, they seem to be used with very little consistency.

This inconsistency also affects the vocabulary used to refer to the individual beings themselves. Sutherland notes the frustrating fact that the designation *yakṣa* is often used interchangeably with the terms *rākṣasa, gandharva, asura,* and *piśāca*.[38] Similarly, T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede have stated that in the Pāli literature many *yakkhas* (Skt. *yakṣa*) are in fact a form of contented *peta* (Skt. *preta*), whereas in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* we find mention of a *yakṣa* who becomes a *piśāca*.[39] This confusing blurring of terminology, prevalent in the literature of all periods, is well exemplified in the *Devadhamma Jātaka*. In this tale, the Bodhisattva must confront a being that haunts an enchanted pool. This creature is alternately referred to as a *yakkha, rakkhasa* (Skt. *rākṣasa*), and a *dakarakkha*[40] (Skt. *udakarakṣa*?), while its lord, the well-documented king of *yakṣas*, Kubera, is here referred to as the Lord of *Vidhyādharas*.[41] This same Lord of *Yakṣas* is also present in the *Mahābhārata*, where he is simultaneously associated with *rākṣasa*s, *gandharvas*, and *guhyakas*, who are all under his command.[42] The situation is difficult at best.

The majority of academic explorations into spirit religions have focused on the most frequently mentioned and depicted categories of spirit-deity; in particular, *yakṣas* and *nāgas* have received a great deal of attention, due to their prominence in both the literature and the art. The intention of this study, however, is to remain as inclusive as possible and to address any relevant evidence pertaining to Buddhism and spirit-deities, regardless of the specific terminology employed to identify the supernatural beings in each instance. In an area of study with such slippery nomenclature, one cannot simply dismiss various categories of beings, if for no other reason than because their names are often used interchangeably. This astounding fluidity and permeability between forms of designation requires that any attempt to define one of these spirit-deities must, to some degree, address them all. On the positive side, however, this intimate association between types of spirit-deities allows us the cautious luxury of generalization, insofar as it justifies our speaking of them as a category of related beings. Ram Nath Misra, taking his cue from the *Amarakośa*, refers to these beings as belonging to a *devajāti* or "god-caste," a kindred group of demigods sharing similar qualities and degrees of power.[43]

If we look to ancient textual accounts, it seems clear that even the early authors treated spirit-deities as a group but were uncertain as to how to classify these beings and the religious practices that developed around them. I am aware of very few instances in which early authors made any attempt to label or define these religious practices as a whole. Patañjali, while writing his commentary on Paṇini's grammar (circa 200 BCE), differentiated between two types of gods: those that were *vaidika* (Vedic or prescribed) and those that were *laukika* (worldly, customary, or generally prevalent).[44] We can find a similar duality in the writings of the Jain mendicant Somadeva, who makes a distinction between *laukika* or "worldly" religious practices and those that he calls *pāralaukika*.[45] Somadeva uses the term *pāralaukika* in reference to that which we learn from the teachings of the Jina, and its meaning can, therefore, be understood as "beyond" or "better than worldly."[46]

In both cases, the author's own religion, Brahmanism and Jainism, respectively, is defined against these *laukika* practices, which seem to underlie both traditions and to be directly related to the achievement of worldly aims. Even in the earliest Buddhist literature we can find evidence of a similar process of self-definition. Among the oldest surviving Buddhist texts, dating to the early first century CE and recently translated by Richard Salomon, is a passage in which a brahman questions the Buddha about his identity. The brahman, Dhoṇa, meets the Buddha and asks him if he is a *deva*, a *gandharva*, a *yakkha*,

or a man. The Buddha answers "no" to each of these options and finally states "I am a Buddha, brahman, a Buddha."[47] In this passage the Buddha is defining himself as something new and altogether different from the options listed by the brahman. Just as in the Hindu and Jain sources, the Buddha is forced to explain his identity by placing it in contrast to the practices of popular religion, in this case by refuting the assumption that he is some manner of deity or spirit. It is remarkable that examples from all three of these major religious institutions seek to define themselves in relation to this set of popular religious practices. Such sources attest to its pervasiveness and importance.

Embedded in the narratives and intellectual tracts of the textual traditions are numerous descriptions of *laukika* practice. By combing the texts we can identify aspects of *laukika* practice and belief which existed as an undercurrent of religious activity performed by most people in ancient India, despite any brahmanical, Jain, or Buddhist affiliations. *Laukika* practices are frequently conceived of as being primarily rural or village-based, probably because spirit religions still play a large role in villages throughout India. It is clear from the textual accounts, however, that these religious practices were a crucial component of ancient urban life, as well. The *Arthaśāstra* lists the installation of shrines to various tutelary and guardian deities as a vital aspect of city planning, and there are numerous tales that mention *yakṣas* or similar spirit-deities residing inside city gates or urban shrines.[48] In one tale, the *Gagga Jātaka*, a king actually employs one of these spirit-deities as a tax collector; whereas, in the Tamil text *Maṇimekhalai*, one such being is responsible for policing the marketplace and punishing those crimes that escaped the notice of the human authorities.[49]

The evidence provided by these examples makes it problematic to refer to religious practices involving spirit-deities as "rural" or "village-based." Although villages and rural communities clearly constituted an important segment of those who followed such practices, they by no means defined the limits of the practices' appeal. Likewise, any attempt to classify these religious practices as "folk religion" runs into similar problems. The texts refer to these practices in relation to the most elite and educated members of society, as is suggested by the king's role in the *Gagga Jātaka* mentioned above. There are numerous literary accounts that represent individuals such as kings, brahmans, and even members of the *saṃgha* at times turning to these spirit-deities for help.

In the *Mahāvaṃsa*, we are told of a prince who becomes king with the help of a *yakkhiṇī* who takes the form of a mare. Upon becoming king, he establishes shrines for important *yakkha* allies in the town and dedicates a special shrine to the mare-*yakkhiṇī* within the palace compound. The text tells

us that after establishing his city "the king, who had *yakkhas* and *bhūtas* for friends, enjoyed his fortune."[50] *Yakṣas* are linked to kings in the Jātakas as well. For instance, in the *Kuru-Dhamma Jātaka* a *yakṣa* named Cittarāja acts as a witness to an ancient ritual performed by a king. In this ritual, the king stands at the shore of a lake and, in front of the *yakṣa*, shoots brightly decorated arrows into the four directions, thus reaffirming his authority.[51] Even the Buddha's *kṣatriya* family had a tutelary *yakṣa*, Śākyavardhana, to whom the future Buddha was presented as a child.[52] Correspondingly, in his adult life the Buddha acknowledged the connections between honoring spirit-deities at *caityas* (prepared sacred spaces) and continued dynastic success. In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, when a large group of Licchavis ask the Buddha how they can maintain their reign, the Buddha lists a number of appropriate activities that will ensure their prosperity, among them the following: "So long as they [the Licchavi-Vajjis] shall honour, respect, venerate, revere the Vajjian shrines within and without (their borders), shall not fail to provide meet offerings as given of yore, made of yore, growth may be expected, not decline."[53] This passage is further explained in the commentary which states that Vajji shrines are in fact *yakkhacetiyāni* or the residences of *yakṣas*.[54] This prescription and the other examples given above all point to an intimate association between the honoring of spirit-deities and the kingly elite.

A similar association can be demonstrated for the brahmans. The *Manusmṛti* (circa first century CE) dictates the proper procedure for brahmans at ceremonies designated to feed the ancestors, in which the spirits or ghosts (*bhūtas*) are also tended.[55] In a different chapter of the same work, Vedic graduates are informed that they must never be remiss in sacrifices to the gods, men, sages, *bhūtas*, and the ancestors.[56] The evidence provided by the text implies brahmanical participation in rites dedicated to spirit-deities, whereas the *Palāsa Jātaka* presents us with a descriptive and explicit account of a brahman dedicating a tree shrine to a tree-spirit (*bhūtāni*) in hopes of attaining wealth. This tale is an account of one of Ananda's past lives in which he was a poor brahman; by faithfully honoring the spirit of a tree, who is the Bodhisattva, he gains for himself great wealth.[57]

From this litany of diverse references we can garner some idea of the inclusive and pervasive nature of these *laukika* practices. Just as the characterization of these practices as "rural" or "village-based" must give way to the evidence of widespread urban practices, so too, any references to these practices as "folk," "peasant," or "popular" (meaning non-elite) must also be questioned. In fact, there is a body of evidence that points to the *saṃgha* as occasionally participating in these *laukika* practices, as well. Although the exact relationship between the monastic community and these spirit-deities will be

more fully explored and defined in the course of this work, a few examples will serve as evidence for the current argument.

The Chinese monk and pilgrim Yijing (I-tsing) on several occasions refers to the monastic practice of leaving food out for the spirits.[58] Likewise, he refers to special spirit-deities, such as Hāritī and Mahākāla, who were particularly honored by the *saṃgha*.[59] In one tale, the lay staff and the monks in a monastery turn to the *yakṣa* Mahākāla (whose image resides in their kitchen) for more food after the surprise arrival of five hundred important guests. Miraculously, there is food enough to feed everyone with the usual amount left over. This feat was accomplished, Yijing believes, due to the intervention of the spirit-deity.[60] Also, in the *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* the Buddha explicitly instructs his monks to call on the *yakṣa* chiefs in times of need or peril.[61] Although later chapters will further explore the exact nature of the relationship between these beings and the *saṃgha*, it is sufficient for now to acknowledge that the Buddhist community appears to have been in no way averse to turning to spirit-deities in times of need.

Attempts to define these spirit-deities in terms of their remoteness from urban centers or their exclusive popularity among the lower castes have thus proven to be inadequate. As will be demonstrated, even attempting to define these beings as regional or local gods is insufficient in a few very important cases, for a handful of these spirit-deities grew in popularity and transcended any regional associations that they may have originally had. Despite this growth in popularity, however, they are still referred to by the same terms used to refer to local deities (*yakṣa, yakṣiṇī, nāga*, etc.), which implies that having limited geographic authority is an insufficient criterion by which to define these spirit-deities.

Even though several tales provide us examples of supernatural beings whose power will not extend beyond a specific geographic feature (such as a pond, a stream, the shade of particular tree, or the limits of a city or a single house), some spirit-deities managed to transcend any original limitations that had been placed upon them.[62] For instance, the *yakṣi* Hāritī is featured prominently in the Buddhist literary and artistic traditions throughout India. Although it seems that she began as a goddess of disease native to the Magadhan city of Rājagṛha, after her famous conversion to Buddhism at the hands of the Buddha, her renown seems to have spread far beyond the limits of her city.[63] In fact, Yijing reports the presence of statues of Hāritī on the porches or in the dining halls of all Indian monastic complexes.[64] In a similar vein, the early Buddhist *stūpa* at Bhārhut has several labeled reliefs depicting various minor gods and supernatural beings. Among them are the *yakṣa* Sūciloma (figure 1.1)

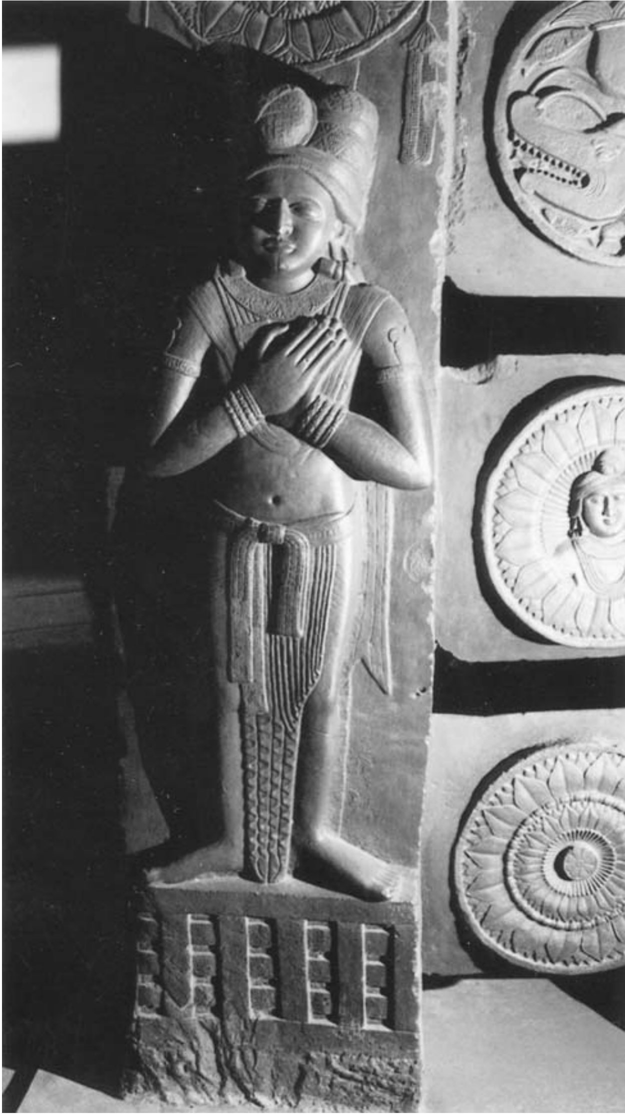

FIGURE I.1. Suchiloma *Yakho* (Sūciloma *Yakṣa*). Bhārhut. Ca. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata (Calcutta). Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

and the *yakṣa* Ajakālaka (figure 1.2), both of whom are known from texts to have been native to other cities, Gayā and Pātali, respectively, where they apparently had *caityas* dedicated solely to themselves.[65] Yet at this single Buddhist monument various *yakṣas* from diverse locations have been assembled and, since it can be assumed that the images at this site held power, the deities depicted have to be recognized as more than simply local. So although the term "local deity" may suffice in most instances, it is inadequate in a few important cases and should, therefore, be avoided as a general term of designation for these beings.

Since the terms "popular," "folk," "village-based," "rural," and "local" are all imprecise, one is left wondering what terms are sufficient to encompass the multifaceted natures of these beings. The terms *laukika* and "popular" are useful, provided "popular" is understood as meaning "non-exclusive" and is recognized as encompassing all levels of society from the most elite to the most humble. Likewise, the terms "chthonic" or "nonsoteriological" seem appropriate in most instances, because even when these spirit-deities do not live in the earth they are inevitably concerned with worldly matters such as fecundity and wealth rather than those of salvation or transcendence. I agree with Sutherland, however, in finding the English term "spirit" to be the best description of these beings because it has connotations of both ghost and divinity.[66] Because all of these beings fall somewhere in this gradation between ghost and god and because they participate in the nature of both I have chosen to employ the term "spirit-deity."

I use this term not because I wish to create a category that is somehow different from ghosts or gods but rather because I want to emphasize, in a general way, that these beings are something of both. Clearly, some of these beings, such as *bhūtas,* seem to behave in a manner consistent with ghosts. These beings are equated with many of the other types of more godlike spirit-deities and, as mentioned in the *Mahābhārata,* are at times worthy of worship.[67] These are qualities are quite unlike those possessed by ghosts in the Western sense. Similarly, Kubera, the king of the *yakṣas,* behaves in ways that seem consistent with a god. However, he is not a *deva* and, although he is referred to by many names, he is, to my knowledge, never referred to as such. In fact, he is at times shown to be a devotee of the higher gods and is frequently portrayed as a devotee of Śiva.[68] Likewise, when Kubera's son Pāñcālika takes Śiva's grief and madness upon himself, it is implied that *yakṣas* are better able to deal with intense emotion than gods are.[69] This act implies a fundamental difference between the natures of Śiva and Pāñcālika, who, like his father, shares the company of gods but is not numbered among them. Therefore, I have chosen the composite term "spirit-deity" in hopes of encom-

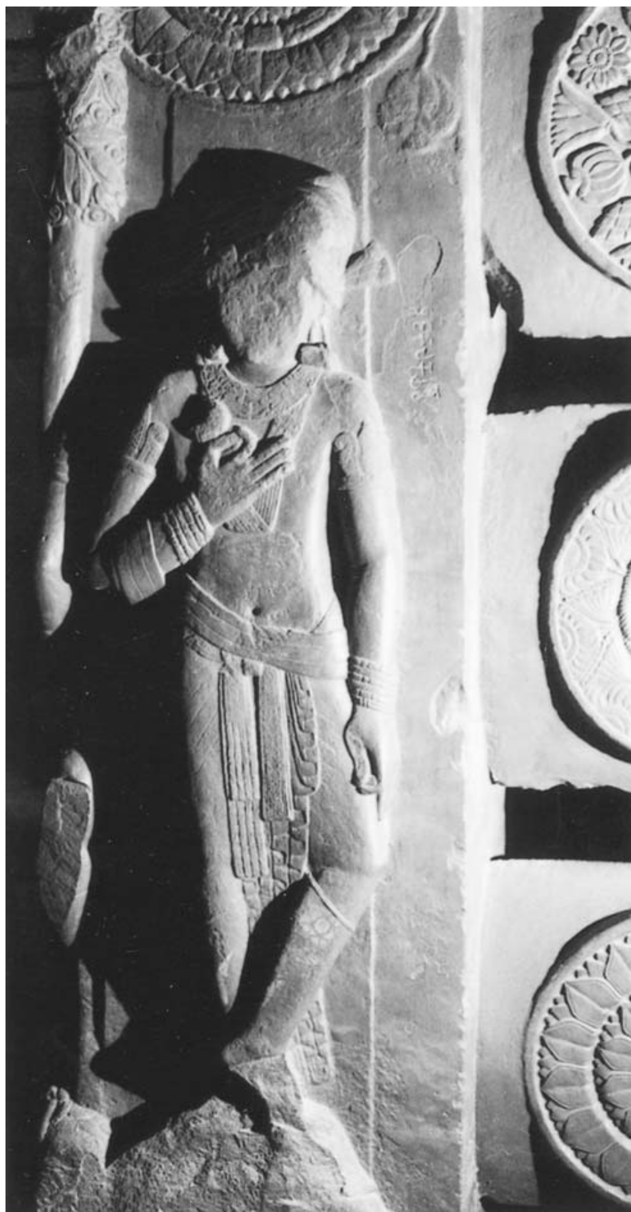

FIGURE 1.2. Ajakālako *Yakho* (Ajakālaka *Yakṣa*). Bhārhut. Ca. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

passing these beings in all of their aspects. I refer to the religious practices surrounding these beings as simply "spirit religion" because the English word "religion" already contains notions of divinity.

But what is the nature of Indian spirit religion, and what practices does it include? Fortunately, the textual and physical evidence provides us many details about the forms of worship directed toward spirit-deities.

Indian Spirit Religion and Practice

Although spirit-deities can inhabit all manner of natural features or man-made structures, the primary environs in which interaction between humans and supernatural beings occurred was at *caityas,* sanctified areas where offerings to the spirit-deities could be made. At their most basic, these *caityas* were decorated trees or stones, and at their most complex they were structural temples. Coomaraswamy has already done a masterful job of detailing the specifics of *caityas* and their primary function as the residences of spirit-deities, so there is no need to dwell at length on the issue here.[70] In short, although these ritual spaces could be elaborated with architecture, Coomaraswamy identifies the presence of a central stone-slab altar as one of the defining features of a *caitya.* He also includes the presence of *vedikā* rails and umbrellas (*chatta*) as being characteristic elements in the demarcation of these shrines.[71] The altars were often located next to a tree, rock, pool, or other natural feature that was believed to be the actual residence of the supernatural being. At times, images of the spirit-deities were placed within the *caitya* space and, presumably, superceded the natural features as a residence for the spirit-deity. Significantly, images of *yakṣas* and *yakṣīs* constitute the earliest examples of figural, freestanding sculpture in India and help to explain why the term *devatā* (roughly translated as "minor god") has the second meaning of "image" or "idol" (figures 1.3 and 1.4). Long before images became a central part of brahmanical ritual they had a central role in the honoring of spirit-deities.

There are two narratives of which I am aware that recount the creation of *caityas* dedicated to spirit-deities and describe in detail the components and motivations involved in their establishment. The first account comes from the *Dhammapadāṭṭhakathā:*

> At Sāvatthī, we are told, lived a householder named Great-Wealth, Mahā-Suvaṇṇa. He was rich, possessed of great wealth, possessed of ample means of enjoyment, but at the same time he was childless. One day as he was on his way home from bathing at a ghat he saw

FIGURE 1.3. *Yakṣa*. Besnagar. Ca. 100 BCE. Archaeological Museum, Vidiśā. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

by the roadside a large forest tree with spreading branches. Thought he, "This tree must be tenanted by a powerful tree-spirit." So he caused the ground under the tree to be cleared, the tree itself to be inclosed [*sic*] with a wall, and sand to be spread within the inclosure [*sic*]. And, having decked the tree with flags and banners, he made

FIGURE 1.4. *Yakṣī*. Besnagar. Ca. 100 BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

> the following vow, "Should I obtain a son or a daughter, I will pay you great honor." Having so done, he went on his way.[72]

The second account of the creation of a *caitya* can be found in the *Palāsa Jātaka*. In this tale the Bodhisattva is reborn as the spirit of a Judas-tree and rewards a poor brahman who is attentive in his devotion.

> Now at this time all the inhabitants of Benares were devoted to the worship of such deities [tree spirits], and constantly engaged in religious offerings and the like. And a certain poor brahmin thought, "I too will watch over some divinity." So he found a big Judas-tree growing on high ground, and by sprinkling gravel and sweeping all around it, he kept its root smooth and free from grass. Then he presented it with a scented wreath of five sprays and lighting a lamp made an offering of flowers and perfume and incense. And after a reverential salutation, he said, "Peace be with thee," and then went his way.[73]

In both of these tales the consecration of a *caitya* is revealed to be a rather simple affair, and from them we can get an idea of the basic components required for the creation of a sacred space. Only a small imaginative leap is needed to envision one of these personal shrines swelling in importance and architectural elaboration as it gains a reputation for ensuring and engendering good fortune.

These shrines were usually located in villages or were connected with urban centers. The names of several spirit deities and the settlements with which they were associated have been preserved in the textual records. For instance, Maṇibhadra is known to have had a *caitya* located just outside of the city of Mithilā, and Pūrṇabhadra had a shrine located in Campā.[74] The *Mahāmāyurī* provides us an invaluable resource in understanding the widespread nature of these practices. It lists almost a hundred *yakṣas* and the specific towns with which they are associated.[75] This impressive list supports the idea that every town in ancient India had its own *caitya* or *caityas* in which the spirit-deities of that area held sway.

It appears that at times supernatural beings residing inside specific *caityas* developed reputations for being particularly efficacious, usually in the fulfillment of a particular desire or the curing of a specific disease. Supplicants visited these renowned shrines from distant villages in hope of gaining supernatural assistance. The *Mahābhārata* tells of various *yakṣa tīrthas* that were visited in order to achieve specific aims. One at Kurukṣetra was dedicated to

the *yakṣa* Arantuka. Bathing at this site brought either merit equal to that achieved by performing the *Agniṣṭoma* sacrifice or the gift of obtaining gold.[76] A *yakṣinī* at Rājagṛha could remove the sin of abortion (*brūṇa-hatyā*), while at other *yakṣa tīrthas* one could gain a thousand cows, achieve the status of Gaṇapati, or be granted freedom from disease.[77]

In the *Mahābhārata*, *caityas* are described as at times possessing other supernatural powers associated with protection and defense. When the Pāṇḍavas were attempting to attack Magadha, they encountered some trouble because its capital city was protected by a *caitya* located on a high, wooded hill. The brothers destroyed the shrine prior to attacking the city. Nancy Falk points out that this destruction of the *caitya* prefigures the fall of the town, in that the king begins to receive evil omens of his impending doom immediately after the shrine is destroyed.[78] Not all spirit deities dwelt in locations that were pleasant and comforting, however. Many seem to have chosen homes that were quite foreboding and situated in dangerous locations such as the deep wilderness or cremation grounds. In one tale, an ascetic and a gambler worship the *yakṣa* Vidyutprabhā who dwells in the banyan tree in the corner of a cemetery. They make offerings of food to the *yakṣa* for three nights before their wishes are granted. And each night they have to brave the terrors of the cremation ground in order to do so.[79]

Regardless of their setting, these tales suggest that interaction with spirit-deities requires ritual action in order to be efficacious. No matter if the intentions of the devotee are directed toward health, wealth, or progeny—some sort of exchange is necessary in order to secure the blessing or to appease the anger of the spirit-deity. The *Mānava Gṛhyasūtra* mentions offerings of cooked and uncooked rice, meat, fish, flour cakes, fragrant substances, beverages, and various wreaths and garments as part of a ritual performed for *yakṣas*.[80] In another text, a *yakṣa* whose gaze causes illness is converted with the promise of offerings presented at every village in the region.[81] Tales like these inspired Coomaraswamy to see in the worship of spirit-deities the forerunner of modern *bhakti* practices.[82] Yet if this is indeed true, these ritual practices must have been modified over time, because descriptions of ancient rites frequently include offerings of meat and alcohol.

The *Singāla Jātaka* describes a festival performed in honor of spirit-deities in which meat and fish are strewn about the streets of a city and pots of alcohol are left out. Interestingly, the Bodhisattva, who in this tale is born as the spirit of a tree in a cemetery grove, is uninterested in the festival, while a wily jackal is quick to take advantage of the situation.[83] This is the only *Jātaka* to describe such a festival, but many other Jātakas mention offering meat and alcohol to spirit-deities and inevitably point out the immorality of doing so. In both the

Dummedha and the *Ayakūṭa* Jātakas, we have tales in which the Bodhisattva tries to discourage offerings of blood and alcohol to *yakṣas*. In the first, the Bodhisattva was born as a prince who is critical of certain aspects of tree-spirit worship, but rather than condemn *yakṣa* worship entirely the Bodhisattva-prince simply outlaws alcohol and blood sacrifices. He does this by threatening to make a blood offering out of anyone who dares to violate his decree.[84] In the second tale, the Bodhisattva is again born as a prince but, when he outlaws the sacrifice of living creatures, an irate spirit-deity (alternately referred to as a *yakkha* and a *rakkhasa*) threatens to destroy him. Due to his righteousness, however, the mighty god Sakka (Indra) descends from heaven to protect the Bodhisattva from the angry onslaught.[85] It is important to note that in both cases the future-Buddha does not forbid *yakṣa* worship or question its effectiveness; he simply objects to those aspects of practice that run contrary to the Buddhist teachings. This was done, I would argue, in order to remove those elements objectionable to the Buddhist *dharma* prior to gradually incorporating spirit-deities into the Buddhist fold.

Another aspect of spirit religion that may also have been considered inappropriate by the *saṃgha* but was certainly recognized as a dangerous possibility is the predilection for possession exhibited by many spirit-deities. This ability to possess humans is rarely acknowledged in the secondary literature, but numerous primary sources tell of spirit-deities who could take control of the bodies and minds of their victims. In many cases this possession is seen as the cause of severe illness, whereas in other examples it seems to be a desirable state akin to the ecstatic trance of a medium.

The earliest reference to spirit possession can be found in the *Ṛg Veda* and is attributed to the *yakṣas*. The suggestion is made here that "Yaksha should not possess the body of the worshipers," which suggests that even in this early period possession by *yakṣas* was a fearsome prospect.[86] Similar references to the dangers associated with spirit possession (often called *yakṣa-graha*) can be found in numerous later sources. In one tale, found in the *Sutta Nipāta Commentary*, a *yakṣa* named Āḷavaka possesses the minds of those who cannot answer his questions.[87] In a second tale, a disillusioned garland maker is angry at his tutelary *yakṣa*, named Moggarapaṇi, due to a misfortune that befell his wife. Before the garland maker can curse the *yakṣa*, the spirit-deity enters his body and sends him on a killing spree. He dispatches his wife's assailants, his wife, and numerous random townsfolk. This rampage continues until the spirit can be expelled through the power of a Jain mendicant.[88] Not surprisingly, an important Indian medical text, the *Cāraka Saṃhitā*, attributes most types of mental illness to possession by spirit-deities. Although some forms of mental disorder were linked to dietary problems or moral shortcomings, most were

attributed to the *grahas* (graspings) of various spirit-deities. Each type of spiritual being produces its own unique symptoms and has tendencies to bring out specific antisocial personality traits in the victims.[89]

In other cases, however, possession by spirits seems to have been considered a blessing. According to one tale, a female spirit-deity who had been a man's mother in a past life possesses her former child in order to set him on a proper moral path.[90] The child is a Buddhist novice who is uncertain if he wants to remain a monk and in a moment of weakness renounces his monastic vows and returns to his family home. Once he arrives, the spirit possesses him, he literally twists and foams, and after his ordeal he decides to return to the *saṃgha* because, as his mother reminds him, "They that lead the Holy Life, With such, ogres do not sport."[91] So although this possession seems to have been beneficial in the long run, the experience itself was apparently far less than pleasurable.

In other examples, the ecstatic state brought on by possession seems to have been considered desirable. In the Puranic story recounted earlier in which the *yakṣa* Pāñcālika takes Śiva's emotional trauma upon himself, Śiva rewards him with the following blessing:

> Whoever will see you at any time in the month of Caitra, touch you or worship you with devotion, be he an old man, a child, a young man, or a woman, shall go mad. O Yakṣa, they shall sing, dance, sport and play on their instruments with zeal. Even as they speak mirthfully in front of Pāñcālika, they will have magic powers.[92]

This description implies a pleasant ecstatic state undertaken by the worshipers of Pāncālika on a yearly basis in order to gain magical gifts promised by Śiva. They achieved this state by seeing or touching the *yakṣa*, which may refer to the presence of an image as a focus for devotion. Likewise, the specific mention of zealously performed music and dance suggests a frenzied ritual event whereby people entered states of ecstasy or trance in honor of the *yakṣa*.

For good or ill, possession seems to have been a large part of spirit religion. This should not be too surprising, because many forms of spirit religion practiced throughout the world (including parts of modern India and Sri Lanka) involve such ecstatic practices, as do some forms of contemporary Hindu practice.[93] This realization may shed some light on the *yakṣa* king Kubera's title as the "rider of men" and his association with a human as a *vāhana* (vehicle).[94] In any case, it seems clear that the ability of spirit-deities to inhabit trees, rocks, and pools at times extended to humans as well.

From these descriptions we can begin to understand something of the nature and practices of spirit religions as they existed in ancient India. Our

understanding can be furthered through a study of various images that depict scenes of spirit-deity worship. For instance, at Bhārhut there are numerous scenes that depict people and animals worshiping at stone altars set up beneath trees decorated with garlands (figure 1.5). In these images we cannot be sure if the devotees are in fact worshiping spirit-deities or if they are honoring the Buddha in an aniconic form or simply paying respect to the Bodhi tree itself.[95] Even this confusion is revealing because it implies a similarity in the forms of worship employed in both honoring the Buddha and propitiating spirit-deities. There is, however, one remarkable example found on the coping of the *vedikā* rail at Bhārhut that beyond any doubt represents a scene of people interacting with a tree-spirit (figure 1.6). In this image, a man is exchanging a bowl of food with the tree as the tree pours water over the man's hands, thereby acknowledging the gift. The inhabiting spirit of the tree, whose arms actually emerge from the tree, is receiving or providing sustenance from/to the human supplicant in his demesne. An almost identical scene can be found on one of the *vedikā* rails at the Mahābodhi temple at Bodh Gayā. In this scene, arms emerging from a tree are again taking or making offerings. In this relief a few more details of the *caitya* can be identified, including a wicker stool and an altar set up below the tree.

A related scene in which a spirit deity interacts with humans at a *caitya* can be seen among the sculpture at the site of Chandavaram (second century CE). In this scene, the *yakṣa* Śākyavardhana emerges from the base of a fenced-

FIGURE 1.5. Scene of Tree Worship (The Bodhi Tree of Vipaśchit). Bhārhut. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

FIGURE 1.6. Tree Spirit and a Devotee. Bhārhut. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

off tree in order to make obeisance to the infant Śākyamuni (figure 1.7). In this tale, the *yakṣa* humbles himself in front of the child in recognition of his importance as the future-Buddha.[96] This scene provides us a welcome example of a visual depiction of a *caitya* that is also described in a textual source. This correlation between text and image presents a rare moment of certainty in our interpretation of the visual material against which we can compare other depictions of spirit-deity worship.

A. Ghosh and H. Sarkar, during one of their clearance operations at Amarāvatī, uncovered a decorated stele that also bears a scene of worship at a *caitya*.[97] This inscribed scene on the stele depicts several people worshiping at two trees whose bases have been enclosed with railed fences. The inscription informs us that this is a representation of the "Bahuputra-chaitya (and) the *chaityas* of Vaiśalī," a location at which the Buddha frequently resided during his visits to the town.[98] Buddhaghoṣa mentions that this *caitya* contained a many-branched tree to which people prayed in order to bear sons.[99] Significantly, one of the three devotees depicted in the scene is a woman who is holding out her child to the tree as if offering thanks or supplication to the spirit-deity residing in the tree.

A somewhat more complex depiction of spirit-deity worship can be found on a tiny first-century BCE spherical object currently in the collection of the

FIGURE 1.7. Śākyavardhana Scene. Chandavaram. Ca. 2nd c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Hyderabad. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. This work has a frieze of engraved figures separated into two parts by trees. In one scene a man and a woman make gestures of worship toward a rocky outcropping that bears the profile of a human face (presumably the resident spirit-deity). In the other scene a second couple is conversing near a goose and a lone woman, who is excitedly dancing to the music provided by a nearby vina player.[100] This representation of a tree-filled grotto containing a sacred rock in which an abiding spirit dwells, honored by obeisance and wild dance, adheres closely to the previously mentioned textual accounts. Although the actual function of this object is uncertain, there can be little doubt as to the subject of its imagery.

In all of these cases the uniformity between the textual accounts and the physical evidence is reassuring. Specifically, the textual sources can confirm our reading of the physical evidence, just as the artwork reveals that the narrative accounts can be understood part of a larger historical process. This correlation helps to reinforce the validity of both types of evidence and to confirm the accuracy of the descriptions given above. This informative physical evidence, which reveals so much about the nature of early spirit religion, is overwhelmingly found on early Buddhist monuments. This somewhat surprising pairing of Buddhism and spirit religions begs the question: what precisely is the relationship between these two forms of religious expression? The next chapter explores this issue.

2

Making Believers

When one is strict in practice and sincere in conduct in accordance with the Vinaya teaching, one is followed and honoured by dragons (*nāga*), spirits, devas, and men.

—Yijing (I-tsing), Chinese monk and traveler in India (671–695 CE)

Historical Context

The *saṃgha* faced a dilemma at the close of the Mauryan Dynasty, brought on by the disruption of the previously close relationship that had existed between the Buddhist monastic community and royal patronage. Although there is some debate over the actual dates for the Mauryan Dynasty, there is little doubt that the kings of this dynasty had been remarkably supportive of the *saṃgha*. In particular, Aśoka Maurya is heralded as the epitome of a good Buddhist king, and his donations have become literally legendary. For instance, he is said to have magically created eighty-four thousand *dharmarājikas* (*stūpas*) during the time of a single eclipse, and while on pilgrimage to these sacred structures was able to meet with spirits who had personally witnessed the miracles of the Buddha.[1]

In another tale, one of Aśoka's queens unwittingly poisons the Bodhi tree as a result of Aśoka's generous donations to it. This violent act occurs after the queen grows jealous that the king is send-

ing all of his jewels to someone named "Bodhi" and, when she orders a sorceress to kill this rival with a spell, it is the Bodhi tree that suffers. Aśoka is so dedicated to Buddhism, however, that when the health of the tree declines, so does his own. Fortunately, the truth is discovered in time and things are set straight before any permanent damage is done.[2]

This picture of an intimate relationship between Aśoka and Buddhism is strengthened by passages in the *Mahāvaṃsa* and the *Divyāvadana*, which mention that Aśoka's own brother (Tissa or Vītaśoka, respectively) became a monk as a result of a conversion cleverly orchestrated by the king himself.[3] In the *Divyāvadana* version of this tale, Aśoka teaches his brother that life is fleeting and full of sorrow by making him king for seven days with the warning that at the end of those days he will be killed. Aśoka was bluffing, but during this time his brother was unable to focus on the pleasures of life and in this manner developed an understanding of Buddhist asceticism.

Although the extreme claims made in these stories cannot be taken at face value, there is undoubtedly some historical accuracy embedded within the narratives. Based on the Aśokan Edicts, it seems that Aśoka patronized many religious and philosophical traditions and was never exclusively Buddhist; yet these same inscriptions also suggest that he had more than a passing interest in supporting Buddhism. The Aśokan Edicts are a series of inscriptions that were written by royal decree and can be found on pillars and rocks throughout the vast area that was Aśoka's kingdom. As such, these inscriptions provide the best extant evidence of Aśoka's actual intentions and the fact that he addresses many such edicts to "Brāhmaṇas, Śramaṇas, and other Pāṣaṇḍas" suggests that he had dealings with a wide variety of religious organizations.[4]

In several inscriptions Aśoka explicitly refers to the Buddha, and in one inscription the king may even refer to himself as an *upāsaka*, a special type of Buddhist lay disciple.[5] Although this last point has been debated, it is quite clear that in the Sarnath inscription the king becomes directly involved in a dispute that had taken place within the *saṃgha*. He states that the "Saṃgha cannot be torn asunder" and decrees that any monks or nuns who work to divide the community will be forced to renounce their vows.[6] Likewise, on the Rummindei inscription Aśoka states that he made a pilgrimage to the place of the Buddha's birth (Lumbinī), and to commemorate the event reduced the amount of taxes that the nearby village owed to the state.[7] When all of this inscriptional evidence is taken along with the favorable portrayals of King Aśoka in the later Buddhist literature, his support of the Buddhist community cannot be questioned.

According to the textual accounts, however, this generous royal patronage did not begin with the Mauryans. The names of previous Magadhan kings

have been recorded as being great supporters of the Buddha and his followers. Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru are among the most renowned of these earliest royal patrons of Buddhism, and each is associated with great acts of generosity toward the *saṃgha*. Even if the tales of these kings are more legend than history, the writers of the texts clearly felt that it was plausible to make claims of royal support. Presumably the readers and hearers of these tales would have found these claims of royal patronage unreasonable if the texts did not contain some measure of historical fact. On the basis of certainty of Mauryan support and the likelihood of royal patronage undertaken by prior kings, it seems prudent to ask why, apart from issues of personal fulfillment, would political elites opt to throw support behind this relatively new religious movement?

Himanshu Ray points out that early monasteries were often situated on the outskirts of imperially held areas in western India and frequently served as bastions of acculturation by introducing people to the laws, language, and customs of the court. Although Ray is specifically discussing the political circumstances under the Sātavāhana kings, this same function may have made Buddhism attractive to earlier kings, as well.[8]

That this was the case is borne out by the archaeological record. Mauryan remains have been found in conjunction with megalithic settlements, and there is a preponderance of evidence that monasteries were frequently built over or near megalithic burial sites.[9] Megalithic sites are associated with village-based political units that existed outside of the "Sanskritized" imperial control. The presence of the Buddhist material directly above the megalithic layer suggests that the Buddhist monasteries formed the initial contact between these people and larger political or cultural institutions. Furthermore, royal support for Buddhist centers may have served to divert power from the brahmans.

Although the brahmans were also heavily involved in the acculturation of remote people, unlike the Buddhists they posed a political threat. This potential political rivalry from the brahmans was actualized in the emergence of the Śunga Dynasty (185–173 BCE), who were low-ranking brahmans by caste.[10] Although the date of this political shift is subject to debate the sequence of events is established. And, given the probable caste affiliations of the Śunga kings, it is not surprising that Puśyamitra, the first of the Śunga rulers, focused his religious patronage almost exclusively on Vedic sacrifices. The Buddhist texts attribute harsh and fanatical persecutions to Puśyamitra, whom they claim sought to destroy Buddhism. It is possible, however, that he simply ignored the *saṃgha* and that contemporary monks saw this withdrawal of long-standing royal support as the death knell of the order. Clearly, this fate did not befall the *saṃgha*. But it does raise the question of how the Buddhist community man-

aged to survive the loss of royal patronage that coincided with the fall of the Mauryan power.

The partial answer to this query can be found in the architectural and inscriptional evidence from this period. The proliferation of major Buddhist monuments that have been dated to this time seems to contradict the horrific accounts of Buddhist persecution. It is also true, however, that there is little or no evidence of royal patronage for any of the Śunga-period Buddhist monuments. Instead we find that the inscriptions at sites like Bhārhut, Bhājā, and Sāñcī point overwhelmingly toward donations from the non-elite public or members of the *saṃgha* itself.[11]

This growing support being offered by the general public seems to have been at odds with the court, as is suggested by a story told in the *Mahāvastu*, a text that was compiled over the course of several centuries stretching from the second century BCE to the third century CE.[12] This tale tells of a princess who angers powerful brahmans by honoring the Buddha Kāśyapa. In order to prevent an uprising, the king gives the woman to the brahmans to be killed. The townsfolk, soldiers, and ministers, who are all Buddhist, decide to protect the princess, however, and their large numbers scare the brahmans away.[13] The historicity of this narrative is not overly important; what is significant is that this opposition between the brahmanical elite and Buddhist public was perceived and understood as a trope by later Buddhist writers.

How did this dramatic shift occur? How did the *saṃgha* reinvent itself in a way that broke its almost exclusive reliance on direct royal patronage? And what services did the *saṃgha* provide to the public in exchange for this worldly support? The answers to these questions can be partially understood by considering the Buddhist community's role as a group of *śramaṇas* or renouncers.

By being ascetics, the *saṃgha* were participating in a socially recognized form of religious expression. Their role as *śramaṇas* placed the monks outside ordinary secular interaction and granted them some measure of spiritual authority and respect.[14] The ascetic in Indian society and theology has a long history that dates back to at least the time of the Upaniṣads and perhaps extends even further back.[15] No matter when this tradition began, by the second century BCE *tapasvins* (ascetics) and *śramaṇas* were a familiar and respected part of the Indian religious landscape.

The problem, then, lay in maintaining this spiritual authority based on separation and renunciation while simultaneously attracting popular interest and worldly support. It was not enough to be a renouncer. If one wanted secular support one also had to be relevant to the public. Padmanabh Jaini, in commenting on the difficulty that *śramaṇa* religions faced in making themselves pertinent, accessible, and useful to the laity writes:

> Jainism, like Theravada Buddhism, is a *Śramaṇa* religion, and its primary teachings concern the path to *nirvana* that is to be followed by those who are able to renounce the world. However, it also claims to teach a lesser but nevertheless honorable path of "merit-making" for those who choose to remain in the household life. While the paths are not truly complimentary, they must still accommodate each other, if only because the mendicants are dependent on the beneficence of the lay community for their support.[16]

Although Jaini is primarily interested in the Jain aspects of this dilemma, he has succinctly framed one of the major problems facing the early Buddhist community: How do those concentrating on a personal quest for enlightenment establish the religious authority and pertinence necessary to merit public support? Unlike the brahmans, Buddhist monks did not originally participate in life rituals such as marriages or funerals, nor did they have the long-standing religious authority that the brahmans enjoyed through the structure of the caste system.[17] Furthermore, in order to be recognized as a font for the production of merit, they needed to have some outward expression of religious attainment. With this dilemma in mind, we should turn to the texts. By finding examples in which members of the public seek out the *saṃgha* we can perhaps discern what literate monks understood the public's motivations for such interactions to be.

Before we undertake this analysis, certain points must be addressed regarding the types of literary sources that will be referenced. The diverse range and nature of the textual evidence cited in the previous chapter reveal one of the challenges facing any attempt to grapple with Indian spirit religions. This type of an inquiry is rarely a straightforward process, largely due to the fact that there are no canonical primary sources that directly express the ideas and opinions of those who exclusively practiced popular forms of religious expression. Although references to such beliefs are ubiquitous in the literature of other traditions (Buddhist, Jain, Hindu) these references are rarely explicated and are invariably filtered through their own religious perspectives. In short, an explanation or championing of popular religious practices is never at the core of the authors' interests. In the case of the Buddhist literature, the *yakṣas, nāgas*, and other beings more often than not serve as little more than narrative hooks that provide an opportunity for an explication of doctrine. Therefore, in order to learn small amounts of information about popular religious practices, large amounts of literary material must be combed.

For this reason this study will cast a wide net in an effort not to exclude any evidence that may potentially provide a more complete view of these prac-

tices and their relationship to Buddhism. Speaking in the most general terms, the literary evidence utilized in this work can be separated into four major genres, each of which presents certain challenges and benefits to the researcher. The first category is that of legal and political texts, the second comprises the accounts of foreign travelers, the third is inscriptional evidence, and the fourth can be broadly and loosely termed narrative literature.

Although works such as the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, *Arthaśāstra*, and *Manusmṛti* represent vastly divergent religious and political perspectives, each of these works sets out rules for behavior and practice. Because this function underlies the creation of these texts, we can regard the subjects that they address as a reflection of the issues and concerns that seemed most pressing to their respective authors. By setting out laws, rules, or advice dictating how to behave, these texts provide an important glimpse of the way their authors viewed the world. And despite their significant doctrinal differences, much of this type of literature addresses the problematic issue of how to comport oneself in regard to spirit-deities.

The second textual category is also the most limited. Foreign historical accounts of India's early periods are rare, but those that do exist provide noteworthy insights into subjects that most indigenous authors take for granted. Some of the earliest foreign accounts are Greek, but these sources are relatively silent on the topic of spirit religions. By contrast, the accounts of Chinese Buddhist pilgrims are replete with tales of both Buddhist practice and spirit-deities. However, one must be cautious when utilizing these sources. In particular, one must constantly be aware that these are not the observations of cultural insiders and, as such, may represent significantly biased or mistaken conclusions. Despite these shortcomings, this type of literature has the distinct benefit being written with an almost journalistic quality that often preserves details of life and practice that are absent in other forms of literature. This is particularly true in the case of Buddhist ritual. The Chinese pilgrims were often motivated by a desire to preserve an accurate account of how South Asian Buddhists behaved so that monks and nuns in their home country could undertake similar practices. For this reason, their descriptions of ritual actions and, to a lesser degree, the meanings behind them are often quite trustworthy.

The third category in this textual typology covers all of the material that can be garnered from inscriptional evidence. This material has several benefits, not the least of which is that we can be assured that it has not been altered over successive recensions. Also because this material is often found in conjunction with architectural or archaeological remains, it can be dated with a much higher degree of accuracy than most other types of textual evidence. The major drawback associated with most forms of writing left on permanent ma-

terials is that they tend to be brief, focused, or even formulaic. When the subjects mentioned in the inscriptions are relevant to the topic, however, they can serve as a fine source of historical documentation.

The final category of text is admittedly rather broad and covers the majority of all references to spirit religions. Most of the information that details aspects of popular practice is embedded within narrative accounts, and it is from these literary tales that most of what is known about spirit religions has been derived. Large amounts of information about popular practices are preserved within the Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain literary traditions. When reading these tales, however, one needs to be aware that these texts were often written by authors whose own systems of belief stood in competition with spirit religions or who were, at least, arguing for the supremacy of their own point of view. Furthermore, in every case one must be extremely cautious about using narratives to track religious, political, and social development. At best these stories provide evidence of major trends or practices and offer insights into the ways in which communities wanted themselves to be seen.

The challenges in utilizing these literary sources as historical evidence are compounded by the notorious difficulties facing any attempt to authoritatively date most of the early Indian Buddhist texts. For this study I have endeavored to select sources that either have an edition that is convincingly linked to the early centuries of Buddhist development (third century BCE to early fifth century CE) or is known through recensions that are believably derived from earlier South Asian prototypes. I will also make occasional reference to tales from Tamil or Sri Lankan sources, such as the *Maṇimekhalai* or *Mahāvaṃsa*, but only when such evidence seems particularly pertinent to the discussion or provides a noteworthy insight.

Given the large span of time during which these texts were written, my preference would be to track changes in the *saṃgha's* relationship to spirit-deities over time. However, due to the aggregate nature of many of the textual sources, which were added to over the centuries, any attempt to trace development will have to remain schematic at best. Materials that are later in date will occasionally be referenced. But when texts like the accounts of Yijing or even the *Petavatthu* are referred to, I will distinguish them as representing a somewhat later body of evidence. This later material is central to understanding the persistent nature of the practices and beliefs documented in the earlier accounts and can be helpful in appreciating the long-term impact spirit religions had on the development of Buddhism. The aim, then, is to provide a comprehensive overview of the *saṃgha's* early relationship with spirit religions and to develop a more complete understanding of a process of interaction that existed between these two systems of belief over the course of centuries.

Tales of Conversion

In attempting to divine the reasons behind the emerging public interest in Buddhism as revealed by donative inscriptions dating to the start of the Śunga era, it is helpful to explore the literary sources in order to identify situations in which the public turned to the *saṃgha* for help. By finding examples of contact, perhaps we can uncover some of the reasons behind the public's interest in Buddhism and provide insights into the mechanisms by which the *saṃgha* made itself relevant to the community.

In the literature, kings and sages often seek out the Buddha and his followers in order to engage them in philosophic debate or to seek answers to introspective quandaries. Elite teachers of rival sects are frequently described as accosting the *saṃgha* in order to test their worthiness or to engage them in supernatural contests. The non-elite people in the literature, however, more often than not approach the *saṃgha* for two basic reasons: either they are seeking merit through donations or they need help in dealing with a supernatural problem. As we will see, these two motivations for interaction are often closely linked.

In the story of Avaruddhaka *yakṣa*, the Buddha and a group of monks recite *parittas*, protective words, for seven days in order to guard an infant boy from the *yakṣa* that wishes to consume him. In this tale, the monks perform this dangerous service at the request of the parents who seek out the *saṃgha* in a state of desperation.[18] Similarly, in the story of the *nāga* Apalāla, the Buddha and his monks are beseeched by the residents of a village to deal with the powerful *nāga* who has been poisoning their water upstream. The Buddha confronts and defeats the *nāga* on their behalf and soon restores pure water to the village.[19] The encounter between the *yakṣī* Hāritī and the Buddha has already been briefly mentioned, but it serves as another excellent example of a case where the Buddha steps in to remove a supernatural threat that menaces society. This confrontation takes place at the request of the people of Magadha, whose children were being killed by the ferocious goddess, and it is resolved when the Buddha quells the anger that drives the goddess's actions. In this manner he restores order to the city.[20]

In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, a fascinating account of the conversion of Gardabha, a *yakṣa* dwelling in Mathurā, is recorded.[21] In this story the Buddha assembles the monks who reside near Mathurā so that they might receive alms from the community. After they have eaten, a brahman from the community approaches the Buddha and requests help:

"Reverend, all sorts of malignant *nāgas* and malignant *yakṣas* have been subdued by the Blessed One. Now, this Yakṣa Gardabha has been for a long time hostile toward us who are not hostile, an enemy to us who have no enemy, hurtful to those who have done no hurt. Whatever children are born he snatches away. Ah! Might the Blessed One subdue the Yakṣa Gardabha out of compassion!"

At that time the Yakṣa Gardabha had come and was seated in that assembly. The Blessed One addressed him: "Did you hear that, Gardabha?"

"I heard Blessed One."

"Did you hear, Gardabha?"

"I heard, Sugata."

"You must cease from this evil which is contrary to the Dharma!"

"Blessed One, I will cease on one condition—if they have a *vihāra* for the Community of Monks from the Four Directions constructed in my name."

The Blessed One then addressed the devout brahmins and householders of Mathurā: "Did you hear, brahmins and householders?"

"We heard Blessed One. We will have it constructed."

Then the Blessed One subdued Gardabha the Yakṣa and his retinue of five hundred. The devout brahmins and householders had five hundred *vihāras* constructed in their names. In the same way the Yakṣa Śara, the Yakṣa Vana and the Yakṣiṇīs Ālikāvendā and Maghā were subdued. When the Blessed One entered Mathurā through supernatural power he subdued Timisikā Yakṣiṇī with her retinue of five hundred, and in their name too five hundred *vihāras* were constructed. Both inside and outside Mathurā the Blessed One subdued two thousand five hundred *yakṣas,* and in their name devout brahmins and householders constructed two thousand five hundred *vihāras.*[22]

In this tale the Buddha tames the dangerous spirit-deity with a simple reprimand and gains new adherents, both human and supernatural, in the process. It is significant that the *yakṣa* requests that a monastery be built in his name, as it is implied that the continued support of the *vihāra* pleases that potentially deadly being. The presence of the monastic dwellings aids the public by curtailing the bloodthirsty actions of the spirit-deities while at the

same time earning the *saṃgha* continued support from the nearby communities.

It is worth mentioning that this tale of the conversion of Gardabha is a verbatim repetition of a tale in the same Vinaya, which tells of the conversion of the *yakṣiṇī* Kuntī in the town of Kuntīnagara.[23] The fact that these two tales have been presented in the same format, as a kind of stock passage or literary trope, would suggest the routine nature of the stories' contents and would further imply an expected familiarity on the reader's part with this kind of legendary literature. Likewise, the repetition of this narrative form also reveals the significance placed on these tales of supernatural conversion and on the Buddha's role as an expert in mediating this type of dispute.

It was not just the Buddha who had this power to tame and subdue spirit deities; his monks are often portrayed as performing similar feats. For instance, in one story a seven-year-old novice named Culla Sumana needs restorative water from a specific pond in order to cure his ailing master. When the *nāga* of the pond refuses to give up the water and threatens the boy three times before the gods, Culla Sumana defeats the creature and takes the water by means of his magical charms.[24]

In a different tale, the Buddha approaches the Mango Ferry, and one of his monks, Sāgata, runs ahead to prepare the way. When the monk arrives at the water he encounters a *nāga* who intends to block the Buddha's path but, rather than bother Śākyamuni with such a problem, Sāgata defeats the *nāga* himself.[25] Similarly, the *Divyāvadana* contains a story that is perhaps the greatest act of conversion performed by a monk. This is the conversion of the Buddha's archrival, Māra, at the hands of the accomplished monk Upagupta. Although the Buddha was only able to subdue Māra, Upagupta, living many years after the Buddha's death was given the honor of converting him into a protector of the Law.[26]

This type of conversion tale is mentioned in the historical records of the Chinese pilgrim Faxian (399–414 CE), who wrote of a converted "white-eared *nāga*" who always ate with the monks of a certain monastery, and in return for the meals and offerings ensured clement weather in the region.[27] This passage highlights the mutually beneficial relationship that existed between the monks and the *nāga* and helps us to realize that these tales of conversion were undoubtedly understood as being more than just good stories.

Converting spirit-deities was not only a male prerogative. Nuns too are featured in the literature, engaged in the subduing of troublesome creatures. Although there are fewer tales of nuns who perform supernatural feats, this may simply be symptomatic of the paucity of stories in the Buddhist literature that feature female protagonists. In the *Mahāvaṃsa*, we are told of a group of

nuns who are transporting a clipping from the Bodhi tree to Sri Lanka. Along the way the sea is stirred up as a horde of *nāgas* seeks to steal the tree for themselves. Before they can snatch the tree with their supernatural powers, an accomplished nun sends them fleeing by transforming herself into a *supaṇṇa* (*garuda*), a creature that is the natural predator of *nāgas*.[28]

In the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, there is further evidence for the role of nuns in confronting spirit-deities. Even though nuns were forbidden to learn about worldly subjects, the monastic laws expressly permit nuns to learn both writing and protective spells (*parittas*), which are used in resisting all manners of hostile, supernatural forces.[29] That this area of study was expressly open to nuns along with writing is intriguing: the legal code places literacy and the ability to learn protective spells on equal terms as skills that are permissible to all members of the monastic community regardless of gender.

A similar treatment of nuns as authorities over spirit-deities and the dead can be seen in the Tamil narrative *Maṇimekhalai*. This text dates to either the second or the sixth century CE, and even though it was quite possibly written somewhat later than the previously recounted examples it describes several detailed encounters between spirit-deities and a young nun.[30] On one occasion the heroine Maṇimekhalai, a courtesan turned Buddhist nun, is confronted by a ravenous *vidyādhara* (a type of supernatural being) named Kayashandikai, who has been cursed by an ascetic with insatiable hunger and a loss of its ability to fly.[31] It only takes a handful of rice from Maṇimekhalai's magic begging bowl to break the curse and free the spirit from her painful appetites. In return for this act of kindness, the *vidyādhara* becomes the young nun's loyal companion and a devotee of Buddhism. Furthermore, while in Puhar the same young nun resides in a cemetery where "only the friends of the dead dare to tread," and despite "the hordes of hideous famished demons who feed on human flesh" she travels safely, protected by her vows.[32] The demons are literally unable to approach her due to her virtue. We are once again presented with a textual example of the authority that members of the *saṃgha* exhibit over their passions while dealing with the supernatural. In this case, not only is the teenage nun immune to the powers of the cemetery dwellers but she is also able to placate the fevered hungers of a supernatural being, thereby rendering it calm and helpful.

Gail Hinich Sutherland writes that the karmic magic of the gods and demons is like "so many fireworks that have not the power to move the meditating human monk one iota."[33] She has identified a primary tool used by the *saṃgha* in confronting spirit-deities, namely, their ability not to be swayed by fear or desire, emotions that lie at the core of these karmic beings' powers. I would only qualify Sutherland's remark by adding the term "pure" or "accomplished"

to describe the monk who can withstand such powers because, as we will see, not every member of the *saṃgha* had the capabilities to stand up to supernatural creatures. Nevertheless, the Buddhist community must have been very successful in their endeavor to tame and convert spirit-deities, since later Hindu writers were prompted to immortalize this process by making the Buddha an avatar of Viṣṇu. Significantly, within this avatar status is couched a backhanded insult. The Buddha avatar is said to have defeated all the demons by converting them to false systems of belief, thus rendering them powerless to achieve strength through Hindu karmic systems.[34]

This intense process of conversion was a great benefit to the *saṃgha* in that they were able to generate social relevance through these actions and thereby gain both followers and donations. Recounting some additional stories may further help to clarify this process. In particular, one story from the *Mahāvaṃsa* is worth quoting in its entirety:

> At that time, in Kashmir and Gandhāra, the nāga king of great miraculous power, Aravāḷa, was causing the rain called "hail" to pour down upon ripe crops and, being cruel, was having everything washed into the sea. The thera [monk] Majjhantika went there quickly by air and performed such acts as walking on the surface of the water of the Aravāḷa-lake. The nāgas saw this and, being enraged, informed the king about it. The nāga-king, too, being enraged, did various terrifying acts: great winds blew; a cloud rained and thundered; here and there, thunder-bolts crashed and lightning flashed; trees and peaks of mountains were hurled down. Nāgas in grisly form caused terror in all directions and he himself spat smoke and fire and uttered abuses in many ways. The thera, through miraculous power, subdued all that terror. Demonstrating his supreme power, he told the nāga-king, "Even if the whole world including devas would come and terrify me, there is none here who would succeed in causing fear and trepidation. Great nāga, even if you were to raise and hurl on me the whole world together with the oceans and mountains, you would not be able to generate fear and trepidation in me. On the other hand, O nāga-king, that would be your own destruction." To him who became humbled hearing these words, the thera preached the Dhamma. Then the nāga-king was established in refuges and precepts. Likewise, eighty-four thousand nāgas and many gandhabbas, yakkhas and Kumbhandakas of the Himālayas. The yakkha named Paṇḍaka, too along with yakkhiṇī Harīta and five hundred sons attained the First Fruit. Being admonished as follows,

> they acted accordingly: "Henceforth do not allow your anger to arise as before. Do not destroy crops, as living beings are desirous of happiness. Develop loving kindness towards beings, thinking 'May human beings live in happiness.' " Then the nāga-king made the thera sit on a gem set throne and stood nearby fanning him. Then the people, residing in Kashmir and Gandhāra, who came to offer homage to the nāga-king, acknowledged the thera as possessing miraculous power, worshipped the thera himself and sat on a side. He expounded to them the Dhamma, Āsivisūpama (Simile of the Serpent). The conversion of eighty thousand persons took place and a hundred thousand persons obtained ordination from the thera. Henceforth—even now Kashmir and Gandhāra have shown with yellow robes and been devoted to the three treasures.[35]

This remarkable story provides an ideal example of the complete process, starting with the conversion of a troublesome spirit-deity and ending with the conversion of an entire region to the Buddhist fold. Admittedly, the story is fanciful by modern standards, with its accounts of flying monks and fire-breathing *nāgas,* but the process is one that we see repeated in the literature time and again and is almost certainly indicative of a methodology for conversion employed by the *saṃgha*. The process begins with unflappable monks or nuns confronting troublesome or dangerous spirit-deities, and it ends with the populace recognizing the power of the Buddhist teachings over that of their previous local gods. This process not only provided evidence of the worldly and emotional detachment of the Buddhist community but it also provided what was perceived as an important social service to the community by creating a mechanism through which potentially troublesome spirit-deities could be kept in check. In the stories, the *saṃgha* repeatedly positions itself as an unassailable, impassive buffer between the people and these capricious beings of desire and whim. Donations to the *saṃgha* preserved the institution, which through its teachings and example contained the passions of the spirit-deities and rendered the community a more secure place.

Just as in the story quoted above, in which the *thera* walks on the *nāga*-king's lake, this process of conversion usually begins with the *saṃgha* refusing to acknowledge the authority of the spirit-deity and trespassing upon its domain. Significantly, evidence for this process of encroachment can be found in the archaeological record of many early Buddhist sites. Several early Buddhist monasteries were built over previous, megalithic burial sites. Although I will explore this archaeological evidence in greater detail in the next chapter, it is important to mention now that the methodology employed for the con-

version of spirit-deities in the literature finds some grounding in the physical evidence, as well; the early Buddhist community seems to have, with great regularity, positioned their religious centers directly over sites associated with funerary practices. In India, as in most of the world, such sites were seen as being exceedingly dangerous due to the presence of malicious ghosts and spirit-deities. Such an imposition upon the haunts of spirit-deities would undoubtedly have been understood by the laity as a risky undertaking or, at least, a bold assertion.

Numerous literary references also mention the monastic proximity to haunted areas, cemeteries or otherwise. The Chinese pilgrim Faxian mentions in his description of the Karaṇḍa bamboo garden near Rājagṛiha that "North of the *vihāra* two or three *le* [less than one mile] was the *Śmaśānam,* which name means in Chinese, 'the field of graves into which the dead are thrown.' "[36] Faxian also mentions the "Great Heap" monastery, which is named after a wicked demon who used to dwell at this location. After the demon's conversion the site was turned into a *vihāra* and the formerly dangerous inhabitant was, in Faxian's time (399–414 CE), famous for magically keeping the paths of the monastery swept.[37] He also mentions a monastery east of Kauśāmbi near the spot where the Buddha converted an "evil demon" and practiced meditation.[38] Even the *Mahāvaṃsa* tells us that a Buddhist *stūpa* was built east of Anurādhapura (in Sri Lanka) over the "site of the *yakkha* Kālavela."[39] A. K. Guruge notes that this site was a *yakkha* temple originally built by King Paṇḍukābhaya in honor of his faithful servant who had been reborn as a *yakkha*.[40] It is significant to note that not even this royal *yakkha* temple was exempt from eventual conversion into a Buddhist monument.

It seems that the *saṃgha* was not alone in having the power to confront spirit-deities and succeed. The Upaniṣads warn against charlatans who "for money say 'we can pacify all the spirits, such as the *yakṣas, rākṣasas, bhūtas, gaṇas, piśācas* and snakes.' "[41] This implies the presence of lay experts who dealt with troublesome spirits for money, perhaps some type of traveling shaman or medium. These lay spiritualists are mentioned in the Buddhist literature, as well. For example, in the *Padakusalamāṇava Jātaka,* one such "devil-doctor" is shown to be incompetent as he mistakes an old woman in a cave for a *yakṣī*.[42] Clearly, such spiritualists were not highly regarded by either the brahmans or the Buddhists.

In some cases simply being a powerful human seems to have automatically granted some protection against the supernatural. Kings in particular enjoyed a special relationship with the spiritual world. For instance, on numerous occasions Aśoka, the great Buddhist patron and king, is mentioned as having the power to command spirit-deities. In the *Mahāvaṃsa,* Aśoka employs *yakkhas*

to deliver his messages while in another part of the same text gods, *nāgas*, animals, and "spirits of the air" are all described as bringing daily tribute to the mighty king.[43] In the *Divyāvadana,* it is said, "As soon as Aśoka became king, his authority extended to the *yakṣa*s as far away as one yojana above the earth, and to the nāgas a yojana beneath it."[44] This authority stems from Aśoka's position as king and is exhibited even prior to his conversion to Buddhism. Yet the text makes it apparent that the king's ability to command spirit-deities is secondary to the power of the *saṃgha* in this area. The *Divyāvadana* is replete with occasions in which the great monk Upagupta's presence is required before various spirit-deities can be convinced to appear before the king and recount their memories of the Buddha.[45] In a tale involving the Śunga king Puṣyamitra, as also found in the *Divyāvadāna,* an explicit confrontation occurs between the power of the king and the monks. According to the tale:

> There the *yakṣa* Daṃṣṭrānivāsin reasoned: "[If Puṣyamitra is not killed] the Buddhist religion will die out; but I maintain the precepts—it is not possible for me to harm anyone whomsoever!" Now another *yakṣa*, Kṛmiśa, was seeking the hand of Daṃṣṭrānivāsin's daughter in marriage, but Daṃṣṭrānivāsin had refused him saying "you are an evil doer!" Now, however, he agreed to give Kṛmiśa his daughter, on the condition that he take appropriate measures for the rescue and continued protection of the Buddhist religion. Now King Puṣyamitra always had behind him as his bodyguard a very big *yakṣa*. He was so strong that the king was never beaten. But Daṃṣṭranivāsin grabbed that *yakṣa* who was Puṣyamitra's aide-de-corps, and went for a walk in the mountains. Puṣyamitra then fled south to the great ocean; but there the *yakṣa* Kṛmiśa took up a great mountain and set it down on Puṣyamitra, his troops, and his chariots.[46]

This ingeniously diplomatic, if ethically problematic, passage presents an interesting strategy in which the spirit-deities loyal to the *saṃgha* manage to destroy the enemies of the faith while still holding true to the Buddhist ethics that defined their conversions in the first place. By turning to the morally ambiguous figure of Kṛmiśa to do the dirty work, the Buddhist authors preserve the moral purity of their supernatural allies while still demonstrating that they are stronger and more clever than those allied with the anti-Buddhist king. Further, it is through the *saṃgha's* association with spirit-deities that this tale of Buddhist persecution is transformed into a victory for the Law and a cautionary example for future kings.

Tales like these from the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Mahāvaṃsa* reveal that continued success in dealing with spirit-deities whether as a king, commoner, or

monk is contingent upon an ethical base. In the tale of Puṣyamitra, it is the king's consistently immoral actions that eventually draw down the wrath of the spirit-deities; whereas, for the Buddhists or righteous kings it is their adherence to a moral system that frees them from the destructive passions that the spirit-deities command. The monastic ability to suppress base desires protects the *saṃgha* from the threats and seductions of the spirit-deities and, I would argue, it is this same ability that makes the Buddhist teachings so appealing to the passion-driven spirit-deities. On numerous occasions such beings seek out the *saṃgha* in order to gain ease from their overwhelming passions and respite from their hungers by taking refuge in the Law.[47] For this reason, spirit-deities are drawn to moral actions and tend to look favorably upon those who embody fearless virtue.

The story of Maitrībala, an ethical king, is told in several sources. According to the *Jātakamala* version of the tale, several *ojohara yakṣas* (vigor-stealing *yakṣas*) who had been banished from their homes by the king of the *yakṣas*, Kubera, enter the capital but are unable to drain the strength of the populace. When a boy is questioned as to "why he displays no fear of *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, or other demons," the child replies that the virtue of the king protects them. When the *yakṣas* demand food of the king, he gives them some of his own flesh. They are so impressed that they go away peacefully.[48] This text demonstrates the respect that spirit-deities often hold for those who demonstrate unshakable virtue. A passage in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* echoes the same themes featured in the Maitrībala story by stating that speaking the truth, circumambulation of images, and eating only at the time when the Buddhist mendicants do are acts of devotion that please *yakṣas*.[49]

The placation of spirit-deities can be achieved through moral action, which is not the sole domain of the *saṃgha* but which the *saṃgha* embodies as an institution. As we have seen, however, those outside the *saṃgha* could, at times, also have power over such beings. The king as *Dhammarāja* gains some authority over spirit-deities, as do the Buddhist laity, who are free to invoke the names of the *yakṣa* chiefs that, as defenders of the Law, can assist the public in times of need.[50] Similarly, in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* we are told that when the wealthy lay devotee and donor Anāthapiṇḍaka was beset by troubles in the course of trying to see the Buddha, the *yakkha* Śivaka guided him through a fearful cemetery at night, thereby allowing him to reach the Blessed One.[51]

The power that layman, king, or monk wield in relationship to the spirit-deities seems directly proportional to the degree to which they embody proper moral behavior ("proper" here being defined according to Buddhist ethical concepts). Ultimately, it is this same reliance on moral action that serves the Buddha so well when dealing with spirit-deities in his past lives, as recounted

in the Jātakas. In these tales the Bodhisattva, although not a monk, is consistently the paradigm of correct moral action, and it is therefore fitting that in those tales in which he encounters spirit-deities he inevitably emerges victorious.

For instance, in the *Devadhamma Jātaka* the Bodhisattva is born as Prince Mahiṃsāsa, the eldest son of a king. Due to intrigue on the part of his stepmother, the Bodhisattva and his brother flee to the forest. On hearing of their departure, the prince's stepbrother, Prince Moon, becomes ashamed of his mother's actions and joins the Bodhisattva in exile. While in the forest the stepbrother bathes in a lake and is challenged by a disguised spirit of the water to answer a question or be taken captive. Prince Moon fails to accurately define the term "godlike" and is immediately imprisoned beneath the water. The same fate befalls the Bodhisattva's true brother, and it is not long before the Bodhisattva himself goes off in search of his siblings. Upon seeing the spirit-deity, the Bodhisattva is instantly aware of his true nature and eventually answers that those called "godlike" "shrink from sin" and serve as "votaries of Good." The spirit-deity is so impressed with his response that he offers to free one brother. When the Bodhisattva chooses his stepbrother over his real brother, the spirit is again astounded by the blameless nature of his actions and frees both brothers as a sign of goodwill. But the story does not end here; it goes on to tell us that:

> Having worked the demon's conversion, the Bodhisattva continued to dwell in that spot under his protection, until one day he read in the stars that his father was dead. Then taking the water-sprite with him, he returned to Benares and took possession of the kingdom. . . . For the water-sprite he made a home in pleasant spot and took measures to ensure his being provided with the choicest garlands, flowers, and food.[52]

In this way the future-Buddha through righteous actions and fearless virtue converts the spirit-deity and makes him an asset to society rather than a threat. This conversion hinges on the same techniques employed by the *saṃgha* in the *Mahavāṃsa* or the *Divyāvadana*. The Bodhisattva first transgresses the lair of the spirit-deity, resists its attempts to trap him, and then manages to effect its conversion through an extended conversation in which moral action is explicated. And, while this Jātaka shows that not only monks have the ability to work supernatural conversions, it also demonstrates that such deeds require a heroic virtue that is far beyond the scope of most.

The *Sutano Jātaka* echoes many of these same ideas. In this story the Bodhisattva was born as Sutano, a poor householder struggling to support his

mother. It so happened that the local king had been hunting and fell asleep under a banyan tree that was inhabited by a *yakkha* who had been given permission by Vessavana (Kubera) to eat anything that came under his branches. In exchange for his life, the cowardly king offered to send a man with a bowl of rice every day for the *yakkha* to consume. The *yakkha* agreed to this proposal, and each day he devoured both the rice and the unfortunate bearer. At first the king sent prisoners to be eaten, but soon the jails were empty. The panic-stricken king knew that on the day he failed to send a victim, the *yakkha* would come for him, so in desperation he offered a huge reward to anyone willing to take the rice to the *yakkha*. Sutano, realizing his inability to care for his mother, accepted the challenge and, after giving the money to his mother, went off to face the tree spirit. However, the clever man borrowed the king's slippers, umbrella, sword, and bowl. In this manner he did not touch the ground under the spirit's tree (due to the slippers) or come under the shade of its branches (due to the umbrella) and with the sword he pushed the rice close to the tree. Once the *yakkha* manifested itself, Sutano engaged it in dialogue and argued that the *yakkha* would receive more offerings if it were a kind protector than it ever could gain as a cruel, murderous monster. Sutano then established the creature in the five virtues and said, "Why dwell in the forest? Come, I will settle you by the city gate and make you get the best rice."[53]

In this tale the Bodhisattva survives his encounter with the *yakkha* through his ingenuity and wits, but it is his ability to point out the shortsightedness of evil actions that eventually brings about the permanent conversion of the spirit-deity. Likewise, in the *Vidhurapaṇḍita Jātaka*, the future-Buddha must rely on his wisdom in order to live through his initial encounters with the spirit-deities so that he may eventually convert them with his sermons. In this complicated Jātaka, the Bodhisattva is born as the wise minister Vidhura. After mediating a dispute between four supernatural kings, the wife of the *nāga* king comes to hear of his great wisdom and desires to hear him speak. In order to hide her intentions and to test the virtue of the minister, she states that she wants the heart of this wise teacher brought to her. To achieve this, the *nāga* king promises his daughter in marriage to a *yakkha* named Puṇṇaka on the condition that he bring back the heart of the Bodhisattva. When this *yakkha* meets the future-Buddha he is impressed by the teacher's virtue, but his desire to marry the *nāga* princess drives him to attempt murder. After several tries at killing the minister by scaring him to death (which Vidhura easily resists), the *yakkha* then resorts to a physical assault. At this point the minister inquires as to his motives for his attack and quickly discerns the *nāga* queen's true intentions. He soon convinces the *yakkha* to bring him to her. In this way the Bodhisattva passes the test of the *nāga* queen and is taken to the *nāga* realm,

where he preaches moral actions and converts both the *nāgas* and his *yakkha* assailant.[54]

In all of the Jātakas quoted here there is a consistency in the relationship between the spirit-deities and the Bodhisattva. The spirit-deities change their behavior both in response to the obvious power that the future-Buddha possesses (expressed in their inability to affect him) and because he just makes good sense. As a moral exemplar, the future Buddha demonstrates the benefits of moral action on both a karmic and practical level. The *yakkha* in the Sutano tale gains a permanent food supply and a village of devotees, as does the spirit-deity of the pond in the *Devadhamma Jātaka*. On a similar note, the *yakkha* in the story of Vidhura ceases his attack only when he is convinced that killing the minister will actually displease the *nāga* queen and harm his prospects of marriage. These arguments form the rational foundation for the permanent conversion of these beings.

Such logical, albeit materialistic, discussions consistently precede the indoctrination of spirit-deities into the "five virtues" and must have been seen as an important step in the process. On a social level, these arguments must also have been crucial in convincing the public that their honored and feared spirit-deities had had sudden and permanent changes of heart. By providing practical motives that appealed to the spirit-deities' desire for food or happiness, these tales must have hastened the public acceptance of these deities as adherents and guardians of Buddhism. Ultimately, by integrating spirit-deities into a known moral system with a well-established code of behavior, the *saṃgha* was better able to regulate the actions of these previously capricious beings and buffer the community from the potential dangers that such beings were believed to embody.

In the Jātakas mentioned thus far, it has been argued that conversion actually improved conditions for the spirit-deities. There is one point, however, on which the Buddhist teachings and the accepted devotional practices directed toward spirit-deities could not compromise, namely, the use of meat and alcohol as devotional offerings. There is another set of Jātakas that deal explicitly with this important conflict.

In the rather succinct *Dummedha Jātaka*, the Bodhisattva was born as the Prince Brahmadatta and as a young man recognized the folly in slaughtering animals to the gods. He began to worship at the tree shrine without offering blood. When he became king, he told his ministers that his political success was due to a promise he made to the tree spirit: he said he had promised to make a sacrifice out of anyone foolish enough to slaughter living creatures as offerings. With this powerful threat, Brahmadatta managed to change his subjects' behavior without needing to cause anyone harm.[55] An interesting twist

on this same issue is related in the *Āyācitabhatta Jātaka,* in which the Bodhisattva has been born as a tree spirit who warns his devotees against offering blood sacrifices. He tells them that any release from a debt owed to a spirit is not worth the karmic retribution generated by such actions.[56]

Finally, we come to the *Ayakūṭa Jātaka,* in which a council of wicked *yakkhas* has grown angry at the lack of blood sacrifices and decides to send off a mighty *yakkha* to kill the king who has outlawed such offerings. The king is, of course, the future-Buddha, but here he is surprisingly helpless to withstand the power of the *yakkha* assassin. Fortunately for him, the merit generated from his demand for nonviolent offerings is great enough to get Sakka's (Indra's) attention. The great god Sakka manifests himself in front of the *yakkha,* who now does not dare to lay a hand on the king for fear of retribution. Indra personally chases off the murderous creature and vows to perpetually protect the moral king from such threats.[57]

These three Jātakas all take aim at the practice of meat or blood sacrifices, and in all three cases the hero is able to outlaw its practice. Although Ram Nath Misra and others have argued that the *Ayakūṭa* and *Dummedha* Jātakas depict attempts to eradicate *yakkha* worship entirely, it seems to me that all these Jātakas can be understood in a somewhat different way. I would argue that these stories describe a process during which members of the *saṃgha* sought to change any objectionable aspects of popular worship so as to prepare it for immersion into Buddhism.[58] The actual worship of spirit-deities is not maligned; only those aspects that run contrary to basic Buddhist teachings against violence and inebriation are forbidden. This kind of selective critique of spirit religions can be seen as part of a larger concern with the over-reaching passions and moral shortcomings that are often associated with spirit-deities and their growing association with Buddhism.

It seems that one of the attractions that the Buddhist teachings held for spirit-deities was that they could calm the rampant passions, hungers, and desires that constantly tormented these creatures. It is clear from the literature that certain spirit-deities desperately desired to hear the dharma. In one tale, a *yakṣī* living near the monastery at Jetavana hushed her child to sleep early so she could hear the monks preaching the law.[59] In another tale, a *nāga* actually infiltrates the *saṃgha* disguised as a human. While sleeping, however, he reverts to his true form and his deception is discovered. This tale is given as the reason why new monks, as explicitly required by the Vinaya texts, must be asked at their ordination if they are "a serpent or an animal in human form."[60] This example is also a good case of a monastic rule based on the acceptance of spirit-deities as a reality.

The Buddhists could also ease painful hungers through the transfer of

merit. In one tale a group of hideous hungry ghosts (*preta*) appear before the Buddha. Theses creatures were "like articulated skeletons risen up, covered with their own hair, stomachs the size of mountains, mouths the size of the eye of a needle, burning, blazing, bursting with fire, one mass of flame." They sought relief from their suffering and asked that the Buddha give them the merit earned by an offering to the *saṃgha* soon to be made by their living relatives. The Buddha agrees to do so only if their living relatives consent to the transaction. At the time when the food is offered to the monks, the ghosts appear again but end up scaring away all of the people at the ceremony. The Buddha calmly calls them back and informs them of the ghosts' wishes. Hearing the plight of their ancestors, the people quickly agree to offer the merit of the meal to the ghosts and thereby placate their overwhelming hungers.[61]

The descriptions of the needs and desires of the spirit-deities are sharply contrasted with the terminology used to describe the Buddha and his followers. In the Vinaya texts monks are described as "tamed," "disciplined," "freed," and "exempt from passion."[62] These qualities seem at times to be contagious. We are told that when the Buddha enters a place "fear of nonhumans" disappears.[63] This inability to be emotionally moved is what protects the *saṃgha* in their dealings with the supernatural. This conflict between the dangerous passions of the spirit-deities and the calm detachment of the Buddha forms the core of a few stories related in the *Sutta Nipāta*.

In the story of the conversion of the *yakkha* Āḷavaka, the mischievous spirit-deity repeatedly orders the Buddha to enter and then exit a structure. At first the Buddha complies, but soon he tires of the game and refuses to obey the *yakkha's* commands. When the Buddha refuses to obey, the *yakkha* challenges the Buddha with a threat that occurs repeatedly in the *Sutta Nipāta* as a stock passage: if the Buddha cannot answer his question he will scare him out of his mind, rend his heart or seize him by the feet, and throw him over the Ganges. The Buddha then responds by saying that there is no one "including the devas, Māra and Brahmā, among beings including ascetics and brahmans, devas and men" who could successfully assault him in that manner. What follows is a series of metaphysical questions answered by the Buddha. This discussion ends in the conversion of the *yakkha*, who promises to praise the Buddha everywhere he goes.[64]

A remarkably similar tale from the same text details the conversion of the *yakkha* Sūciloma, a passage from which is quoted at the start of chapter 1. This tale begins when the *yakkhas* Khara and Sūciloma see the Buddha meditating at Gayā. Sūciloma decides to test the Buddha, and after the standard threat is leveled against the Buddha a philosophic discussion ensues and concludes when the contentious spirit-deity is won over.[65] Also in the *Sutta Nipāta* is the

story of the *yakkhas* Sātāgira and Hemavata. Sātāgira proposes that they visit the Buddha and proceeds to impress the other *yakkha* with descriptions of the virtuous nature of the Buddha. When the *yakkhas* finally do meet the Buddha they engage him in a series of questions and answers. Eventually, both *yakkhas* are satisfied and are won over. As a result of this conversation, not only are the two primary *yakkhas* in this tale converted, so are one thousand other spirit-deities who witnessed the event.[66]

The conversion of spirit-deities seems to echo critiques and questions held by human devotees; questions about ritual actions, proper behavior, and philosophic points of inquiry are all dealt with in the tales. Certain high-minded beings quickly embrace the teachings, whereas others persistently seek its destruction. Most fall somewhere in the middle of this range and approach the Buddhists full of skepticism and curiosity which, when properly addressed, wins them over to Buddhist systems of belief. It is clear that the conversion of spirit-deities was seen as being parallel to the conversion of people. In fact, in the Jātakas the Bodhisattva manages to convert two supposed spirit-deities who are in actuality men deluded into believing that they are *yakkhas*.

The *Jayaddisa Jātaka* begins with the death of a queen who is reborn as an ogress (*rakkhasī*) and devours the children of her former harem rival. She manages to kill two of her rival's newborn children, but on the third attempt she is chased away by the guards after snatching up the infant. While running with the child she develops affection for it and begins to raise it as an ogre (*rakkhasa*). That is to say, they live in a cemetery and eat human flesh. In fact, with the help of a special root the child can even conceal his bodily form, like an ogre. Years later the ogress dies and the good queen soon afterward gives birth to a son, Jayaddisa. Jayaddisa grows up to be king and his son Alīnasattu is the Bodhisattva. While hunting, Jayadissa is captured by the ogre, who releases him on the promise that he will return the following day. The Bodhisattva goes in his father's place and through his fearlessness impresses the ogre. After an extensive conversation, the truth of the ogre's past is revealed and the Bodhisattva is reconciled with his uncle. The former ogre is tamed and begins a new life as an ascetic.[67]

A related set of circumstances is set forth in the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka*. In this lengthy tale, the king of Benares unwittingly tastes human flesh and, because of his previous existence as a *yakkha*, he quickly develops an insatiable appetite for it. When the truth of his obsession is revealed he flees to the woods, where he resorts to attacking travelers. Eventually, he captures Sutasoma, a dear friend from his days at school who also happens to be the future-Buddha. Sutasoma asks to leave in order to fulfill a promise to a brahman, but vows to return. When Sutasoma voluntarily returns to captivity, the cannibal-king is so

impressed that he grants him four boons. When Sutasoma asks that the king give up cannibalism, he agrees. Eventually, the king recovers from his excesses and is returned to the throne of Benares.[68]

Although the *Mahāsutasoma* and *Jayaddisa* Jātakas are both complex tales with many salient insights into early beliefs, the significance for our present argument lies in the fact that the methods used by the *saṃgha* for the conversion of spirit-deities work equally well on humans. Both Alīnasattu and Sutasoma must face humans who are behaving like *yakkhas* and, like *yakkhas*, these men have lost any ability to rein in their desires and passions no matter how base. The contrast between their frightening descent into chaotic passions and the remarkable self-control of the future-Buddha while facing a horrible death seems to spark the initial curiosity and admiration that the depraved men have for the Bodhisattva. This initial shock at the honesty, courage, and self control possessed by the future-Buddha initiates further dialogue through which the rampant hunger of the *yakkha*-men comes to be held in check. Within the Buddhist paradigm, desire leads to suffering, so it is therefore logical that beings who are slaves to their passions would seek out the freedom offered through the Buddhist system of thought. It is this, more than anything, which the *saṃgha* offers as a refuge to all adherents, human and spirit-deity alike.

A further point to be made with these stories is the consistency with which renegade spirit-deities dwell within the wilds of the forest or the carnage of the cemetery or charnel grounds. This can be contrasted with the manner in which these beings, once converted, are taken into the city or village and are reincorporated into civilized environs. This process did not always entail the spirit-deities being moved into the city. In many instances, the archaeological evidence suggests that civilization went out to them.

This page intentionally left blank

3

Set in Stone

I also wish to explain to you, since it surprises you, why figures painted in a fresco or images modeled in clay or sculpted in stone or wood, should sometimes have the power to speak.

—A *yakṣa* trapped in a pillar speaking to the young nun Maṇimekhalai

Monasteries and Megaliths

In the previous chapter, literary references were provided that mention or imply the presence of Buddhist monastic institutions in and near areas associated with the worship of spirit-deities. Many of these haunts were in fact locations associated with funerary practice and suggest that monasteries were often built in close proximity to sites used for cremation or burial.

For instance, in the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* we are told of a cemetery-dwelling monk who battles with a "nonhuman" over a fine woolen blanket left on a corpse. After snatching the cloth, the monk returned to the nearby Jetavana monastery and "since gods and *nāgas* and *yakṣas* who were devoted to the Buddha were staying in the Jetavana, the hungry ghost, being considered of little power, was not able to enter and sat wailing at the door."[1] Eventually the Buddha hears the wailing and makes the monk return the blanket to the needy ghost. The Buddha then pro-

ceeds to dictate the proper way by which to take cloth left at cemetery grounds. This story is fascinating for several reasons, but two points are important here. The first point is that the Jetavana monastery was located in close proximity to a cemetery and, second, enough monks visited funerary sites as to require the creation of a Vinaya rule on the proper way for taking funerary goods from the dead.

This tendency to build monasteries in or near cemeteries is also suggested in a passage from the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. This text informs us that while meditating in the monastery, the "Venerable Vairaṭṭasiṃha did not achieve one-pointedness of mind because of the foul smell of corpses."[2] It seems that the monastic complex had an unpleasant smell due to its proximity to a funerary ground. In this passage, the Buddha approves the use of garlands, perfumes, incense, and aromatic powders to help cover the foul odors. Once again, this problem must have been common enough that it demanded a Vinaya rule to address it.

The relationships between monasteries and places associated with funerary practices that are described in the Buddhist textual sources find some corroboration in the archaeological evidence. The archaeological record demonstrates that Buddhist monasteries were frequently built over or near ancient megalithic burial sites.[3] Although the form of secondary burial found at many megalithic sites differs from the cremations and charnel grounds described in the literature, it is significant that sites associated with the dead were frequently found in close proximity to monastic centers. This is particularly true in the regions of Andhra and Swat, both of which were on the edges of what had been the Mauryan Empire and, by extension, royally supported Buddhism.

Although the association of monastic complexes with areas linked to spirit-deities and the dead can be seen all over South Asia, this early preponderance of archaeological evidence from the areas on the edges of Magadhan imperial influence suggests that these practices played a role in the conversion of new populations. It is equally possible, however, that these Buddhist building practices were common across the subcontinent, and the physical evidence may simply result from differences in regional funerary traditions. It is far easier to identify the massive rocks associated with ancient megalithic burial sites than it is to spot the fragments of ash and bone that might indicate a long-forgotten charnel ground. Therefore, even though the specifics of this process remain elusive, both the physical and textual evidence point to an early association between Buddhism and places related to death and the dead.

In Andhra, megalithic grave sites have been identified under or near the Buddhist remains at Goli, Chandavaram, Panigiri, and Vaddamanu.[4] The famous sites of Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa also show evidence of having

been constructed in close proximity to megalithic burial grounds. The main *stūpa* at Amarāvatī is not only situated directly over the remains of a megalithic grave but the monastery complex is also located in the center of a large area peppered with megalithic remains.[5] A similar situation can be found at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, where one of the main *stūpas* was located directly over the remains of an ancient grave. It even appears that some of the stones originally employed by the builders of the megalithic structure were reused in the construction of the *stūpa* itself.[6] Remains of ancient graves have also been identified under the site of Butkara, as well as under the Buddhist layer at Mohenjodaro in the far northwest.[7]

Although most of the archaeological evidence for Buddhist monasteries on or near ancient burial sites can be found on the borders of the earliest powerful dynasties that were centered along the Gangetic basin, there is some evidence that these kinds of practices were occurring even within the Buddhist heartland. For example, a series of ancient tumuli containing ash were identified in the excavation of the Buddhist monuments at Kusinārā, and a stone circle containing both human and animal remains was found at the Buddhist complex in Jaggayyapetta.[8] A circular burial, very similar to the one at Jaggayyapetta, was discovered at Lumbinī, which contained a human skull, various animal bones gathered in pots, and an iron sickle.[9] Although these examples from the northeast are not as plentiful or as clearly understood as those found in other regions, they do provide a few more examples of the pervasive tendency to associate early monasteries with the dead.

This litany of sites in no way represents the full extent of the possible archaeological connections between Buddhist sites and the ancient dead. We are limited to fragmentary evidence because the early archaeologists, with few exceptions, were uninterested in excavating the megalithic finds under the Buddhist monuments. For this reason the archaeological reports are spotty at best, and only very recently have archaeologists seriously turned their attentions to this earliest layer of construction.

Sufficient evidence nevertheless exists to suggest a definite association between the construction of Buddhist monasteries and ancient (often megalithic) funerary grounds. Schopen writes that even a "cursory survey of the archaeological literature seems to indicate that many Buddhist monastic sites in India were already occupied by the proto-historical dead before they were taken over by the immigrant monks."[10] He goes on to suggest that this pattern of habitation may have served the monks well by positioning them as the "guardians of the native dead," and that this role many have gained them entree into the community.[11] We can expand these shared links with the community to include associations with other types of sites related to the presence of spirit-deities.

So far we have only considered the relationship between the *saṃgha* and cemeteries or charnel grounds but, as we have seen in the literature, not all spirit-deities reside in such morbid locales. Although the literature documents the process by which the *saṃgha* encroached into areas associated with the residence of spirit-deities in order to establish their monasteries, most of the physical objects associated with *caityas* and the worship of popular deities are, unfortunately, impermanent. Since perishable objects of religious and social significance such as trees, wooden rails, and garlands do not weather the passage of time well, this creates a problem in trying to find physical evidence of the activities described in the texts.

At Rajgir, surrounding the base of what was originally a Buddhist *stūpa*, excavations have recovered the remains of hundreds of pottery jars (up to 1.26 meters in height) that have numerous unusual spouts attached to their surfaces (figure 3.1).[12]

> A peculiar feature of these jars is that they have stuck on, or in some-cases rivetted into, their surfaces a large number of spouts, some of which are curiously shaped as serpent-hoods, goblins and animal figures. The vessels have sometimes long necks and rounded bottoms. . . . Though there is no ancient parallel to these finds, it is interesting to note that similar jars with spouts are still now used in Bengal in the worship of serpents under the name Manasā.[13]

The presence of these ritual vessels suggests the practice of *nāga* worship before and during the time this location was associated with Buddhism. This relationship is further supported by a fragmentary sculpture found at the site, which dates to between the first and second centuries CE. This sculptural relief is carved on both sides and depicts standing *nāga* figures (now in the National Museum, New Delhi, figure 3.2). Below the row of standing figures a mutilated inscription was found which informs us that the sculpture depicts Maṇi-*nāga*. The name Maṇi implies a connection to the modern name of the site: Maniyar Math. This makes it likely that Maṇi-*nāga* was the resident spirit-deity at this site around which the local cult was centered.

The presence of this sculpture likewise suggests that the worship of *nāgas* continued to be important at the site long after Buddhism was established there. The sculpture has an inscription which informs us that the donor of the image was *bhagini Samagadhi* or "sister Samagadhi."[14] Significantly, this object was found along with two other detached pieces that contain the words *parvato Vipula* and *rāja-Śreṇika*. The term *Vipula* seems to refer to a mountain in the Rajgir area, while the name Śreṇika is another name for the well-known king Bimbisāra.[15] These fragments help confirm the Buddhist presence at site, be-

FIGURE 3.1. Terra-cotta Vessel. Rajgir. 2nd–4th c. CE. Nālandā Museum. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

cause Bimbisāra is mentioned in the literature as being one of the first avid supporters of the Buddha. Therefore, although we cannot be certain if Samagadhi donated this *nāga* image to a Buddhist community, the presence of Śreṇika's name nearby makes this assertion likely to be true. At a minimum, we can claim that Buddhist remains and those associated with the worship of a *nāga* were found at the same location.

Yet despite the evidence linking this site to both Buddhism and spirit-deity worship, most of the conclusions we can draw on the basis of this information are simply assumptions. Even if these assumptions are probable, they are assumptions nonetheless. The case of Rajgir exposes some of the difficulties in

FIGURE 3.2. Maṇi-*nāga*. Rajgir. 1st–2nd c. CE. National Museum, New Delhi. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

using only archaeologically recovered evidence to connect the worship of spirit-deities, not associated with funerary practices, with Buddhist monasteries. Even though there is evidence to suggest the worship of spirit-deities at Maniyar Math both before and after the earliest evidence of Buddhism at the site, it brings us no closer to understanding how the Buddhist community interacted with these popular deities or to what degree they were linked. Fortunately, the textual evidence describing other important monastic centers supplements the archaeological material and goes a long way toward filling in these gaps.

The *nāga* image at Maniyar Math is representative of a wider trend seen in the artistic evidence found at many Buddhist sites, which points to an active Buddhist involvement with the maintenance of spirit-deity cults. Even on the earliest Buddhist monuments, the presence of figural representations of spirit-deities is unmistakable. When we look to the textual evidence for insights on the significance of these images, it becomes apparent that numerous accounts describe the conversion of spirit-deity *caityas* into Buddhist monasteries. For instance, the *Aṅguttara Commentary* mentions an Ānanda *caitya* in Bhoganagara that was later converted into a Buddhist *vihāra*, and the *Dīgha Nikāya Commentary* mentions an Udena *caitya* that was later converted into a *vihāra* and dedicated to the *yakṣa* Udena.[16] Even the renowned Buddhist monastery at Nālandā is said to have been named after a *nāga* who resided in a nearby water tank.[17] Additionally, in the previous chapter I referred to two monasteries mentioned by Faxian, both of which were named for or associated with the presence of a specific spirit-deity.[18] Similarly, the story of the *yakṣa* Gardabha, related in the previous chapter, concludes with the construction of a monastery in Mathurā that is built in the spirit-deity's name.[19]

The Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang mentions at least two cases in which a monastery was built over the spots where confrontations between kings and *nāgas* had taken place. The first was constructed by King Kaniṣka in order to subdue a troublesome *nāga* who had been causing fierce storms. After six failed attempts to build the monastic center, this encounter culminated in a direct confrontation with the *nāga*, after which the king finally succeeded in completing his structure on the edge of the lake where the *nāga* resided. Xuanzang goes on to mention that this monastery served to pacify the *nāga*, and if storms ever began to arise the resident monks would beat a drum in the monastery in order to remind the *nāga* of his vow to behave.[20] In a related tale, Xuanzang tells of a monastery that was built to mark the location where a minister went to go live with the *nāgas* in order to end a terrible drought.[21] In this instance the monastery was built to honor the heroism of the minister. One can assume, however, that the Buddhist presence also served to quiet the potentially discontented spirit of the minister who "joined the *nāgas*" by voluntarily walking into a lake. Suicides, even heroically motivated ones, are notorious for producing restless spirits.

It is interesting that in the cases mentioned above the Buddhist institutions were understood as in some way containing or controlling the unpredictable power of the spirit-deities. Just as the literature describes a process by which the spirit-deities were converted into supporters of the Buddhist Law and the haunts of these beings were transformed into Buddhist monastic centers, the

physical evidence also reveals a monastic desire to incorporate images of spirit-deities into Buddhist contexts. Before looking further at the presence of spirit-deities on Buddhist structures, we should first examine evidence of Indian spirit religions prior to contact with Buddhism.

Physical Evidence of Spirit-Deity Worship

Numerous examples of large stone images depicting spirit-deities dating from the third through the first centuries BCE have been identified. These sculptures, most of which are quite large (over a meter in height), probably functioned as cult objects within local shrines. A stocky and now-headless *yakṣa* figure from Patna stands roughly 160 cm. in height, which is about the same size as the voluptuous and controversial Dīdārgañj *yakṣī* (figure 3.3). Although there has been some debate over the date of the *yakṣī* figure, I believe that both of these images can be dated rather securely to about the third century BCE. Also from Patna is a second *yakṣa* figure that exhibits many stylistic similarities to the headless image and is undoubtedly a product of the same time period (figure 3.4). Although the Dīdārgañj *yakṣī* is in a much finer state of repair than either of the Patna images, all are dressed as royalty and appear as the very paradigms of worldly health, wealth and fecundity.[22] A first-century CE *yakṣa* image from Bharama Kalan (now in the Mathurā Museum) remains in an excellent state of preservation and serves as a fine example of the elaborate attire originally worn by the often badly weathered male images (figure 3.5).[23] The details of the jewels, headdress, and sword on this figure can all be clearly distinguished. This figure in many ways typifies the royal bearing and opulent garb that characterize these early works.

From the town of Besnagar, near ancient Vidiśā, come two well-known images dating to the first century BCE. The female figure is almost life-size but has been extensively damaged over the face and upper torso (figure 1.4). The male image from this site is truly massive (well over three meters in height) and stares intently outward while grasping a sack or flask in his fist (figure 1.3). Another large *yakṣa* image, this time from Parkham, dates to about the same time as the Vidiśā (Besnagar) images and, like all the images is positioned in a rigidly frontal pose, looking straight ahead and dressed in the finest clothes. The fact that these images are all carved in the round raises the likelihood that they occupied the central position in their respective sacred enclosures, as would be required for circumambulation by devotees.

Alexander Cunningham states that the eroded condition of the Parkham *yakṣa* is a result of centuries of libations poured over the image; libations of

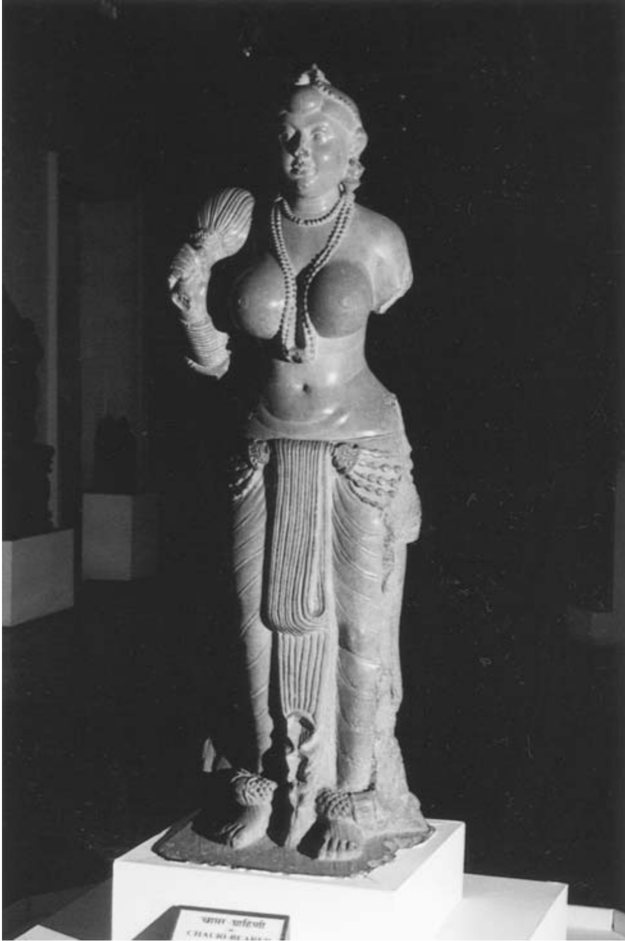

FIGURE 3.3. *Yakṣī*. Dīdārgañj. Ca. 3rd c. BCE. Patna Museum. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

red lead and ghee were apparently still being offered to the image in Cunningham's day.[24] Furthermore, the wide-eyed gazes seen on all the images may suggest a link to modern Hindu *darśan* (ritually seeing and being seen by the deity), which would further confirm their function as objects of ritual devotion. This link with Hindu *darśan* is not totally unexpected. Coomaraswany suggested years ago that Hindu *bhakti* practices found their origins in the worship of spirit-deities.[25] The small (3 cm.) first-century BCE spherical object from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art that was discussed in chapter 1 also provides evidence that spirit-deities were worshiped in ways that resemble modern *bhakti* rites. This small object depicts a forested *caitya* at which offer-

FIGURE 3.4. *Yakṣa*. Patna. Ca. 3rd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

ings of food, music, and dance are being made. All of these practices are analogous to elements found in modern Hindu *pūjās*.[26]

The positioning, size, and decoration of these images also conform nicely to the textual descriptions of *caityas* and their use. For instance, a certain story in the *Pariśiṣṭaparvaṇa* tells of a man who tests the fidelity of his adulterous wife by making her crawl through the legs of a statue of the *yakṣa* Sobana.[27] This image is said to crush those who are guilty between its legs. The woman outsmarts the *yakṣa* and her husband by stating her oath in such a way that it is technically true and thereby escapes harm. This tale is also helpful in con-

FIGURE 3.5. *Yakṣa*. Bharama Kalan. Ca. 1st c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Mathurā. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

firming that spirit-deity statues were occasionally large enough for an adult woman to crawl between their legs.

In the *Divyāvadāna* we are told that as a child Śākyamuni was presented to Śākyavardhana, the tutelary *yakṣa* of the Śākya clan, but when he was brought forward it was the *yakṣa* who manifested himself and made obeisance to the boy.[28] In this tale we have an account of *yakṣa* worship practiced by the Buddha's own family and an early recognition of the Buddha's authority over such beings. Furthermore, depictions of this tale, which are common in Andhra and Gandhāra, provide us glimpses of *yakṣa-caityas* as they were understood in those regions. Several representations of this narrative appear on the

decoration of the Buddhist *stūpas* at Nāgārjunakoṇḍa and Amarāvatī. Both of the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa reliefs illustrated here pair this scene with depictions of Śākyamuni's presentation to the astrologer Asita (figures 3.6, 3.7). These two stories make a logical pairing, as both deal with the recognition of Śākyamuni's special destiny while he was still an infant. This same duet of tales is represented on the previously mentioned stone panel from Chandavaram (now in the Hyderabad Museum). This panel shows a wonderfully exuberant representation of Śākyavardana, who seems to dive from the tree shrine in his rush to prostrate himself before the future-Buddha (figure 1.7)

No matter what region they are from, representations of this tale tend to be consistent in the elements that they include. They show Śākyavardhana at the moment he manifests himself (or animates his statue) and bows before the future-Buddha. The event occurs after Śākyamuni's family has taken the child outside the palace in order to present the infant at the *caitya* of the family's tutelary *yakṣa*. In these examples, the palace wall, the Buddha's family, and the tree-shrine are all clearly depicted. As is usual in early Buddhist art, the image of Śākyamuni himself has been excluded from the iconographic repertoire, and his presence is simply implied by the cloth carried by his mother.

The most significant element in these reliefs for the present discussion,

FIGURE 3.6. Śākyavardhana Scene. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. 3rd–4th c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

FIGURE 3.7. Śākyavardhana Scene. Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, Ca. 3rd c. CE. National Museum, New Delhi. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

however, is the manner in which the spirit-deities have been represented. The *yakṣas* seen in these reliefs resemble statues that have been placed on stone bases. This observation becomes weightier when we realize that in at least one textual version of the Śākyavardhana tale the *yakṣa* occupies his own statue in order to pay his respects to the future-Buddha, thereby making an explicit link between the presence of spirit-deities and freestanding figural sculpture.[29] Stories like this one strengthen the identification of early freestanding images as representations of important spirit-deities. It is not hard to imagine the statues from Patna, Vidiśa, or Parkham standing under lone trees and being honored in a manner similar to the way the *yakṣas* in these narrative reliefs are.

Based on this evidence, it appears that the standard techniques used to represent *yakṣas* in art are very similar to the ways in which royal personages might appear. *Yakṣas* tend to be tall, royally attired, and well-fed figures who in many ways resemble princes or kings. When portrayed as freestanding images, they can often be identified by their size, frontal posture, and large eyes. Furthermore, these images will often carry attributes associated with wealth (bags of coins), health (fruit or flasks of medicine), or protection (swords or other weapons).

By extension, *yakṣīs* often resemble royal women in their attire and jewelry.

It is not uncommon for the female figures to wear relatively little clothing, however, and to have particular emphasis placed on the hips and breasts. Although these figures share the same large eyes and frontal posture as their male counterparts, the attributes they carry, if any, are often closely associated with fertility and health. This association with fertility is often expressed through a special connection between the *yakṣīs* and vegetation. It is quite common to see the female figures placed alongside trees, resting an arm across a branch or simply holding a piece of fruit or a flower.

The relative scarcity of freestanding representations of humans in South Asia prior to the second century CE and the fact that our attributions are often confirmed by the presence of inscriptions make these spirit-deities rather easy to recognize. Yet for both the male and female figures the real challenge comes in recognizing them within a narrative context. In these cases it is often difficult to distinguish the spirit-deities from the humans. When these supernatural beings are seen emerging from an altar or tree, identification is a simple matter. In other cases, we have no choice but to identify the narrative before we can determine the nature of individual figures. Familiarity with the contexts and practices associated with spirit religions is also an invaluable tool for recognizing representations of these spirit-deities when they occur in the art.

In summary, the visual and textual evidence for most types of spirit-deity worship points to a widespread set of practices that centered on images or altars (benches, thrones, etc.) set in fenced enclosures to which people turned in times of need or to mark important transitions (such as the birth of a child). Given the importance enjoyed by the spirit-deities as revealed in these accounts and by the impressive nature of their statues, it is particularly significant that at the first-century BCE Buddhist site of Bhārhut they have been relegated to positions of subservience.

The Iconography of Early Buddhist Sites

The Bhārhut *stūpa* is one of the earliest extant Buddhist structures and, due to the presence of dedicatory inscriptions, we know that it was patronized almost exclusively by monks, nuns, and the non-elite laity. Although relatively little of the original structure still exists, most of the remaining material has been gathered and preserved in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. The existing portions of the original structure consist of a little over one-quarter of the highly decorated *vedikā* rail and one grand *toraṇa*, or gateway. The *vedikā* rail originally encircled the central *stūpa* and the extant portions of this enclosure are covered with relief carvings that depict both narrative scenes and large figural images.

This remarkable site provides us a unique degree of certainty in identifying its iconography due to the presence of inscriptions that name many figural sculptures and narrative scenes.

Although most of the narrative scenes relate tales associated with the life or past lives of the Buddha, there are a number that depict stories involving spirit-deities. Unfortunately, some of these scenes defy easy identification because of either the absence of labels, a lack of certainty in interpreting the labels, or damage incurred by the sculptures themselves. For instance, one label that identifies "the shrine in a woodland where the deer were eaten," may be a reference to the *Vyaggha Jātaka*.[30] In this tale the spirit-deities residing in some trees scare away the lions who are eating the local deer, only to have the humans rush into the lion-free forest and cut down all the trees. In the tiny relief depicting this tale, however, no spirit-deities (or any anthropomorphic figures) are represented, which leaves this attribution questionable. Similarly, one relief labeled as the *Kinnara Jātaka* has been variously identified as the *Takkāriya Jātaka* and the *Chanda Kinnara Jātaka*, both of which feature a type of supernatural being known as a *kinnara*.[31] But because this scene was broken horizontally, it is difficult to ascertain which interpretation is correct.

There are even scenes that clearly depict spirit-deities, like the well-known representation of monkeys pulling the teeth of a large ogrelike creature. But in the absence of labels or a known textual parallel, we can say little about its significance. The same is true for a scene on the Prasenajit Pillar, which may depict the scene of Māra's defeat. The relief is not inscribed and has therefore been interpreted differently by various scholars. For example, Barua has identified the sculpture as representing the moment when the gods in Tuṣita heaven ask the future-Buddha to be born as Śākyamuni.[32] In truth, the scene is very difficult to securely identify, and this sort of uncertainly would make any further explication of the scenes' meanings unreliable.

Two of the narrative reliefs at Bhārhut, on which I will concentrate, are the tales of the *nāga* Erāpatta (also called Erakapatta) and the *yakṣa* Pūrṇaka; both are identified by name in inscriptions and are clearly represented in the art.[33] This rare degree of clarity makes them useful in understanding how the narrative scenes help to construct and locate the presence of spirit-deities within this Buddhist monument.

The tale of the *nāga* Erakapatta can be found in the *Dhammapada Commentary*; it tells of a monk who is reborn as a *nāga* due to a minor sin and is forced to wait centuries before he has an opportunity to meet a buddha in person. Each evening he instructs his daughter to dance and sing on his immense serpent-hoods, and he promises her in marriage to any man that can answer the questions she asks in her song. Eventually a man who had been

coached by the Buddha is able to accurately answer her questions. When the *nāga* finally hears this response he realizes that there is a buddha in the land and quickly goes to offer his respect and to renew his personal efforts to attain Buddhahood. At the heart of the tale is a lesson on how difficult and rare it is to be born as a human and to have had the benefit of hearing the Buddhist Law. Furthermore, we are informed that the *nāga* must act virtuously in hope of being reborn as a human and, therefore, potentially to become enlightened.[34]

The tale is clearly depicted in a relief carving located on the corner pillar of the southern gate, also known as the Prasenajit Pillar (figure 3.8). In the scene, the *Nāga* king can be seen bowing to an empty throne that functions as an aniconic signifier of the Buddha's presence.[35] To further clarify the subject matter, two inscriptions were placed alongside the image. One simply states the name Erāpata *Nāga Rāja*, whereas the second succinctly entitles the scene, "Erāpata worships the Bhagavat." In this case, the term "Bhagavat" is an honorific referring to the Buddha himself. The image portrays the moment in which Erakapatta bows to the throne of the Buddha, thereby demonstrating the superiority of the Buddhist Law through this act of respect undertaken by the devout spirit-deity.

FIGURE 3.8. Erāpata *Nāga Rāja*. Bhārhut. Ca. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

The second Bhārhut narrative scene is depicted on two panels of relief carving located on the corner pillar of the north gate. They are labeled with a single inscription, which informs us that the scene represents "[t]he Jātaka episodes of Vidūra and Pūrṇaka."[36] This tale is long and complicated, and was already retold at some length in the previous chapter, so I will briefly summarize it here.

In this *Jātaka*, the future-Buddha is born as a wise man named Vidhura. After Vidhura settles a philosophic dispute between a human king, Indra, a *garuda* king, and the ruler of the *nāgas*, the wife of the *nāga* king is informed of Vidhura's wisdom and wishes both to hear his teachings and to test his worth. In order to do this she tells her husband that she wants Vidhura's heart brought to her and, reluctantly, the *nāga* king agrees. At this point a ruthless *yakṣa* named Pūrṇaka agrees to kill Vidhura in exchange for permission to marry the *nāga* king's daughter. After a few failed attempts are made on his life, the future-Buddha calmly converts Pūrṇaka into a devotee by preaching. Then, upon inquiring about the motives behind the *yakṣa's* attacks, Vidhura immediately perceives the *nāga* queen's true intentions and sets off to preach in the *nāga* realm, to the satisfaction of all.[37] At the heart of this story is an affirmation that the Buddhist Law is of great interest to all manner of supernatural beings.

It is intriguing that this tale, like the story of Erāpatta *nāga*, centers on spirit-deities who greatly desire to hear and follow the Buddhist teachings. Furthermore, in the tale of Pūrṇaka these teachings are used to quiet the homicidal intentions of the *yakṣa* and to transform him from an adversary into a loyal devotee. Both scenes convey a message about the relationship between spirit-deities and the Buddhist teachings. This thematic similarity may point to a programmatic intention behind the decision to depict these tales so prominently at the site. In order to uncover more about these possible intentions, however, we must first consider other forms of sculptural decoration at the site.

Despite the importance of the narrative scenes, by far the most prominent forms of decoration on this monument are the large, labeled depictions of spirit-deities that grace many of the upright pillars of the rail. Among those mentioned are: Sūpavaso *Yakha,* Chakavako *Nāga Raja,* Virudako *Yakha,* Gangito *Yakha,* Vajapi *Vijadharo* (*Vidyādhara*), Sirimā *Devata,* Suchiloma *Yakho, Yakhini* Sudasana, Chada *Yakhi,* Kubiro *Yakho,* Ajakālako *Yakho,* Mahakoka *Devatā,* and the *Achharā* (which Cunningham translates as *apsaras*) Misakosa, Subhada, Padumāvati, and Alambusa (figures 1.1, 1.2, 3.9–3.11). This list is impressive, especially considering that not all of the figures are identified by inscriptions and that many other similar figures must have existed on the now-

FIGURE 3.9. Chakavako *Nāga Raja* (Cakravaka *Nāgarāja*). Bhārhut. Ca. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

lost portions of the *vedikā*. In fact, there are several pillars containing images of spirit-deities that do not have labels, but it is reasonable to assume that at the time their identities would have been understood, as well.

Notably, many of the names inscribed on this monument are also mentioned in the literature. Armed with this information we can, in a few instances, discover where the cults of these spirit-deities were originally based. Although Kubiro (or Kubera), the renowned king of the *yakṣas*, was worshiped throughout India, other spirit-deities like Ajakālako (Ajakālaka or Ajakalāpaka) can be associated with a specific shrine. In particular, Ajakalāpaka is mentioned in

FIGURE 3.10. Kubiro *Yakho* (Kubera *Yakṣa*). Bhārhut. Ca. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

the *Udāna* as being a resident of the town of Pātali, while the *yakṣa* Sūciloma is described in the *Sutta Nipāta* as haunting the forests of Gayā.[38] The Sudasana that is mentioned on the Bhārhut pillars is most likely the same as the Sudarśana mentioned in the *Mahāmāyūrī* as being the tutelary deity of the town of Campā.[39] And, the *nāga* Erāpata, who can be seen on the previously mentioned narrative sculpture, is described in both the *Mahāvastu* and the *Dhammapada*

FIGURE 3.11. Chada *Yakhi* (Chanda *Yakṣī*). Bhārhut. Ca. 2nd c. BCE. Indian Museum, Kolkata. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

Commentaries as being a resident of a lake in Takṣaśilā.[40] Likewise, a *yakṣa* named Pūrṇaka, the same name as that of the *yakṣa* depicted in the narrative reliefs, is listed in the *Mahāmāyūrī* as being associated with the town of Malaya.[41]

It would seem, then, that these spirit-deities have been collected from throughout the subcontinent in order to be displayed on the rails and gateways of this early Buddhist monument. Although it is unclear which visitors to the *stūpa* would have know the origins of the spirit-deities depicted on the pillars, the labels suggest that it was considered important that visitors be made aware of which spirit-deities were present at the site. Furthermore, the depicted spirit-

deities, which are mentioned in the texts, predominantly reside in large towns or well-known locations, so it is at least probable that merchants or pilgrims would have been familiar with the identities of these beings.

Each of these spirit-deities presumably had its own *caitya* and cult in which it occupied the central position; yet here they have been relegated to the periphery of the *caitya* space, as the center has been reserved for the Buddhist *stūpa*. The architecture suggests a process of superimposition in which the Buddha and his relics were given higher religious value than were the surrounding deities, who simply mark the boundaries of the sacred space. When the sculpture is considered along with the literary evidence, it is not difficult to envision these figures as the tamed spirit-deities of the legends, here incorporated into the faith as guardians and devotees of the *stūpa* and its Buddhist relics. These works, like the tales discussed above, were reminders of the conversion process whereby spirit-deities were incorporated into the Buddhist context. They stand as visual markers of the Buddhists' success in taming and converting troublesome spirit-deities.

Despite their new Buddhist home, it seems quite likely that these sculptures located on the rails of Buddhist monuments continued to be offered devotion by the public. The textual accounts suggest that their worship continued to be an important element in Indian religious life, only now as part of a new Buddhist context. Certain aspects of spirit-deity worship were undoubtedly altered by this transition, such as the prohibition against the offering of meat and alcohol or their location on the periphery of the *caitya* space. Furthermore, the offering of meritorious actions or monastic donations seems to have replaced sacrifices as the surest way to win a spirit-deity's favor. The previously mentioned Vinaya story of the hungry ghosts who desired the merit earned from a monastic donation, or the tale of the *yakṣa* who would only be appeased by the donation of a monastery in his name, point to this change in practice. This shift in donation practices is made explicit in another Vinaya account, which is also has a parallel account in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*. In this tale, a brahman from Magadha feeds the Buddha and asks:

> What flows from the merit, what flows from the good of this gift, may that be for a long time for the benefit, advantage, and ease of the gods who reside in Pātaliputra! And may you assign the reward to their name![42]

The Buddha is greatly pleased by this suggestion, praises the brahman, and points out that "the person who has looked after the gods is at ease. He sees what is auspicious."[43] Likewise, in a passage from the Pāli commentary on the *Dhammapada*, we are told that king Bimbisāra made offerings of robes to the

Buddha and his monks. By his dedication of the merit of this offering to a group of ghosts who were haunting him, those ghosts were instantly and visibly "clothed in divine raiments."[44] Clearly offerings that generated merit, such as donations to the *saṃgha,* were effective in both pleasing and appeasing supernatural beings.

Despite these changes, many aspects of spirit religion seem to have stayed the same. For instance, portraying spirit-deities in sculptural form was by no means a Buddhist innovation. As we have seen, images of spirit-deities are among the oldest sculptural images found on the subcontinent. Yet by assembling these spirit-deities from across vast distances only to represent them in positions of secondary importance, the *saṃgha* was making a bold statement that challenged the very foundations of spirit-deity worship in India.

Although Bhārhut is unique in that its images are so thoroughly labeled, parallels to its spirit-deity images can be found on most of the early Buddhist sites in India. Kārlī, Kānheri, Sāñcī, Nāsik, and many other Buddhist sites all contain prominent images of spirit-deities among their decoration. As an example of the role of these images at a single site we can look to the rock-cut monastery at Ajaṇṭā. Richard Cohen writes about the importance of *nāga* images at Ajaṇṭā and refers to their influence on the Buddhist community at the site.[45] In this analysis he refers to minister Varāhadeva's inscription at cave 16, which describes the cave as "a splendid dwelling for the ascetic Indra [the Buddha] excavated on the finest mountain, home to a *nāga* king."[46] Cohen goes on to interpret this inscription by stating that:

> this mountain scarp's original inhabitant, its *nāga* king, was rendered homeless when the Vākāṭakas began to institute a Buddhist community at the site. The *nāga* needed a new place to live. And so, in addition to creating a home for Buddha, Varāhadeva's dedicatory inscription tells that he also excavated a new dwelling for the *nāga* king located immediately inside the cave's entrance.[47]

Cohen goes on to suggest that by displacing the *nāga*, the *saṃgha* had a special duty to tend to the needs of the creature and refers to Faxian's description of a ritual performed in the town of Sāṃkāśya as an example of what these duties may have entailed. Faxian writes that the local *nāga* "is the patron of this body of priests. He causes fertilising and seasonable showers of rain to fall within their country, and preserves it from plagues and calamities, and so causes the priesthood to dwell in security."[48] In return for this kindness, however, the monks were required to provide the *nāga* with a shrine and throne at which daily offerings were presented. Beyond these daily rituals, once a year

they were expected to "place in the midst of the [the *nāga's*] lair a copper vessel full of cream; and then, from the highest to the lowest, they walk past him in procession as if to pay him greeting all round."[49]

Cohen argues that the monks had an economic reliance upon the spirit-deities because their presence was believed to ensure the rains that pleased the laity, who in turn supported the monks. I would add, however, that this system of exchange presupposes the importance of the *nāga* at Ajaṇṭā and the public's recognition of the *saṃgha*'s ability to mediate on their behalf.

Similarly, in a fascinating article about the Buddhist rock-cut caves at Pitalkhorā (first century BCE), M. N. Deshpande links the descriptions of cities and their tutelary *yakṣas* as listed in the *Mahāmāyūrī* to an important trade route stretching from Bharukachcha to Pratiṣṭhāna.[50] He then links modern Pitalkhorā with the ancient site of Pitaṅgalya and identifies Saṅkārin as the *yakṣa* who called this location home prior to Buddhist construction. This evidence provides yet another example of what has become a familiar pattern in which the abode of a spirit-deity has, once again, been transformed into an important Buddhist monastic center. Among finds from the site, the figure of a *yakṣa,* originally from the door jamb of Cave 3 and currently in the Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai, may be a representation of the resident spirit-deity (figure 3.12). The fact that the figure is dressed in royal garb, has large forward-staring eyes, and has elephant's ears all point to its attribution as a spirit-deity of some importance. And, although the figure is not labeled, we can cautiously identify the image as a representation of Saṅkārin, the *yakṣa* that the *Mahāmāyūrī* mentions as residing in this mountainous location. But regardless of this particular image's identity, the textual accounts make it clear that the site of Pitalkhorā was believed to be home to more than just Buddhist monks.

Other spirit-deity images were included in the original construction of the rock-cut caves at Pitalkhorā. Large door-guardian figures, which may or may not be depictions of spirit-deities, can still be seen at the lowest point of the monastic complex where they were positioned as part of an ornate entryway leading up to Cave 4, a monastic residence (figure 3.13). These massive spear-bearing guardians are situated on the gateway and are directly adjacent to a large five-headed *nāga*. Also carved into the rock of the passageway is an ingeniously constructed series of gutters that collected runoff from the mountains above and channeled the water out of the *nāga's* five mouths. In the rainy season, this serpent would have sprayed water toward the doorway and into the path of visitors. Although we cannot be certain if this engineering feat was constructed for fanciful, ritual, or utilitarian reasons, we can be certain that an association is being made between *nāgas*, the monastery, and the presence of

FIGURE 3.12. *Yakṣa*. Pitalkhorā. 2nd c. BCE. Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai. Photo courtesy of Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai.

FIGURE 3.13. Entryway with Guardians and *Nāga*. Pitalkhorā. Ca. 100–70 BCE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

water. The presence of this *nāga* on the gateway of a Buddhist monastery may also suggest a link between the abundance of rains and the actions of the monastic community as caretakers of the spirit-deities.

In discussing the sites of Ajaṇṭā and Pitalkhorā, a new pattern can be identified in the placement of spirit-deities at Buddhist monasteries. At these sites the supernatural beings are not only on the periphery of *stūpas* and the Buddhist relics but are also in positions subordinant to the monks and nuns themselves. At both of these sites the spirit-deities not only flank the *caitya* halls containing the *stūpas*, they have also been placed on the outskirts of the entire monastic complex. At both Ajaṇṭā and Pitalkhorā, the approach to the rock-cut caves is guarded by the presence of spirit-deities that demarcate the limits of the monastic complex. They are often located lower on the hillside than either the *stūpas* or the monastic residences. This positioning seems to imply that the spirit-deities hold a less-honored status than the one ostensibly enjoyed by the monks and nuns.

The approximately twenty rock-cut caves at Bhājā (100–70 BCE) located in the Western Ghats, a little over 100 km southeast of Mumbai, are counted among the earliest extant Buddhist structures, and as such are useful in exploring the origins of Buddhist iconography. The iconography at *Vihāra* 19 is particularly interesting because it is both remarkably complex and well pre-

served. Although the *vihāra* is best known for the two large and complicated relief carvings located on the southwestern wall of the porch, here I am more interested in exploring the other decorations, which are often overlooked in discussions of the site.[51] Among these are several large representations of male figures that closely resemble the spirit-deity figures from Bhārhut (figure 3.14).

FIGURE 3.14. Guardian Figure. Bhājā, *Viharā* 19. Ca. 100–70 BCE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

Furthermore, like the Bhārhut images, these figures have all been placed in vertical, rectangular frames, which mimic the shape of *vedikā* pillars. This similarity to the Bhārhut figures and the fact that they seem to function as guardians make it likely that these figures are representations of spirit-deities.

I attribute the role of protector to spirit-deities primarily on the basis of textual accounts of such beings defending monasteries and monks from harm. In one tale from the Vinaya mentioned at the start of the chapter, for instance, we are told that an angry hungry ghost was unable to enter a monastery because "gods and *nāgas* and *yakṣas* who were devoted to the Buddha" were staying there.[52] In another text it is said that monks should call upon the *yakkha*-chiefs in order to gain protection from all manner of harm.[53] The role of spirit-deities as guardians of monasteries is more fully explored in chapter 6, but these two examples serve to show that spirit-deities were frequently understood as being sources of protection and defense. This realization, along with the iconographic and stylistic similarities to the Bhārhut images, allows us to be rather secure in claiming that the Bhājā figures are intended to represent some manner of protective spirit-deity.

The presence of these images is not limited solely to the exterior portion of the cave. Guardian figures are found even inside the main chamber (figure 3.15). The largest representations of these spirit-deities are found along the front of the *vihāra's* porch and along the left-hand (northeastern) inner wall of the monastery. If we include the two smaller Atlas-like images of spirit-deities (*guhyakas*?), found along the base of the back wall (figure 3.16), as part of this iconographic plan, the spirit-deity figures are found along three walls of the cave's perimeter. They are, in a sense encircling the interior space of the *vihāra*, just as their counterparts at Bhārhut encircle the *stūpa*.

Elsewhere I have argued that the iconography on the porch of *Vihāra* 19 functions as a *vedikā* rail to separate the sacred space of the monastery from the outside world.[54] If it is true that this imagery represents the symbolism of a *vedikā* rail being adapted to a new structural format, this means that the full force of the *vedikā's* potent imagery was being employed to demarcate sacredness within the abodes of living monks. The monks and nuns themselves, like the Buddhist relics, were being identified and set apart because of their spiritual importance. Here again the spirit-deities have been relegated to the edges, standing as sentinels in the service of the *vihāra*'s human residents.

Although the iconographic program at Bhājā suggests a hierarchical relationship between the monks and the spirit-deities, the stability and nature of that relationship remains ambiguous. That is, even though the spirit-deities have been placed along the edges of the sacred space they are clearly not devoid of power. Faxian's later accounts of rituals undertaken by the monks in Sāṃ-

FIGURE 3.15. Guardian Figure. Bhājā, *Viharā* 19. Ca. 100–70 BCE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

kāśya reveals that this comfortable cohabitation of monks and spirit-deities required maintenance and was subject to changes if demands were not met.[55] Likewise, the *Kṣudrakavastu* and *Pārivāsikavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* both stipulate that at least once a day verses were to be recited for the benefit of the gods of the *vihāra*.[56]

In the stories of both Hāritī and Kuntī we are told of disease goddesses who are tamed by the Buddha and who desire to hear the Buddhist teachings. They agree to give up the practice of devouring children, and in return the Buddha promises that they will be given sustenance from a portion of all the goods donated to the *vihāras*.[57] The importance of this arrangement is con-

FIGURE 3.16. *Guhyaka* Figure. Bhājā, *Viharā* 19. Ca. 100–70 BCE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

firmed by the fact that Yijing mentions seeing images of Hāritī in the porches and dining area of several *vihāras*.[58] Likewise, Elizabeth Rosen Stone mentions the presence of a seated female deity within a shrine at the Aparamahāvinaseliyas precinct (site 280) of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.[59] This rectangular shrine was situated within a hilltop area that included places for washing and assembling. Although we cannot be sure what interaction the monks had with this image, it is at least certain that this female spirit-deity was important enough to have merited her own shrine. In many instances the truce between the spirit-deity and the *saṃgha* seems to have been a conditional one, and shrines such as this may have played a role in the active maintenance of this relationship through periodic offerings or rites presented by the Buddhist community.

There is evidence to show that a standardized iconography of painted spirit-deity images was also incorporated into the building of a monastic complex. In the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvastivāda Vinaya*, the wealthy donor Anāthapiṇḍada is told by the Buddha to decorate the monastery as follows:

> At the outer door have a *yakṣa* holding a club in his hand painted; on the porch the Great Miracle and the Wheel of Rebirth with its Five Possibilities; on the gallery the Jātakamāla; at the door of the perfume chamber a *yakṣa* holding a garland in its hand; in the meet-

> ing hall the various elder monks drawing up the Dharma; in the refectory a *yakṣa* holding food in its hands; at the door of the strong room a *yakṣa* holding an iron hook in its hands; in the water hall a *nāga* holding a flask in its hands and ornamented with all sorts of ornaments.[60]

This passage not only points to the prominent and well-integrated role spirit-deities played in the daily life of the monastery, but the placement of these paintings suggests that the spirit-deities were understood as performing specific tasks for the *saṃgha*. Their images have been placed at locations that allow them either to function as guardians (at the front porch, outside the strong room) or to oversee public offerings (at the refectory, in the perfume chamber). In the only instance in which a *nāga* is depicted, it occurs near the monastic water supply, which, given the literary associations between *nāgas* and water, seems quite appropriate. Yet of all the spirit-deities mentioned in this passage, it is the *yakṣa* painted in the refectory that is the most telling. This figure is located in the hall where food is both donated to the monastery and distributed to the monastic residents. This spirit-deity is represented as holding offerings which may either suggest that he is partaking of the offerings, or is presenting them to the *saṃgha*. Either way, it would seem that offerings to the monastery did more than simply feed monks.

The architectural remains at Bedsā, a first-century CE rock-cut monastery in western India, provide evidence that the relationship between the Buddhist community and local chthonic deities was not permanently set at the moment the monastery was built. The physical evidence from this site points to an evolving and ongoing relationship between the monks and the local spirit-deities. Next to a cell door at the back of Bedsā's unusually shaped apsidal *vihāra* an intrusive image of a female figure was added (figure 3.17). This image, given a position of prominence in the *vihāra*, clearly does not form part of the cave's original decorative scheme. In order to carve it, the artist had to cut into preexisting decoration and upset the regularity of the cave's plan. Because this image cuts into previous decoration from the back of the cave, it clearly must have been added after the cave was completed and presumably in use. Its presence demonstrates that at some point in the later history of the site it became imperative, for some unknown reason, to include an image of this being within the monastic setting.[61]

It can be deduced that the nature of the relationship between the *saṃgha* and the local spirit-deities changed over time. Certain rituals or artistic additions were at times required to maintain the pacification of known spirit-deities or to tame new beings that emerged on the local religious scene. Yet these

FIGURE 3.17. Female Figure. Bedsā, Cave 11. Ca. 2nd–3rd c. CE. (?). Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

efforts were clearly seen as being efficacious by the public. Yijing (seventh century) describes a ceremony performed at mealtime in which a tray of food is set aside as an offering to "the dead and other spirits who are worthy of offerings."[62] The food to be offered is brought before an elder who sprinkles it with water and says: "By virtue of the good works we are about to accomplish, may we generously benefit the world of spirits, who, having eaten the food, may be reborn in a pleasant state after death."[63] It is then brought to "a hidden spot, in a forest, grove, river, or pond in order to give it to the departed."[64]

Rituals like this point to an ongoing monastic concern with tending not

only wayward spirit-deities but, it would seem, the unhappy dead, as well. Likewise, the proliferation of votive *stūpas* at many Buddhist monuments, some of which appear to have been built to generate merit for the dead, may also reveal a widespread faith in the *saṃgha*'s ability to provide relief to the dead and secure them a better rebirth. The importance of these so-called votive *stūpas* and the rituals described by Yijing raise some interesting questions, however. What exactly was the relationship between spirit-deities and the dead? In what ways were they similar or distinct? And how were their needs addressed by the Buddhist community?

4

Ghost Stories

The Blessed One said: "Gentlemen, why do you run away?"
They said: "Blessed One, hungry ghosts are coming."
The Blessed One said: "You must come back! These are your own relatives! If you consent, I could assign the reward in their name."

—*Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* iii.1.220.1–221.6

Ancestor Worship in Contemporary Practice

In attempting to understand ancient systems of belief, it is occasionally helpful to look at contemporary practices that descend from those early systems. This exercise reveals similarities between the current practices among some groups in India and ancient aspects of spirit religion. Although it would be naïve to expect these traditional groups to have remained without religious innovation during the roughly twenty-five hundred years that separate us from the time of the Buddha, we can gain occasional insights into ancient practices by examining their current religious systems. The information provides us a model by which to better understand ancient practices, revealing consistencies over time and fruitful avenues for further research.

One of the most interesting examples of contemporary religious practices can be found among the Sora of eastern India. This community lives in the region of central India located along the border between Orissa and Andhra Pradesh, an area that was crucial in the

development and spread of ancient Buddhism. According to their beliefs, the dead enter a series of stages after death that gradually render them both more benign and more detached from the living. In the first stage, the spirits of the dead, or *sonums*, enter a location in the local environment that is traditionally associated with the way in which they died.[1]

This association between the landscape and the deceased's manner of death is not directly causal but is dictated by tradition and, therefore, may appear somewhat arbitrary. For instance, the *sonums* of those who are killed by leopards are believed to dwell in a particular set of termite mounds, whereas other forms of death lead the *sonums* to different places in the local environment such as a path, a rock, a body of water, or a clearing.[2] At this stage the *sonums* are considered extremely dangerous and seek to bring death to others in that same way that they themselves perished.[3] Over time, however, and with the appropriate ceremonies, the dangerous dead can be transformed into ancestors who come to reside in the underworld, which is at least partially equated with the fields and pools owned by their lineage.[4] Upon reaching this stage, the dead are far less dangerous but can still cause infertility, drought, or disease if angered. On the other hand, as ancestors the dead are also in a position to aid the living by ensuring fertility in the crops and bringing good fortune in exchange for ritual offerings.[5]

These *sonums* and ancestors can be contacted through shamans and have definite and distinct personalities that are at times quite different from those the individual evinced in life.[6] Occasionally, these personalities fail to fade over time and become more akin to deities. For instance, the guardian *sonum* of one of the Sora villages, a being named Kidtung, has resided in this role for many generations and has become, for all practical purposes, a minor deity.[7]

Sonums, before they become ancestors, reside in locations in the wilderness, whereas after becoming ancestors they dwell within the village or cultivated fields. Notions of location and proximity to the living can therefore be significant features in predicting the ferocity of the dead. This transformative process has much in common with the widespread Hindu distinction between the harmless long-term ancestral dead (*pitṛ*) and the problematic recent dead (*bhūta* or *preta*).[8] Likewise, in the Buddhist literature we find that the movement of a spirit-deity from the forest to the village often serves as a signifier of a spirit's conversion into a benign state.[9] Proximity to the living is equated with the taming or socialization of the dead and gives rise to an important symbolic distinction between village and wilderness that pervades many aspects and variations of Indian spirit religion.

The Dhangar of the Deccan are another contemporary community among whom spirits are associated with natural features in the local environment.

Gods are believed to dwell in rocks or water, and tree goddesses are known to cure sicknesses or to inflict them on those who do not show proper respect. Similarly, the Dhangar tell stories of water-dwelling deities (*apsarases*) who can grant children and of *nāgas* who have the power to cure snake bites.[10]

Some spirits, in Dhangar belief, are said to go directly to Indra's heaven, while other spirits are placed in the role of divine assistants.[11] Specifically, the Dhangar say that an army of ghosts attends the god Biroba (a local form of Bhairava) as his warriors.[12] In fact, many of the village guardian deities have been found to possess the names of famous local rulers and minor kings. For instance, a dead local ruler name Ramachandra has become the guardian deity of an important Dhangar village. Likewise, a wealthy woman of the merchant caste who saved many villages during a famine is now identified with a protector goddess.[13] In both of these cases the protective spirits of the community leaders continue to defend their people even in death. In these instances the special dead are given a new divine status that perpetuates their memory while allowing them to continue in their role as defenders of the community.

These examples represent only a small sampling of the numerous religious traditions within India for whom ancestors and spirits play an important role. It is worth mentioning that both the Sora and the Dhangar consider their religious practices to be Hindu and commonly worship the major Hindu deities alongside local spirits or honor them in the guise of local heroes. I have chosen to discuss these two groups in particular because of the parallels they provide with ancient spirit religions and the insights they can provide into early practices. These religious traditions strongly demonstrate the intimate connection between the life-granting and life-threatening powers of local deities and the presence of the ancestral dead. In the above examples, a few important recurring themes can be identified which suggest continuities between these current religious practices and aspects of ancient spirit religion.

In all of the cases mentioned, the dead are consistently extremely demanding. They require rituals and offerings on a seasonal or daily basis and are likely to become angry or displeased at the slightest perceived offense. If not appeased, these spirits can cause fear, sickness, or death, but when properly treated they can fulfill desires, bringing good fortune and wealth. These are the same qualities that were used in defining the role of spirit-deities in ancient Indian religious practice and may indicate some continuities between modern, village-based ancestor worship and ancient spirit religions.

In many traditions the more recently dead the spirit, the more temperamental, needy, and unpredictable it is. Many of the ceremonies practiced within popular traditions are intended to transform the dead from the dangerous early states of death into the somewhat passive role of ancestors. The living seek to

transform the dead and thereby render them harmless. This transformation from unpredictable menace to benign protector is one that is paralleled in the Buddhist tales of conversion as well as in Buddhist rituals designed to transfer merit to the dead. A similar concern can also be seen in the brahmanical *śrāddha* funerary rites, whereby the deceased are granted spiritual emancipation through a ritualized offering of food. The relationship between the Buddhists and brahmanical *śrāddha* rites will be explored in the next chapter, but it is interesting to note here that for all of these groups the dead are usually seen as dangerous and unhappy until they can be tended ritually.

Another parallel between modern practices and ancient beliefs is the idea that proximity to a village or holy site can be equated with the placation or subjugation of a restless, dangerous spirit. Among the Sora it is by becoming an ancestor and moving from the wilderness to the places used by the living that one signifies this transition in the status of a deceased relative. As was noted earlier, in the discussion of the Jātaka tales, this move from forest to town was part of the Buddhist tendency to resocialize wayward spirit-deities after their conversions had been effected.[14] The movement from tree or pond to city gate or monastery signifies a profound change in the spirit-deity's relationship with human society.

The Dhangar have a somewhat different practice. It is their custom to place terra-cotta images and small terra-cotta homes in close proximity to the shrine of a major deity in order to help ensure the transformation of the dead from ghost to ancestor.[15] This tendency to place the dead in a sacred location or in the care of a higher being also has parallels in Buddhist practice. Specifically, the donation of votive *stūpas* that either held the funeral remains of deceased relatives or simply bore their names was a widespread practice that can be documented at sites throughout India. These small *stūpas* were believed to generate merit for the departed and, judging by the way these objects are commonly clustered around the main *stūpas* at many early sites, proximity to the central *stūpa* complex and relic seems to have been a major factor in their effectiveness.[16]

These ancestors are local not only in the sense that they are worshiped only by a certain community but also insofar as their power and influence have geographic or familial limitations. These ancestors serve as the guardians of specific villages and fields or, conversely, they are known to haunt certain cemeteries, roads, or pools. The parallels between these regional conceptions of death and certain ancient descriptions of spirit-deities are apparent. In the *Mahāsutasoma Jātaka* we are told that the cannibal *yakkha* can only kill those who enter the area shaded by the tree he inhabits.[17] Similarly, in the *Padaku-*

salamāṇava Jātaka the Bodhisattva evades a cannibal *yakkhiṇī* by crossing a river that serves as the boundary of her power.[18]

The contemporary cultural examples presented here are taken from only a sampling of the many Indian communities that have ties to spirit religions. For instance, the Jakkulas of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka claim to be descendants of *yakṣas*.[19] This bit of ethnographic evidence provides yet another possible association between spirit-deities and ancestors. In Tamil Nadu it is said that when childless women die they become *yakṣīs*; whereas, in the Deccan it is said that a *jakhin* (*yakhinī*) is the ghost of a married woman whose husband remarries after her death.[20]

Thus among many of these regional traditions, ancestors can be born into the role of a spirit-deity after death. Given the numerous connections between ancestors and the modern, village-based deities mentioned above, it is worth considering that in ancient spirit religions an intimate connection between ancestor and spirit-deity may have also existed.

Spirit-Deities and the Ancestral Dead

It is clear from the literary accounts that being born as a spirit-deity was usually conceived of as just one of many possible rebirths awaiting an individual after death. In the *Mahābhārata* fallen warriors are said to join the ranks of the *yakṣas*, while in another part of the same text we are told of a king who was born as a *nāga* as a result of kicking a brahman.[21] Similarly, the *yakkha* Sūciloma was born as a spirit-deity as a result of acting inappropriately while he was a human and a lay-follower of the Buddha Kāśyapa.[22] Even the great *yakṣī* Hāritī was born into her present state as a result of a spiteful wish made against her cowife in a previous life.[23] In a similar vein, the *Dhammapāda Aṭṭhakathā* tells of the *yakkniṇī* Kalī who is one of two wives reborn as spirit-deities that are perpetually engaged in a battle to devour each other's children.[24]

On a more benign note, in Vaiśālī a gatekeeper was reborn as a *yakṣa* who dwelt in the city gates and rang a bell to warn of imminent attacks.[25] A Caṇḍāla named Chaṇḍa was reborn as the chief of *yakṣas* as a reward for refusing to eat human flesh.[26] The *Mahāvaṃsa* tells of murdered servants who are reincarnated as spirit-deities and work to protect their killer's enemy.[27] Apparently even animals can be reborn as *yakṣas*, as exemplified in the *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, which tells of the *yakṣa* Śūlapāṇi who was a bull in his previous life.[28] Likewise, in the *Dhammapāda Commentary* we are told of a *yakṣī* who had been a cow

during her previous one hundred lifetimes but, after killing four youths, she was reborn as a *yakṣī*.[29]

These are just some of the many tales that illustrate the reasons for possible rebirth as a spirit-deity. In some of the ancient literature, however, we can see traces of different, probably older, religious practices that connect spirit-deities directly to the ancestry of specific families. These connections between spirit deities and ancestor worship are revealed in the literary accounts of spirit religions and the practices associated with them. Pāṇini mentions the practice of choosing names for children based on the names of important *yakṣas*.[30] Although V. S. Agrawala believes that this custom originated as a way to thank the *yakṣas* for their role in the conception, I believe that it may also be connected with a funerary custom found among some Indian cultural groups: Parents name their child after specific ancestors in order to help the dead find rest through an intimate association with the child.[31] Further, the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* mentions that *yakṣas* could, on occasion, upset *śrāddha* funerary rites and steal the offerings intended for the *pitṛs* (benign ancestors).[32] The fact that these offerings were desirable to *yakṣas* and the fact that they were believed capable of stealing them imply that the *pitṛs* and the *yakṣas* share certain similarities in their natures. It would seem that this is a case of the restless dead hijacking offerings intended for well-behaved ancestors.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence of links between spirit-deities and ancestors are the frequent associations between a particular lineage or family and a specific tutelary deity. In the *Divyāvadana*, for instance, we have the now-familiar tale of the child Śākyamuni being presented to Śākyavardhana, the tutelary *yakṣa* of the Śākya clan.[33] It is significant that the Śākya lineage group had a deity that was sacred exclusively to themselves. The presence of a family deity is usually associated with ancestor worship in that it is only descendants of an honored ancestor who are required to offer devotion. Likewise, it has been convincingly argued that Pāñcika and Nandā (Hāritī) were originally the tutelary deities of the royal family of Magadha, and the *Mahāmāyūrī* refers to a tutelary *yakṣa* of the royal Arjunāyana lineage of Rajasthan.[34] The *Anguttara Nikāya* and Buddhagoṣa's commentary on the text tell of the Vajji *caityas* that are home to the *yakṣas* of the Licchavi-Vajji family.[35] In reference to these monuments, the Buddha states that as long as the Licchavis honor the *caityas* their line would continue to thrive.

There is also evidence that not all ancestral spirit-deities were *yakṣas*. On this topic Zimmer writes, "serpent princesses, celebrated for their cleverness and charm, figure among the ancestresses of many a South Indian dynasty: a nāginī or a nāga in the family tree gives one a background."[36] The quote reveals that *yakṣas* were not alone in being associated with human families. Further-

more, it is interesting to note that images of the Buddha seated on the *nāga* Muchalinda, although almost nonexistent in the north of India, are common on first- to third-century Andhran monuments. This shift in iconography may be due to the regional importance given to *nāgas* in the south and serve as a recognition of their important role as ancestral figures. Given the importance of spirit-deities to Buddhist expansion, it should not be surprising that the occurrence of spirit-deities on Buddhist monuments would be directly related to the popularity of those spirit-deities within the region.

As a corollary to this observation, in the south it is also rarer to see the types of tall *yakṣa* images we find in the north. Instead, squat dwarflike figures are found in great numbers. Although some scholars refer to these often-impish images as *yakṣas,* I find it highly unlikely that these beings with such significantly different iconography should also be representations of *yakṣas.* Rather, these shorter images seem to adhere more closely to descriptions of *ganas* or, as Ellen Raven has pointed out, *guhyakas.*[37] Regardless of their identity, however, we can claim with some certainty that the occurrences of spirit-deities on Buddhist monuments were directly related to their regional importance. And we can further note that the association between particular spirit-deities and local ancestors was instrumental in determining this importance.

In the story of Kālī *yakkhinī,* the spirit-deity first resides in the rafters of a householder's hut, but being uncomfortable she moves successively to a flail hut, water chatty, bake house, store room, dust heap, and ultimately to the village gate.[38] Although it may not be readily apparent what this tale has to do with ancestors and spirit-deities, I find it revealing that in this tale Kālī begins by inhabiting parts of one family's home but, being "uncomfortable," she gradually moves out into the public space of the village. I would not be surprised if this tale documents the transition of an ancestral, family deity into a spirit-deity recognized by and accessible to the entire community. If this is indeed the case, this tale describes the transition from family ancestor to local deity that many important spirit-deities must have undergone.

Textual accounts like these have led Ram Nath Misra to see certain spirit-deities as tutelary deities associated with a specific family or clan. He writes:

> Thus it appears that the state of being a Yaksha could be obtained as a result of prayer and austerity, spiteful wish, fall from a vow, a preference for that state and evil acts. . . . In any case, these birth stories of Yakshas seem to illustrate that ancestor-worship had its unmistakable bearing on the Yaksha cult. It will be speculative no doubt, but it is quite possible that that Yaksha pantheon may have evolved as a result of deification of various departed heroes.[39]

He also raises the possibility that animal-headed *yakṣas* originate from a connection with totemic ancestor figures.[40] I agree with most of Misra's conclusions and only suggest that this process may have involved spirit-deities other than *yakṣas*.

The evidence points to a genesis for certain types of spirit-deities within ancient ancestor-based beliefs and practices. But regardless of their origins, by the time most of the Buddhist texts were composed, life as a spirit-deity was understood as being one of many possible rebirths granted (or inflicted) as a result of accumulated karma. The link between spirit-deities and the dead never totally disappears, however, and is still evident in the Buddhist literature dealing with "ghosts" such as *pretas* and *bhūtas*. In accordance with this metaphysical framework, the Buddhists developed ritual practices that would allow the living to aid the deceased, no matter the type of new existence into which they had been born. By transferring the positive merit generated through donations to the Buddhist community, the living could benefit and appease the dead regardless of their current state of existence.

Tending the Dead

The first chapter examined the terminology of spirit-deities. What emerged from this analysis was a varied array of terms that were used in an often-frustratingly fluid and interchangeable manner. Within this shifting set of names, however, we can identify characteristics and tendencies that relate to specific types of spirit-deities. *Nāgas* consistently have serpentine traits; *piśācas* and *rākṣasas*, with a few important exceptions, are universally fierce and ravenous; and *gandharvas* are generally ethereal creatures of beauty and passion. The greatest divide between categories of spirit-deities lies in the complicated division between what I term "demigods" and "ghosts," which in the texts are usually, but not exclusively, called *devatā* and *preta*, respectively. The differences between these types of beings are at times difficult to perceive but they can often be reduced to a simple question—is the creature relatively happy or is it tormented? Although this observation may seem overly simple, in most cases it can help to make a crucial distinction between the two categories of spirit-deities. One type is able to render help, while the second is in need of it.

Although such distinctions may seem unimportant, they have significant repercussions for funerary practice. In popular karmic cosmology, the differences between rebirth as a demigod or a ghost are profound. Rebirth among the *devatās* is one step below dwelling in the heavens, whereas rebirth as a hungry ghost, *preta*, is one step above the hells. In both Buddhist literature

and practice this distinction becomes important because with assistance a spirit can shift between these two states of existence. Whole texts have been added to the Pāli Buddhist canon that tell and retell tales in which believers, either for their own sake or for the sake of dead relatives, make offerings in an attempt to move from ghost to demigod. In all cases it is the *saṃgha* that provides the means by which individuals can effect this transition.

The category of spirit-deities that is usually translated as "ghost" or "hungry ghost" includes several types of spirits (*bhūta*, *pisāca*, etc.). However, the term *preta* (Pāli: *peta*), literally "departed one," is the one most frequently encountered in the Buddhist literature when reference is being made to the unhappy dead. The fifth book of the *Avadānaśataka* provides us with what have become the best-known descriptions of such beings. G. H. Gehman summarizes these descriptions by writing:

> The *preta* has a face like the peak of mountain, a belly like a mountain or ocean, and a mouth like the eye of a needle. He is nude but entirely covered with his hair so that he forms, as it were, a single flame. In his condition he utters cries of distress and awakens the sympathy of men.[41]

This passage emphasizes the *preta's* inability to satiate its massive hunger, and due to this vivid and disturbing description it is clear why this version of "hungry ghosts" has become the most standard, particularly in East Asia. The horrible suffering is commonly understood as being karmic retribution for excesses of appetite such as lust, gluttony, greed, and selfishness. As we have come to expect when dealing with spirit-deities, however, this physical description does not hold true for all cases. In the *Petavatthu*, for instance, arguably the most important Buddhist text dealing with *pretas*, we find no consistency in the way these beings are described.

In two tales *petas* are mistaken for both a *deva* and a *gandharva*, while in several others the terms *peta* and *yakkha* are used interchangeably.[42] This complex and mercurial use of terminology is perhaps best demonstrated in the tale of Aṅkura. Within this single tale a *yakkha* first refers to himself as "a yakkha I am, endowed with the highest potency." In a later passage, after being mistaken for a *deva* and a *gandharva*, the same being identifies himself by saying, "I am not a god or a gandharva nor even Sakka Purindada. Aṅkura, recognize me as a peta."[43] Although this creature identifies itself as both a *yakkha* and a *peta*, it is not suffering in any way and is clearly in a position to help others, which it does in the course of the story. Conversely, a second creature in the tale with crooked fingers, a distorted mouth, and dripping eyes is also identified as a *peta* and is most certainly in need of assistance.[44]

In short, we do not have the luxury of relying on descriptions or categories of spirit-deities when trying to determine if the being is a "demigod" or a "ghost." Ultimately, the only reliable gauge of a spirit-deity's status is the presence or absence of overt suffering. This lack of categorical specificity in the *Petavatthu* should not surprise us. The text does not seek to be a field guide to the supernatural; rather, it provides cause-and-effect lessons on the karmic consequence of bad behavior. This text, which was produced at some point prior to the fifth century CE and is related to second-century CE prototypes, identifies the *saṃgha* as the supreme field of merit. It is represented as the ideal institution through which to create positive karma for oneself or by which to transfer positive merit to a deceased loved one.[45] The ghost stories are simply a means to that end.

In the text one lesson is repeated again and again in various forms and with slight nuances: namely, selfishness and greed in this life lead to rebirth as a *preta* with all of the insatiable appetites and constant torment that are endemic to that state of existence. Furthermore, only proper behavior and generosity, particularly toward the *saṃgha*, can save one from such a fate.

Although we can make the general statement that rebirth as a *preta* is usually unpleasant, the text makes it clear that even within this category there are important distinctions to be made. The text contains tales of "mansion *petas*" who live in relative splendor within their magical abodes or "mansions" (*vimāna*).[46] Other tales stipulate that beings were reborn as the *pretas* of places or specific locations, such as "behind the moat on a frontier fortress" or, worse still, in a cesspool.[47] This type of *preta* seems to suffer horribly, but not with the kind of torments that are reserved for other categories of *preta*. For instance, various types of wandering *preta* are described throughout the *Petavatthu* whose specific forms of suffering are designed to match the crimes of which they are guilty. One woman who denied water to a monk is reborn as a thirsty ghost. She is perpetually unable to slake her thirst because water turns to blood before she can drink it.[48] In another tale we are told of a slandering monk who, after some time in hell, is reborn as a ghost with worms devouring his mouth.[49] In many cases the suffering is not constant. For those individuals who did both good and evil in their lifetimes, rebirth as a *preta* can have mixed results. A good woman who committed an act of adultery and lied about it was able to spend her days enjoying her *petī* (female *peta*) mansion but at night was devoured by a giant black dog.[50] Conversely, a hunter who gave up hunting at night was allowed to spend his nights in pleasure in a *peta* mansion while by day he suffered pain in a graveyard.[51]

In many of these cases the *pretas'* sufferings do not go unaddressed. Com-

monly, the *saṃgha*, or one of its members, helps the spirit rectify past selfishness and thereby overcome the horrors of their existence. Indeed, the text becomes polemic in asserting that no one is more adept at assisting the departed than the Buddhist community. Buddhist rites are represented as greatly aiding suffering beings even when brahmanical rituals have proven ineffective.[52] In most cases a simple act of generosity to the Buddhist community bears tremendous karmic rewards and, through the intervention of the *saṃgha*, human relatives can transfer those rewards to their ghostly ancestors.

The *Petavatthu* is at times paired with a second text known as the *Vimānavatthu* ("Stories of the Mansions"). If the *Petavatthu* is the stick detailing karmic punishments, then the *Vimānavatthu* is the carrot used to coax proper behavior by demonstrating karmic rewards. Rather than relating tales of what happens to those who misbehave, this text tells of the rewards awaiting those who are generous and compassionate. At many points in both of these texts, the authors boldly promote the importance of giving to the monastic institution by relating the profound karmic benefits of such acts. Because of this self-promotion and the prominent role played by spirit-deities in the tales, some scholars have seen these texts as having "mercenary motives" and referring to "a low type of Buddhism."[53] Such labels do little to help us understand the importance of the texts, which were not only considered significant enough to be added to the Indian Buddhist canon but were also deemed worthy of extensive commentaries by Dhammapāla in the fifth century.

There are a host of fascinating issues at work in these texts. Although it is true that the books openly and repeatedly encourage the support of the *saṃgha*, a strong majority of the protagonists in these tales are women or low-caste individuals. The entreaty to support the Buddhist community is also an inclusive invitation to participate in Buddhist ritual, specifically aimed at those segments of the population for whom such activities were normally forbidden. If we are looking for ways in which the *saṃgha* managed to weather the vagaries of royal patronage and remain strong in the absence of courtly support, perhaps these "low" texts are more important than they might at first appear. Where else in the history of India's early literature can we find a spirit-deity who rebukes a group of wealthy merchants and travelers and suggests they behave more like their low-caste servant? The spirit-deity enjoins the merchants to behave like:

> That barber, bearing the name of Sambhava, a lay-follower, who lives by brush and blade, know you this man, your attendant? You shall not ridicule me for he is a good man.[54]

Given the extremely low-caste status held by barbers, such a statement is remarkable and points to the role that a wide variety of individuals must have played in the development and support of Buddhism. These tales remind us that if we only look to kings and monks while ignoring the "barbers" of history, we are limiting ourselves to a small part of the total picture.

Although both of these texts portray frequent interaction between the community and the *saṃgha* when dealing with funerary matters, one wonders to what degree these tales produced or reflected actual practice. It is very difficult to trace ritual practice and interaction, but we can identify physical evidence at many early Buddhist monastic sites that points to a widespread public interest in the *saṃgha* as funerary experts. Specifically, at Buddhist sites throughout India the remains of thousands of small (roughly two- to six-foot) *stūpas* can be seen cluttered and jammed next to large central *stūpas* at most of the major sites. The main *stūpas*, more often than not, were believed to contain relics of the Buddha himself and seemed to have functioned as foci for the later construction of smaller *stūpas*. Many of the smaller votive *stūpas* (as they are usually termed) found at sites like Taxila, Sāñcī, and Ratnagiri also show evidence of having contained bits of ash and bone.[55] Scholars have demonstrated that the votive *stūpas* found at Buddhist sites are in fact funerary monuments dedicated to both the lay and the monastic dead.[56] Yijing writes:

> They [the Buddhist monks in India] sometimes build a thing like a *stūpa* for the dead, to contain his *Sarīra* (or relics). It is called a "Kula" which is like a small *stūpa* but without the cupola on top.[57]

This passage reveals that these *kulas* served as both visual reminders of the dead and, at times, containers for their burnt remains. Schopen points out that both Marshall and Mitra refer to the presence of deposits of ash and bone inside small *stūpas* at Taxila and Ratnagiri respectively.[58] Marshall identifies "relic deposits" in a group of *stūpas* crowded around the Dharmarājikā at Taxila, whereas Mitra mentions that subsidiary *stūpas* 3, 4, 23, 24, 25, and 115 at Ratnagiri all contained human remains (figure 4.1).[59] Mitra also mentions that many stray bones, both with and without reliquaries, were found in the *stūpa* area of Ratnagiri, which suggests either that many more of the small *stūpas* had formerly contained ashes or that some other type of funerary activity was practiced at the site.[60] Given the literary and archaeological evidence, Schopen argues that the empty sockets identified on many small *stūpas* were more than likely not intended for the insertion of a finial but were actually intended to hold the ash and bone of the donors or their family members.[61]

FIGURE 4.1. Small *Stūpas*. Ratnagiri. 8th–11th c. CE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

This pattern of *stūpa* placement can be seen at sites across India as layer upon layer of smaller *stūpas* have accumulated near the central monuments over generations of constant use. Alexander Cunningham informs us that at Bodh Gayā there were four tiers of *kulas* or votive *stūpas* stacked on each other over the course of centuries. He states that:

> carved stones of an early date were frequently found in the bases of the later monuments, and as the soil silted up, the general level of the courtyard was gradually raised, and the later stūpas were built over the tops of the earlier ones in successive tiers of different ages. . . . [S]o great was the number of these successive monuments, and so rapid was the accumulation of stones and earth that the general level of the courtyard was raised about 20 feet above the floor of the Great Temple.[62]

Marshall attests to a similar arrangement at Sāñcī, but unfortunately between the years 1881 and 1883 the ground around the great *stūpa* was cleared to a distance of 60 feet from the outer rail and any traces of the subsidiary *stūpas* were swept away.[63] Carlleyle excavated the great *stūpa* and monastic complex

at Rāmagrama (Rampur), which was the original site of the tooth relic. At this site he mentions numerous assemblages of small brick *stūpas* that covered the eastern half of the mound.[64] S. K. Mahpatra makes note of small *stūpas* surrounding the main *stūpa* and the Aśokan pillar at Kolhua, Bihar.[65] And Sastri notes an abundance of small *stūpas* at the Andhran site of Vaddamanu.[66] These are only a tiny fraction of all those sites that at one time contained large numbers of small *stūpas* or *kulas* arranged around the central relic. The archaeological reports on the main temple at the monastic complex in Nālandā state that as "the structure increased in size with each addition, the level of the court gradually rose, and many small votive *stūpas* are found in several places, completely or partially buried under the different floors and walls that have been exposed."[67] Even rock-cut sites like Bhājā contain examples of relatively small *stūpas* that appear to have been built as funerary markers for some of the monastic dead. The fourteen subsidiary *stūpas* at Bhājā range in height from 6 feet 3 inches to 4 feet 8 inches, some of which still bear the names of monks inscribed on their well-worn surfaces (figure 4.2).

From all of these examples it is clear that the practice of building *kulas* at monastic sites was both widespread and popular. Although these small *stūpas* often housed the remains of the dead, how are we to read their presence inside the monastery confines?

In his book, Schopen cites both textual and inscriptional references that help shed some light on the significance of these funerary structures. He cites both the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and Aśokan inscriptions that mention the making of pilgrimages to Buddhist holy sites.[68] Intriguingly, the text states, "those who during that time die here with a believing mind in my presence, all those who still have *karma* to work out, go to heaven."[69] Schopen interprets the significance of this text by stating:

> First it seems fairly clear that the monk redactor of the text thought that the Buddha was, after this *parinirvāṇa*, in some sense actually present at the places where he was formerly known to have been. . . . Second, it is equally clear that the monk redactor of the text accepted as fact that a devout death that occurred within the range of this presence assured for the individuals involved—and these were both monks and laymen—rebirth in heaven.[70]

He further supports his interpretation by referencing the *dhāraṇī* texts that have been found along with deposits of ash and bone at Ratnagiri, Paharpur, Bodh Gayā, Nālandā, and elsewhere.[71] These texts state that through Buddhist rituals the dead could be assured a pleasant rebirth:

FIGURE 4.2. Monastic *Stūpa*. Bhājā. Ca. 100–70 BCE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli

> Moreover, if someone were to write this *dhārāṇī* in the name of another (who is deceased) and were to deposit it in a *stūpa* and earnestly worship it, then the deceased, being freed (by that) from his unfortunate destiny, would be reborn in heaven. Indeed being reborn in the region of the Tuṣita gods through the empowering of the Buddha he would (never again) fall into an unfortunate destiny.[72]

These are powerful words that undoubtedly had a wide appeal among the devout. Yet, these *dhāraṇī* exts also point to Buddhist involvement in actual mortuary practices.

> If one, reciting (this *dhāraṇī*) over earth or sesame or white mustard or water, were to scatter it over the corpse, or if having washed (the body), one afterwards were to either cremate it or deposit and preserve it in a *stūpa*, writing this *dhāraṇī* and attaching it to the top (or head), then the deceased—although already reborn in an unfortunate destiny—being freed, would without a doubt after seven days be reborn in a blessed heaven, or else he would be reborn through the power of his own vow.[73]

Given this information, it would seem that the Buddhist monks and nuns quickly established themselves as experts in dealing with the dead. When we consider the tamed spirit-deities and ghosts mentioned in the texts and depicted in the art together with the so-called votive *stūpas* and funerary rituals mentioned in the *dhāraṇī* literature, it becomes apparent that the *saṃgha* had many spiritual weapons at their disposal, and they had a variety of means by which to deal with the dead in all their forms. One additional example that helps to illustrate this point is mentioned by Yijing. He describes a daily rite in which leftover food is given to beings such as departed spirits who accept offerings of unclean food.[74] This sort of daily practice suggests a familiarity with ghosts and spirit-deities that borders on the routine, and it would seem that these types of concerns were an omnipresent and integral part of monastic life at almost every level.

All of this evidence, taken collectively, reveals a monastic world that frequently interacted with both spirit-deities and the dead. No matter if the interaction is ritualized or impromptu, confrontational or familiar, in every situation the *saṃgha* are presented as the spiritual elite who possess the ability to placate even the most troublesome soul. The building of *kulas* is only one manifestation of a wider public tendency to turn to the Buddhist monastic community when dealing with perceived supernatural threats. In particular, fears over the fate of the recent dead seem to have been allayed through the construction of these merit-generating monuments. In so doing, the public was committing to continued devotion at the Buddhist sites. Each successive generation sought to build monuments to their predecessors, and this perpetual upkeep suggests a consistent lay presence within the monastic complex. Moreover, this public presence within the monastery undoubtedly served as a welcome source of both income and new initiates.

What are the implications of this relationship between spirit-deities and ancestors for our understanding of Buddhism? In what ways does the Buddhist proficiency in dealing with ghosts and demigods change our understanding of

the Buddhist tenets and practices? A few significant reinterpretations can be offered here. The next chapter will address a possible rereading of a central text in the Buddhist canon, the enlightenment at Bodh Gayā. The argument identifies in the tale a seminal act that sets the precedent for the process of converting spirit-deities and tending the dead.

5

The Politics of Enlightenment

"Of what use is my being born as a son when I have not worshipped at sacred Gayā and offered oblations to my parents and forefathers!"

—The thoughts of a young king in the *Vetālapañcavinśati*

Events at Bodh Gayā

Given the importance that spirit religions played in the propagation and spread of Buddhism, it is not entirely unexpected to find that the Buddhist literature both reflects and helps to produce the association between these two religious traditions. Armed with a new understanding of the development of Buddhism, we can look back at familiar Buddhist tales and recognize in them associations with larger social and religious trends. Perhaps the most intriguing and fruitful tales to revisit are the accounts of Śākyamuni's enlightenment at Bodh Gayā. Embedded in the accounts of this event are some of the core tenets of Buddhist belief; significantly, these tales also come to serve as a paradigm for ideal monastic interaction with spirit-deities.

The actions of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā in many ways serve as a model for all subsequent interactions between the *saṃgha* and the spirit-deities. It must be understood, however, that many accounts of the *saṃgha* and spirit-deities were written well before the enlighten-

ment tales were preserved in the forms that we know them today. When I discuss "precedents" or "models" I am therefore referring to the type of ex post facto justifications that are commonly found in the Buddhist legal literature (*vinaya*). This type of literature establishes a religious rule or paradigm that is retroactively linked with the Buddha, thereby granting weight and authority to the messages contained in the text. These tales function as religious precedents regardless of the actual, historical chronology. Although I am not claiming that all of the enlightenment tales adhere to the characteristics of Vinaya texts, I am suggesting that many tales of the Buddha's life participate in the same kind of precedent making that is found in the legal literature. The enlightenment tales are both reflective and productive insofar as they model appropriate interaction between spirit-deities and the ideal monk, Śākyamuni.

Śākyamuni's behavior leading up to the moment of his enlightenment can be read as exemplary insofar as it establishes a trope or strategy according to whose basic guidelines other accounts of interactions between monks and spirit-deities conform. The basic process by which Śākyamuni begins his meditation at Bodh Gayā and defeats Māra is mirrored, to some degree, in all tales of the *saṃgha* and its dealings with the supernatural. By claiming a precedent in the actions of the Buddha himself, the members of the *saṃgha* were able to validate their own practices regarding spirit-deities, such as those related to the placement and decoration of monasteries, as well as the actions performed by the protagonists in the Buddhist literary sources. Yet in order to appreciate fully the connections between the enlightenment and subsequent accounts of monks and nuns confronting spirit-deities, we must first understand the significance of the location in which these events occurred.

Although Bodh Gayā is well recognized as an important Buddhist site, it is worth considering this importance in relation to Gayā's role as a Hindu sacred center. In recent centuries an estimated 80,000 Hindus have traveled every year to Gayā, located a few miles from the Buddhist sacred center at Bodh Gayā, in order to perform the *śrāddha* rites intended to grant emancipation to dead ancestors.[1]

The importance and antiquity of these funerary rites are attested by the fact that the *Manusmṛti* dedicates a large portion of its content to a discussion of the proper execution of such rites, and the *Mahābhārata* names Gayā as the location at which funerary rituals could best be performed.[2] Furthermore, the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, in a discussion on pilgrimage, lists Bodh Gayā as a potent location at which obeisance should be made during the course of the *śrāddha*.[3] Although it is difficult to ascertain whether the region's funerary role predates the Buddhist claims to Bodh Gayā, I agree with Fredrick Asher's well-reasoned assertion that it "was Gaya that drew Sakyamuni to the place that has come to

be called Bodhgaya." More specifically, the "special sanctity" of the site attracted "Sakyamuni to the outskirts of Gaya where he engaged in meditation that resulted in the attainment of Buddhahood."[4] It was no accident that Śākyamuni chose this location as the seat of enlightenment.

To be precise, Śākyamuni reached his enlightenment and thereby became the Buddha (literally "Awakened One") in the forests outside the village of Uruvelā (Skt. Uruvilvā), which is located to the southwest of Gayā itself. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the area encompassing both modern Gayā and Bodh Gayā as "ancient Gayā," because much of the present discussion will be concerned with the way the entire region around Gayā was understood by the early Buddhist community. This region is located to the southwest of the ancient Magadhan royal city of Rājagṛha and is bordered on the east by the Nairañjanā River (now known as the Lilājān). This river meets the Mohanā River just below Bodh Gayā, where they create the Phalgu River whose waters, along with those of the Nairañjanā, play a crucial part in the *tarpana,* or "water offering," portion of the *śrāddha.*[5] At present, as it most likely was in the past, the landscape is dotted with sacred trees and shrines dedicated to deities of all types.

Although the modern names of locations within Gayā and Bodh Gayā often reflect Hindu beliefs, the textual accounts reveal ancient names that link the site with spirit religions and popular funerary practices. For instance, alongside the important sacred hill known as Pretaśilā (Ghost Rock) is a second hill called Ramśilā (Rama's Rock). However, in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* this same hill is referred to as Pretaparvat (Ghost Mountain), which suggests that at some point after the writing of the Purāṇa, Vaishnavite influence unseated the previous association of the stone with restless ancestral ghosts.[6] This early association between ancient Gayā and the ghosts of the dead is central to an understanding of the site's importance for the Buddhist community.

The textual accounts of ancient Gayā that have been referred to above are all part of the Hindu literary tradition and therefore tell us little of the way in which the Buddhists themselves understood the site. However, there do exist numerous Buddhist accounts of Śākyamuni's activities at ancient Gayā, which lead up to his eventual enlightenment at the site. Most of these accounts also tell the tale of a village woman, named either Sujātā or Nandabala, who brings an offering of food to Śākyamuni, allowing him to break his fast. Yet each version is somewhat different from the others.

In examining the textual accounts of these events in the life of Śākyamuni, one has a number of possible sources on which to draw. Here I will be relying primarily on three major texts: the *Buddhacarita, Lalitavistara,* and *Nidanākathā.* As is perpetually the problem when dealing with early South Asian literary

sources, establishing a firm date for these works can be a thorny issue. Because my argument is ultimately a historical one, however, it is important that we at least be able to place these texts with in a broad historical time frame.

The *Buddhacarita* has been attributed to the well-known author Aśvaghoṣa, and as such can be dated to around the first or second century CE, with the early part of the first century being the most probable time period in which Aśvaghoṣa lived.[7] The *Lalitavistara* is more challenging to date. It is often identified as part of the "Mahāyana" Buddhist Sanskrit canon, and some authors identify these qualities as being indicative of a late date. However, a Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara* was undertaken by Dharmarakṣa in 308, which confirms that a version of the text was known in South Asia prior to the early fourth century.[8] The final and latest text, which is also the one that scholars most commonly use as the standard "biography" of Śākyamuni, is the *Nidanākathā*, or "Story of Origins." This text is in fact Buddhaghoṣa's introduction to his commentary on the Pāli Jātaka and is usually dated to the early fifth century CE.[9] Therefore, these three texts can all be placed between the first and early fifth centuries CE and, despite their distance from the time of the Buddha, they are among the earliest extant sources describing the events of the Buddha's enlightenment.

In the *Lalitavistara,* the account of this event begins with an unusual description of the future-Buddha taking cloth from the body of a dead village girl in order to make a robe. This dead girl is specifically mentioned as being the recently deceased servant of Sujātā.[10] Although it is not explicitly stated, the inclusion of this detail may imply that Sujātā's offering to Śākyamuni does in fact have funerary overtones. As the examples from previous chapters have demonstrated, the spirits of both servants and unmarried women are among the most dangerous of the malcontent dead. A possible implication is that Sujātā's offering to Śākyamuni and the rewards this action earned were performed on behalf of her young and unmarried servant. Likewise, the text states that the Buddha left the village and entered the forests east of the city before partaking of Sujātā's gift. This passage is significant because it reinforces the funerary implications by taking the action outside the village setting and into the forests between Uruvelā and Gayā.[11]

These implications take on greater significance when we look to other accounts of Sujātā's offering. In the version of this tale found in the *Nidānakathā,* a veiled reference is made that links the Buddha's actions to those performed by brahmans during the *śrāddha* funerary rites. This reference is revealed in the manner by which Śākyamuni accepts and eats the food brought to him by Sujātā. In order to demonstrate this point, I have compared passages

from the *Nidanākathā* with sections of the *Manusmṛti* that describe the proper manner in which to conduct a *śrāddha* rite.

The *Manusmṛti*, or *Mānavadharmaśāstra* (*Laws of Manu*), has been an extremely influential text and is one of the earliest systematized accounts of brahmanical law. Although scholars believe that this text was compiled and amended over the course of several centuries stretching from the first century BCE to the fifth century CE, the majority of the text dates to the beginning of the first century CE, if not slightly earlier.[12] This text is among the earliest written records of brahmanical laws and customs, although most of these practices were undoubtedly part of brahmanical tradition long before the composition of the text.

Despite the reasonable amount of evidence indicating that the *Manusmṛti* predates the writing of the *Nidanākathā* (early fifth century CE), it is a good idea to be cautious when dealing with such an uncertain chronology. Rather than restrict the discussion to unidirectional issues of influence, therefore, it is more methodologically sound to understand the primary sources referenced in this chapter as participating in a gradual, multivalent, and highly negotiated shift toward Buddhist hegemony over spirit-deities. These texts functioned to report and, in many ways, to create this shift both in understanding and practice.

This interaction occurred not only among the Buddhist textual sources but also in opposition to the literary works of other religious traditions. For instance, it is clear that the authors of the *Nidanākathā* were familiar with funerary customs similar to the ones described in the *Manusmṛti*, if not with the actual text itself, and are implicitly challenging the efficacy of brahmanical funerary rites. Likewise, portions of the *Manusmṛti*, particularly those sections addressing the question of who may accept offerings at a ritual, reject subversive practices that might undercut brahmanical authority and exclusivity. In this way, both texts are implicitly polemical and seek to establish the hegemony of their own tradition by defining themselves favorably in relation to the behavior of others. However, although the *Manusmṛti* is overt in stating its claims of dominance, in the case of the *Nidanākathā* these polemics may not be readily apparent without some further analysis.

In the *Nidanākathā*, the young woman, Sujātā, places the food she intends to feed Śākyamuni in a golden bowl and brings it to him while he is seated under a *nyagrodha* tree.[13] Not only does the *Manusmṛti* recommended the making of *śrāddha* offerings in bowls made of precious metals but it also prescribes that *śrāddha* be performed under trees and in secluded places that are sloping to nearby rivers.[14] The presence of a river is vital for the ritual bathing that the

brahmans have to perform before eating, as well as for disposing the leftover offerings after the ritual.[15] Significantly, Śākyamuni, as recorded in the text, is seated near the river when he is offered the food. He places the food on the bank of the river and proceeds to bathe prior to eating. After eating he tosses the bowl, and any food that remains in it, into the river.[16]

Before eating, the brahmans were instructed to rinse their mouths with water and then pour some out of their bowls as an offering, and the *Nidanākathā* distinctly states that Śākyamuni accepted perfumed water from Sujātā before he accepted any of the food. Likewise, it is stated that the Buddha ate "without any water," which implies that Sujātā's gift of scented water was used for purposes other than drinking.[17] This assumption finds support in the *Mahāvastu* version of the enlightenment tale, which states that "the Bodhisattva took the golden vessel . . . and then the Seer rinsed (his mouth)."[18]

Likewise, in both modern *śrāddha* rites and in those described by the *Manusmṛti,* one of the primary items offered to the ancestors are balls of cooked rice called *piṇḍas,* which are made by the brahmans out of the ritual offerings.[19] Tarapada Bhattacharyya has pointed out that the milk rice offering given to Śākyamuni by Sujātā is remarkably similar to the food traditionally offered in modern *śrāddha* rites, thereby suggesting an additional link between these actions and customary funerary practices.[20] In the *Nidanākathā,* Śākyamuni takes this milk-rice offered by Sujātā and makes forty-nine *piṇḍas,* which he sets out and eats one by one.[21]

The number forty-nine can have several possible meanings. According to the *Nidanākathā,* it refers to the number of days the Buddha sat in meditation after his enlightenment.[22] In both modern Hindu rites and in the *Manusmṛti,* however, each of the *piṇḍas* is offered to specific generations of ancestors, and from three to seven generations can be attended in this manner.[23] Therefore, the number forty-nine, which geometrically raises the maximum number of generations aided by the brahmanical *śrāddha,* may be an esoteric statement of the Buddhist power in appeasing the dead. But regardless of the precise connotations implied by the number forty-nine, the previously mentioned parallels between the *śraddha* rites and Sujātā's offering at Bodh Gayā suggest that there is much more at play in this scene than the description of a simple meal.[24]

Bhattacharyya has suggested that the offerings of the merchants Bhallika and Trapuṣa, who are often noted to be the very first lay supporters of Buddhism, also have distinct parallels to the *śrāddha* rites. The tales of this event state that while these men are traveling through Gayā they are approached by a spirit-deity, which some sources suggest is a relative or is at least known to them. And at the request of this being, the two merchants seek out the Buddha

in order to offer him *madhupiṇḍaka*, or honey *piṇḍas*, which are a standard variation of the offering used in *śrāddha* rites. Intriguingly, whereas some sources say that seven of these *piṇḍas* were offered, others give the number as forty-nine.[25] Here the first lay donation to the Buddhist community is enacted in the form of a funerary ritual, and in some versions of the tale we are presented with the same numerological suggestion of Buddhist efficacy that was discussed earlier. The implication is that the merchants' offering to the Buddha is akin to the performance of the *śrāddha*; however, as indicated by the enthusiasm of the spirit-deity and the number of *piṇḍas*, this gift is potentially far more effective than any traditional rite intended to aid the dead.

According to the *Manusmṛti,* only first-born males may offer the *śrāddha* rites, and such offerings should be given only to qualified brahmans acting as surrogates for the ancestors.[26] In these rites, food is given to and eaten by the brahmans on behalf of the dead, and in this way the offerings are guaranteed to reach the intended *pitṛ*. Yet there is evidence which suggests that *śrāddha* rites were not always performed in such a manner. The polemic litanies of what not to do, as listed in the *Manusmṛti*, give us a good idea of what possible alternate forms of the *śrāddha* may have been. Significantly, the offering of food to the ancestors without a qualified brahman intermediary is vehemently prohibited. If a qualified brahman is fed, three to seven past generations are satisfied by the rite, but if an unqualified person is fed the rite can backfire and actually cause harm to the spirits of the dead.[27] This combination of promise and threat reveals the concerns of the text's authors and suggests that perhaps the brahmans were not always a central part of these rites.

The *Nidanākathā* enlightenment tale features Śākyamuni, a mendicant kṣatriya renouncer, assuming the role of the brahman officiate and undertaking the rites for a low-caste woman, thereby intentionally transgressing many of the restrictions expressed in the brahmanical codes. At least symbolically, the implication is made that this ritual is far more effective than the traditional *śrāddha* rites. The authors of the *Nidanākathā* are making a statement of authority in no uncertain terms. This ritual is represented as being simultaneously more inclusive and more effective than brahmanical rites, and it pointedly establishes the Buddhist efficacy in addressing the needs of the dead. In the *Sutta Nipāta*, a similar situation arises in which the Buddha tells a brahman that any person with proper conduct is qualified to eat the sacrificial cakes at his offering.[28] Although the brahman in this tale is conducting an *Aggihutta* sacrifice and not a funerary rite, the issues of exclusion and inclusion are quite similar to the situation we find in the tale of Gayā. Likewise, the Buddha's insistence on conduct and not caste as the criterion for participation may shed some light on the revolutionary significance of Sujātā's offering.

The *Lalitavistara* version of the enlightenment tale has many similarities to the story as it is told in the *Nidanākathā*. In the *Lalitavistara,* Sujātā and others of her village—ten women and five men of "good families"—have contact with the future-Buddha while he is still engaging in harsh austerities and before he has come to realize the value of the Middle Way.[29] They are the ones who bring Śākyamuni his meager meals of one sesame seed or a single grain of rice. During this time Sujātā prays that Śākyamuni will give up his austere practices and regain his strength. Further, she prays that she might be the one to give food to the future-Buddha if and when he finally does break his fast.[30] Therefore, on the night that he chooses to eat, she is awakened by a dream which informs her that the future-Buddha has given up his austerities and will be coming to accept food from her. When he arrives, Śākyamuni takes her offering of milk-rice and returns to the banks of the Nairañjanā River. Once there, a series of events similar to those described in the *Nidanākathā* takes place. Śākyamuni first bathes, then he eats and throws the bowl into the river. After finishing this meal, Śākyamuni returns Sujātā's generosity by giving a discourse on the Dharma for Sujātā and the local gods, thereby earning them all "great benefits."[31]

The *Buddhacarita* account of this event describes a similar series of events and, like the *Lalitavistara,* expressly states that Nandabala (as Sujātā is called in this text) received a profound karmic reward for her generosity. Specifically, the text tells us that "By partaking of it [Nandabala's offering] he secured for her the full reward of her birth."[32] It is noteworthy that both of these texts make a point of explicitly demonstrating that gifts given to Śākyamuni, even before he became the Buddha, produce remarkable amounts of merit for the donor.

In the *Nidanākathā*, however, this relationship between offering and reward is somewhat complicated because Sujātā explicitly mistakes the future-Buddha for a tree-*deva* whom she has sworn to thank for granting her a son. By openly taking the offerings intended for the tree-*deva* and then proceeding to perform actions that mirror the *śrāddha* rite, Śākyamuni seems to be undertaking a very unusual course of action. Yet, by doing so Śākyamuni is able to demonstrate his authority over spirit-deities as well as his ability to mediate between the living and the dead. Furthermore, by boldly placing himself at the center of ritual offerings intended for spirit-deities, the future-Buddha seems also to be inviting a response from the chthonic beings that reside in the forests around Gayā. After all, one would certainly expect such audacious actions to draw a supernatural response. And, in fact, these actions are at least partially responsible for invoking a powerful reprisal, which comes in the form of Māra's attack.

Before more fully considering the significance of Māra's temptation and attack, we can examine several other events that occur while Śākyamuni is at ancient Gayā, which can provide insights into the ways the Buddhist community understood the importance of the site. For instance, in the *Lalitavistara,* the relationship between the supernatural residents of this funerary site and the future-Buddha, who has been dwelling among them, is at times very ambiguous.

Shortly after giving up his extreme austerities the future-Buddha needs a new robe and is in the process of removing cloth from the body of a dead village girl (Sujātā's servant) when "the earth gods" call out in mockery: "Here is the Descendant of a great royal family, who not only has abandoned the sovereignty of a Cakravartin, but now stoops down for a dusty cloth!"[33] This harsh and critical reaction by the chthonic deities is complicated by the fact that a short time later a *devaputra* named Vimalaprabha, of the Śuddhāvasā realm (the highest of the realms of desire), gives Śākyamuni several saffron-colored robes, thus eliminating the cause of the mockery.[34] Similarly, after the future-Buddha washes his robe, Pāpiyan (Māra) raises the edges of the pond, making it impossible for Śākyamuni to step out. Only by asking for assistance from the goddess of a *kakubha* tree, who lowers its branches to him, is he able to step out of the water.[35] This type of highly ambiguous relationship, fluctuating between antagonism and respect, characterizes Śākyamuni's relationship with the supernatural denizens of ancient Gayā up until the point of his temptation and enlightenment. After Śākyamuni is directly confronted by the full might of Māra and continues unwaveringly to attain his Buddhahood, he is no longer troubled by any sort of spirit-deity which is not eventually subdued or converted to the Buddhist Law. The *Lalitavistara* also makes it clear that the Buddha has the ability to help these supernatural creatures by relieving their pain and promising a better existence:

> Even as far as the Avīci hell where there dwell underworld beings terrible to see, suffering is relieved, and all beings experience great joy. . . . All the hungry ghosts in the world of pretas, tormented by hunger and thirst, through the splendor of the Bodhisattva, obtain food and drink.[36]

In this way the text establishes the power and the authority of the Buddha and his ability to bring peace to even the most tormented beings.

Part of this effectiveness in bringing relief may have been directly related to the power contained within the Buddha's relics. Certainly, in the *Lalitavistara* version of these events there is a great demand for contact-relics, as humans,

gods, and spirit-deities all scramble to possess them. Sujātā collected Śākyamuni's hair after he shaved his head; the bowl he ate from was given to Indra by Sāgara, the *nāga* king (after Indra's first failed attempt to steal it); and even the water he bathed in was collected by countless gods in order to create *stūpas* for devotion.[37] The demand for relics expressed in the text suggests that at the time the *Lalitavistara* was written there was a similar demand for relics among members of the Buddhist community. Given the importance of votive *stūpas* built in association with Buddhist relics, it is probable that the scramble for relics of the Buddha described in the text would have been understood as being laden with mortuary associations. Votive *stūpas* are found almost exclusively in close proximity to relics of the Buddha himself, which seem to have had a special capacity for imparting both merit and repose to those interred nearby.

Although the three major accounts of the events leading up to the Buddha's enlightenment differ in significant ways, each of them emphasizes Gayā's association with spirit-deities and the dead. In each version of Śākyamuni's actions at ancient Gayā, the events culminate in the Buddha's defeat of Māra, and it is well worth examining the manner by which that victory is achieved. The victory over Māra serves not only as the model for self-realization but also becomes the paradigm for the subduing of intransigent spirit-deities. Śākyamuni's actions at Bodh Gayā carry a resonance that is to some degree reflected and reenacted in all tales of confrontation between spirit-deities and the *saṃgha*.

Reading Ancient Gayā

To recapitulate, the three primary accounts of the Buddha's activities all point to the importance of ancient Gayā for *śrāddha* and ancestor worship. Likewise, the texts identify ancient Gayā as a site in which supernatural forces are strongly present, forces that can be either helpful or dangerous. In short, the evidence reveals that there is a noteworthy significance in the Buddha's choice of location for his enlightenment.

What I would suggest is that the accounts of events that took place in ancient Gayā, culminating in the Buddha's defeat of Māra, set the religious precedent by which the *saṃgha* became known as a potent force in overpowering and taming the dead. Śākyamuni traveled to the epicenter of dangerous supernatural activity and there, on that spot, overcame the forces of desire and fear. The Buddha in the *Nidanākathā* not only travels to ancient Gayā to practice his austerities but once there he also accepts the offerings intended for supernatural beings and then proceeds to eat them in the manner

of a brahman performing a *śrāddha* rite. After doing so he spends several nights under a tree in the midst of the haunted hills and forests inhabited by the Lord of Desires, Māra.

With actions as blatantly confrontational as these, it would appear that Śākyamuni was begging the attack by Māra. Even today numerous stories are told of the dangerous *bhūtas*, *pretas*, *rākṣasas*, and untended ancestors that roam the region around Gayā at night.[38] It would seem that the Buddha's enlightenment, as it has been recorded, required not only great insight and concentration but also great bravery and the confidence that he was impervious to all of the forces of fear and desire that Māra could muster. Śākyamuni, as the perfect monk, stood immune to all the supernatural forces that even the foremost funerary site in India could throw against him, due to the nature of his practices and his vow.

In order to understand more completely the full range of implications embedded in this achievement, however, it is necessary to consider the nature of Śākyamuni's adversary. Māra or Pāpimā (the "wicked one") is, among other things, the Lord of Desires. He distracts, confuses and tempts people with promises of happiness that are intended to keep them trapped in the cycle of rebirth.[39] For example, in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* he encourages Śākyamuni to forsake his life as a renouncer and to reclaim his right to become a king, in hope of derailing the ascetic from his eventual attainment of Buddhahood.[40] At times Māra is closely associated with the god of desire and love, Kama, and is described as wielding Kama's Cupid-like bow, which shoots flowered arrows that instill desire in their victims. He is not evil as such, but he does embody delusion and therefore blocks the path to realization. Appropriately, Māra comes to be identified as the Lord of the Realm of Desires, the *Kamaloka*, and he is said to hold authority over all beings that are bound by their sense desires.[41]

Conversely, Māra is also a being who is deeply associated with death. Herman Oldenberg and others have demonstrated that the name Māra is linked to the Sanskrit root *mṛt*, meaning "death." In particular, Māra's name is linked to the causative form *mārayati*, meaning "he who causes death."[42] In this mode Māra can be both fearsome and terrible. And in his anger, Māra is supported by a vast and terrifying army that has the strength to intimidate or overpower his foes and rivals.

This association with both desire and suffering is a natural pairing in Buddhist thought because by encouraging desires Māra is also responsible for the perpetuation of suffering. When these two aspects of Māra are taken together he can be seen as the embodiment of *saṃsāra*, the chain of desire and suffering that produce *karma* and propel us through successive rebirths.[43]

Given this association between Māra and the cycle of rebirth, we can read Śākyamuni's actions prior to his enlightenment as meaningful in yet another way. It is possible to see Śākyamuni's actions, particularly as described in the *Nidanākathā,* as the performance of his own funerary rites; he thereby announced that his impending enlightenment would mark his release from all future rebirths (or redeaths) and, by extension, his freedom from Māra's power.

The actions undertaken by Śākyamuni in preparation for his enlightenment can be understood as a direct challenge to Māra's authority and a profound statement on the nature of the Buddhist teachings. Likewise, when he eventually shared his insights with others, his followers could also seek to free themselves from Māra's influence. In fact, in the *Māhavastu* we are informed that even two of Māra's own sons become sympathetic to Śākyamuni's teachings and refuse to obey the orders of their father.[44] Given these implications and potential consequences, it becomes clear why Māra seems so threatened.

Despite Māra's grand role as a potent and omnipresent figure who potentially embodies the notion of rebirth, he is frequently identified as being a *yakṣa*, *piśāca*, or some other type of spirit-deity. Both the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and the *Sutta Nipāta* refer to Māra as a *yakkha*, and the *Mahāvastu* identifies him as a *piśāca*.[45] These passages imply that Māra was understood as having a nature similar to that of other spirit-deities, unique only in terms of his power and importance. In a sense Māra can be understood as an, or perhaps *the*, archetypal spirit-deity. Just as a *yakṣa* or a *nāga* may have power over health and disease, fertility and famine, aspirations and anxieties, so too Māra only has power over desires and fears. He is entirely nonsoteriological in nature and is revealed to be subject to the very rules of rebirth that he works so diligently to perpetuate in others.

According to the *Majjima Nikāya*, Māra, like Indra (Sakka), fulfills a role that has been occupied by many individuals over the ages. Although there is always a Māra, it is apparently not always the same individual. In a fascinating revelation, the Buddha's devoted disciple Moggallāna admits that in a past life he was Māra and, after serving time in the Avīci hell, had the honor of being reborn as one of the Buddha's most trusted followers.[46] Even Māra, then, is subject to limitations that only the Buddhist teachings can provide the ability to overcome.

In previous chapters, we saw how the texts contain standard, somewhat formulaic encounters between spirit-deities and members of the *saṃgha*. The typical pattern involves monks or nuns who trespass onto the territory claimed by a spirit-deity and withstand the temptations and fears with which the supernatural being assails them; then, if possible, the *saṃgha* member effects the conversion of the aggressive spirit-deity. As will be discussed in more detail

in the next chapter, in these encounters the emotional state of the monk or nun is often at the heart of this contention. Those with equanimity prevail, whereas those who are given to emotional reactions inevitably fail in their aims. In a sense, each of these confrontations between spirit-deities and *saṃgha* members reenacts in a small way Śākyamuni's triumph over Māra. The texts inform us that Māra sends his own daughters to tempt the future-Buddha and musters his entire army to try and shake his convictions; when both of these formidable ploys based in desire and fear fail, Māra is revealed to be essentially powerless. This pattern becomes a trope that, in various forms, is repeated time and again in the Buddhist literature. When considering the placement and decoration of early Buddhist monasteries, one can easily see how these same ideas may have played a central role in motivating and explaining actual practices.

The challenges and trials that Śākyamuni faced are paralleled by the actions of the monks and nuns in the textual and sculptural sources. It is no wonder that only the most accomplished monks and nuns consistently meet with success. In this way, the texts not only establish a claim to spiritual authority by graphically demonstrating the monastic immunity to even the most fearsome powers of spirit-deities and the malcontent dead but in so doing, they also demonstrate the value inherent in the Buddhist virtues of nonattachment and equanimity. If, for a Buddhist audience, the defeat of Māra is symbolic of Śākyamuni's triumph over *saṃsāra,* then perhaps we can read the overcoming of spirit-deities in a similar vein. On this level, the taming of popular deities becomes an act that is laden with spiritual meaning. Such an encounter dramatically demonstrates one's resistance to the tendencies that lead to rebirth and mark the *saṃgha* as a worthy field of merit, with all of the donative consequences that this validation entails.

This reading of the Buddhist narratives suggests the importance of Bodh Gayā both in its associations with *śrāddha* and as the seat of enlightenment. Exploring this connection between the enlightenment and funerary rites reveals a further link between spirit-deities and ancestors, both of which relate to the early Buddhist preoccupation with the dead. In particular, this preoccupation seems to have involved an intense push to make the dead in all their forms Buddhist. This is revealed by the numerous conversion stories involving these spirit-deities and is linked to the *saṃgha's* emerging public role as spiritual authorities capable of protecting the public from the supernatural.

This willingness and ability to convert the dead does not seem to have applied only to the malcontent and restless. The numerous dedicatory inscriptions for the transfer of merit to the dead suggests that even the well-behaved dead could benefit from Buddhist intercession and conversion. We need only

think of the Buddha's journey to Indra's heaven in order to teach his dead mother the Law to appreciate the importance of this process.

It is this function as the keepers and tamers of the dead that brings us back to the presence of pre-Buddhist burial sites under the remains of many Buddhist monastic centers.[47] The evidence provided here helps to explain this trend by seeing it as part of a larger Buddhist preoccupation with the spirit-deities and the dead. Just as the Buddha traveled to the region of ancient Gayā, the ultimate center of ancestor worship, for his enlightenment, so too the early Buddhists sought to build their communities where they could most effectively and most visibly tend the dead. This caretaking, as we have seen, involved both taming the problematic or dangerous spirits and transferring merit for the betterment and well-being of all the dead.[48]

This interest in the supernatural residents of Gayā is also seen in the art. On the old railing from the Mahābodhi Temple, now in the museum at Bodh Gayā, there are images of spirit-deities, which are located on the pillars of the earliest extant *vedikā* rail (figure 5.1). These figures bear a remarkable likeness to the sculpture at Bhārhut and date to about the same period. Although these images are not named in inscriptions, they closely resemble the depictions of spirit-deities found at other sites. Not only are they dressed in a manner similar to the figures at Bhārhut but they are also shown standing on subsidiary figures or vehicles, just as many of the Bhārhut images are.

Furthermore, these images have been positioned on the periphery of the *caitya* space which echoes the same process of superimposition that we have identified in the sculptural program at Bhārhut. The Buddhist monument or relic, in this case the Bodhi tree, occupies the center of the sacred space, while these spirit-deities have been transformed into guardians and devotees. Given the nature of ancient Gayā and its relationship to the supernatural, this type of imagery should not be surprising. It is worth recalling that the conversion of the belligerent *yakṣas* Khara and Sūciloma took place in the region of Gayā, and that the *nāgas* Muchalinda and Sāgara called this forested area home.[49] Even the *Lalitavistara* accounts of Śākyamuni's time in Gayā describe an area that is literally teaming with *yakṣas*, *gandharvas*, *nāgas*, *devas*, and *asuras*. Granted that many of these beings came from other locations in order to witness the enlightenment, but even before this occasion many trees and rivers are described as housing spirit-deities.[50]

From both the visual evidence and from the textual accounts of the events at ancient Gayā, it is clear that this site had an important relationship to both spirit-deities and the dead. As such, it was an ideal location in which the Buddha could test, and prove, the power of his insights. His actions at this site not only opened the road to emancipation for his devotees; they also served to

FIGURE 5.1. Male Figure. Bodh Gayā. Ca. 1st–2nd c. BCE. Archaeological Museum, Bodh Gayā. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

validate a methodology by which the *saṃgha* could demonstrate their spiritual attainment and attract new followers. In almost every case, the interaction between spirit-deities and members of the monastic community follows a pattern, and the textual tradition can identify the origins of this strategy in the Buddha's actions at Gayā. The only development that we do not see in the enlightenment story is the eventual conversion of the supernatural being. Yet even this is eventually accomplished in the *Divyāvadana*, as the monk Upagupta does in fact convert Māra to the Buddhist faith.[51]

With this understanding of the processes by which Buddhism spread in India, and given its relationship to many of Buddhism's most important nar-

ratives, a new difficulty arises. How are we to read the role of the monastic community in this process? Are they duping the public for personal gain by exploiting the beliefs and superstitions of the masses, or do they also have a stake in these popular forms of spirit religion? Such questions carry weighty implications and are central to understanding the historical motivations of the Buddhist community in this process. These questions bear a closer look.

6

Policing the Monastery

When an unbelieving yakṣa heard them he thought to himself: "Seeing that these two Buddhist *śramaṇas* are going along engaged in talk of repulsive things their vital force should be snatched away!"

—*Mūlasarvāstivāda* Vinaya account of a *yakṣa* overhearing two monks

Pious Ghosts and Wayward Monks

The evidence gathered in previous chapters points to an intentional process of expansion undertaken by the Buddhist monastic community in which they sought out and converted spirit-deities in order to transform them into devotees of the Buddhist faith. This process gained the *saṃgha* a new social relevance as the public recognized them as experts in dealing with both spirit-deities and the dead. Yet in looking at this process with modern eyes one is tempted to see duplicity, to see the monks and nuns as manipulating spirit-religions in which they did not believe in order to further their own aims. At worst, the *saṃgha* may appear to be a community of conspirators bilking the masses in hopes of procuring a free meal. It therefore becomes essential to confront the issue of how to read the motivations of the *saṃgha* in this process and to determine how deeply the members of monastic community believed in the potency of the spirit-deities with whom they interacted.

Clearly no single answer is sufficient. The *saṃgha*, like any religious community, is composed of individuals and, no doubt, a vast array of motivations influenced their ordinations. Assuredly there were con-men and charlatans within the ranks, as certainly as there were saintly adherents who rigorously upheld the Law. Although it is impossible to divine the motivations that drove each member of the Buddhist community, it may be possible to discern the feelings of some by examining the texts. If we narrow the scope of our inquiry to ask simply, "How did the monks and nuns view their seemingly favored position in relation to spirit-deities?" many sources can provide us with insight.

Does the literature express a conscious awareness of playing upon the fears of the public, or is some trepidation expressed about the prospect of confronting spirit-deities and encroaching on haunted domains? We know from the accounts of Yijing and Faxian that the monks and nuns did not simply enjoy a one-sided immunity to the powers of spirit-deities, nor were they averse to appealing to local spirit-deities for help in times of need. Rites had to be performed by the Buddhist community in order to maintain a peaceful coexistence with the supernatural beings. Yijing describes the offerings made by monks to the powerful *yakṣi* Hāritī, and Faxian writes about rituals performed by the monks of Samkāśya in honor of a local *nāga*.[1] Such actions reveal that the relationship between spirit-deity and monk was somewhat ambiguous. Likewise, these rituals suggest that the *saṃgha* actively concerned themselves with appeasing the supernatural beings with whom they shared their homes, and that they, at least as much as the general public, were concerned with their relationship to such beings.

Numerous accounts exist in which monks or nuns turn to spirit-deities in times of need. Yijing describes a series of events in which the residents of a monastery appeal to a local spirit-deity named Mahākāla so that they will have enough food to offer a group of visiting monks.[2] Although this course of action is initially undertaken by a mother of a monastic servant, the monks clearly give their approval; it would appear that an active cult to this deity was thriving at the monastery during the time of Yijing's visit. There is little doubt that such actions were accepted and sanctioned by the leaders of the *saṃgha*, because the rituals that these Chinese pilgrims describe explicitly involve the entire community of monks.

Likewise, there are texts that encourage monks to call upon loyal spirit-deities in times of need. For example, Vessavana, king of the *yakṣas* (also called Kubera) is said to have personally given the *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* to the Buddha in order to protect his followers from dangerous spirit-deities. The text contains a series of *parittas* or protective verses that monks can recite in order to ward off fearsome *yakṣas*. These prayers call upon the forty-one *yakṣa*-chiefs (*ma-*

hāyakkha), who will defend the petitioner from all manner of dangers, including those caused by other spirit-deities.[3]

In this same text, Vessavana warns that *yakṣas* generally believed in neither the Buddha nor his teachings. The *Dīgha Nikāya* goes on to claim that the reason for this disbelief was the incompatibility between the nature of *yakṣas* and a moral code that prohibits killing, stealing, intemperance, lying, and promiscuity.[4] It seems that this tension between the *saṃgha* and their supernatural opponents could occasionally be quite dangerous. Fortunately, spirit-deities loyal to the Buddhist law inevitably come to the rescue when the righteous are in need. In the *Udāna* we learn that even the great monk Sāriputta was the target of a superhuman attack but, as is usual, a group of *yakṣas* loyal to the Buddhist Law subdued the offending spirit-deity and protected the besieged monk.[5]

The *Āṭānātiya Sutta* also contains a passage in which Vessavana warns monks that dangerous *yakkhas* often haunt locations that are ideal for meditation. He states that the *yakkhas* "haunt the lonely and remote recesses of the forest, where noise, where sound, hardly is, where breezes from the pastures blow, hidden from men, suitable for meditation. There do eminent Yakkhas dwell who have no faith in the word of the Exalted One."[6] This passage serves to justify the need for the protective *parittas,* which Vessavana imparts to the Buddhist community. In so doing, it becomes clear that monks and nuns were not automatically immune to the powers marshaled by spirit-deities. For instance, the *Dhammapada Commentary* contains a tale in which the residents of a village invite some monks to dwell in a nearby grove for the duration of the rain retreat.[7] The spirit-deities who reside in the grove's trees feel it is improper to dwell higher than the monks, so they decide to leave until the monks move on. But when they learn that the monks plan to stay there for three months, the spirit-deities begin to haunt them with eerie voices, illnesses, and visions of disembodied heads in hope that the monks will vacate the forest. Finally the Buddha gives the frightened monks a *paritta* that when recited makes all the nearby spirit-deities inclined to be helpful and refrain from their fearsome activities. Similarly, in the *Khuddakapāṭha* the Buddha gives Ananda a *paritta* that is so powerful that some of the spirit-deities literally break through the walls in order to escape his recitation of the spell.[8]

There was clearly a perceived need for these protective wards and a recognition that by simply being a member of the monastic community one was subject to supernatural challenges. It seems, however, that the Buddhist renouncers were not alone in facing this danger. In the Jain literature an interesting parallel can be found. According to the *Bṛhatkalpabhāṣya*, certain *yakṣas* took pleasure in feeding monks after dark, thereby making them break one of

their vows.[9] And whereas monks who were tricked into forsaking their vows were rendered vulnerable, those who were true to their vows had the power to subdue spirit-deities.

The Jain example succinctly reveals a crucial caveat that also applies to the relationship between the Buddhist monastic community and spirit-deities, namely, only those who are strict in adhering to their vows are safe. Lapses in obedience to monastic rules or proper decorum leave monks vulnerable to the worldly dangers embodied by spirit-deities, and at these risky moments only the intervention of trustworthy spirit-deities can prevent disaster. A tale from the *Kṣudrakavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstvādin* Vinaya illustrates this point clearly:

> A senior and a junior monk had set out on the road and as they went they were talking about repulsive things. When an unbelieving *yakṣa* heard them he thought to himself: "Seeing that these two Buddhist *śramaṇas* are going along engaged in talk about repulsive things their vital force should be snatched away!" So thinking he followed them. He again thought: "What is past is past. But if now they are still talking about repulsive things their vital force must most surely be snatched away!"
>
> While he was thinking in this way and following them another *yakṣa*, one possessed of faith, came to that place. He asked the first *yakṣa*: "Friend, where are you going?" The other told him what had occurred.
>
> The second *yakṣa* said: "Friend, since these monks are practitioners of austerities they are assuredly engaged in talk about Dharma as they go along. Besides, what have these monks done to you? Wait awhile and we can have a friendly chat with each other as we go along."
>
> The first *yakṣa* said: "Since, friend, I will most certainly not let these two escape, come on! Let's get going!" Knowing that he could divert him for a time, the second *yakṣa* joined him and they followed those two monks.[10]

As the monks travel they continue to talk of "repulsive" things, but eventually they must part ways. At this moment the first *yakṣa* feels he must strike, but the *yakṣa* who was possessed of faith intervenes at the last moment and convinces the first *yakṣa* that the monks were indeed discussing the Dharma, thereby saving their lives. He does this by pointing out the last thing the monks said to each other—their farewells—contained words that expressed a deep understanding of the Buddhist Law. Despite his success, the loyal *yakṣa* is not

pleased at the behavior of the monks or at having to intervene on their behalf. He therefore seeks out the Buddha to express his concerns:

> When he had arrived there and honored with his head the feet of the Blessed One, he sat down to one side. So seated the *yakṣa* said this to the Blessed One: "Reverend One, there are fierce nonhumans and *yakṣa* who do not believe in the teachings of the Blessed One constantly hanging around and present. Reverend One, those who believe are few. Although fierce nonhumans and *yakṣas* who have faith in the teaching of the Blessed One are also constantly around, the fierce *yakṣas* who have no faith in the Blessed One and are constantly around are far more numerous."[11]

The *yakṣa* then tells the Buddha about the events that transpired on the road and urges him to instruct his monks to be mindful of their words while traveling in public. The Buddha assents to the request and states: "Monks, I have heard from a *yakṣa* that while monks were going along on the road talking about the repulsive, unbelieving *yakṣas* were trying to get at them and looking for a chance."[12] The Buddha then uses this opportunity to set forth the rules of decorum for traveling monks.

This tale reveals a fascinating dynamic at work. It implies that monks who break their vows or act without discretion are susceptible to supernatural attacks, and the threat of imminent danger works to discourage monks from inappropriate behavior, even while they are away from the disciplining gaze of the senior monks. By qualifying the circumstances under which monks can be defeated by spirit-deities, the *yakṣas* and other such beings serve to enforce adherence to the monastic codes. The spirit-deities function to police the *saṃgha*, ensuring the obedience of its members. The writer of the text makes a point of mentioning that faithful spirit-deities are outnumbered and cannot always prevent their unbelieving counterparts from assaulting those monks who make themselves vulnerable. And even if the Buddhist spirit-deities are successful in preventing physical harm, there is still the possibility that these elusive spies will report infractions of the code to the monastic elders.

In this way the disciplining aspects of spirit-deities even apply to tamed spirit-deities who adhere to the Buddhist Law and share the residential space of the monastery with the *saṃgha*. For instance, in the same Vinaya there is a passage concerning the proper way to sweep a monastery. We are told that certain monks "did their work while holding a broom in their hand and talking of repulsive things, and when the nonhuman beings and the other monks censured them the Blessed One said: 'The sweeping must be done with con-

sidered talk conforming to the Dharma or with the silence of the Noble One!' "[13] This passage tells us that "nonhuman beings," a common term referring to spirit-deities, scolded monks who spoke of inappropriate things while going about their chores. It is significant that in both of the Vinaya stories quoted in this chapter, spirit-deities are mentioned in tales that deal with curtailing inappropriate speech. Elder monks cannot constantly monitor such infractions; by invoking the aid of omnipresent, invisible, and potentially dangerous spirit-deities, they ensure that wayward monks think twice before disregarding the rules.

This type of policing activity is associated with *yakṣas* in other texts, as well. For instance, in the beginning of the *Maṇimekhalai*, the city of Puhār is having a festival in honor of its guardian deity, who resides at the main crossroads. This spirit, although easily angered, uses his powers to watch the marketplace, constantly looking for crimes. When he sees them, he catches the offenders in his rope, beats them to death, and eats them. Although the Buddhist spirit-deities are commonly not as bloody or heavy-handed, they serve a similar function as supernatural deterrents of improper behavior.[14]

At times this close interaction between spirit-deities and monks gives rise to some rather odd situations. One such case also occurs in the Vinaya and again concerns the monastic practice of wearing robes made of cloth taken from corpses found on the cemetery grounds. It reveals a complex hierarchy that exists between spirit-deities and the monastic community.

In this tale the son of a perfumer falls ill and asks to be wrapped in his favorite blanket after death. Due to his attachment to the blanket, the unfortunate boy is reborn as a hungry ghost with goiters. Soon the monks hear of the wonderful blanket left in the cemetery, and the monk Kālananda goes out to procure the cloth:

> Kālananda hurried to the cemetery and grabbed it, but that nonhuman who had formerly been the boy said: "Noble Kālananda, you must not take my woolen blanket!"
>
> Since a cemetery-dwelling monk is generally one of courage, Kālananda said to him: "Hungry one, you were reborn among the hungry ghosts who have goiters because of your excessive attachment to this woolen blanket. Do you want to be reborn in hell? Let go!"
>
> But the hungry ghost did not let go. Because of his own excessive attachment to that blanket, the monk kicked him with his foot and stripped the blanket off. Then taking it with him, he went to the Jetavana [monastery].

> The hungry ghost followed behind him wailing, saying "Noble Kālananda, return the woolen blanket!" Furious, he too went to the Jetavana.
>
> Since gods and *nāgas* and *yakṣas* who were devoted to the Buddha were staying in the Jetavana, the hungry ghost, being considered of little power, was not able to enter and sat wailing at the door.[15]

Eventually the Buddha hears the hungry ghost wailing at the gate and discerns that if the blanket is not returned the ghost will "vomit warm blood and die," due to his attachment. Therefore, Kālananda is ordered to return the blanket to the boy's corpse in the cemetery, and the Buddha uses this event as an opportunity to set forth rules regarding the removal of cloth from funerary grounds. Kālananda eventually follows the Buddha's instructions, but not before the ghost gets his revenge and gives a swift kick to the belligerent monk.

This astounding and perplexing tale presents a series of escalating power relationships between spirit-deities and monks. The courageous cemetery-dwelling monk Kālananda cannot be intimidated by the dead boy's hungry ghost and even goes so far as to kick the unhappy spirit away from his cloth. In this instance the weak, newly "born" spirit is incapable of punishing the monk, particularly after Kālananda takes refuge in the monastery and is defended by all manner of powerful spirit-deities. However, his suffering does not escape the attention of the Buddha, who is displeased at the monk's behavior and forces him to return the blanket to the needy ghost. In fact, the text even refers to the monk's "excessive attachment" to the blanket, and his *karma* appears to come full circle as the ghost (or, more specifically, the ghost's corpse) delivers a parting kick to the reprimanded monk.

In every previous tale it was the monks who were at risk because of angering observant spirit-deities, in this very unusual case it is the spirit-deity who needs protection from a monk. In all, it is difficult to determine if the monks or the spirit-deities are ultimately more powerful. The outcomes of specific confrontations between spirit-deities and monks seem to hinge on the circumstances and on the respective accomplishments of the participants. In this instance, the pathetic "hungry ghost with goiters" is no match for a cemetery-dwelling monk, whereas in other cases the spirit-deities represent an unmistakable threat.

This ambiguity surrounding the interaction between members of the *saṃgha* and spirit-deities is perhaps nowhere as clearly expressed as in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Within this legal text some surprising situations are presented. The first account briefly states: "At one time a certain monk who was an ex-

orcist [*bhūtavejjaka*] deprived a yakkha of life. He was remorseful."[16] This passage makes it clear that some monks acted as exorcists and that at times their dealings with *yakkhas* resulted in the demise of the offending spirit-deity. The very next case in this same Vinaya, however, presents us with a remarkably different situation: "At one time a monk sent a certain monk to a vihāra inhabited by a predatory yakkha. The yakkha deprived him of life."[17] This case succinctly presents a situation in which a monk is clearly no match for the *yakkha* he is forced to confront. In this instance, the surviving monk is not guilty of an offense because the death was unintentional. However, this case has a corollary in which a monk sends another monk into a *vihāra* inhabited by a predatory *yakkha* "meaning to cause his death" and, not surprisingly, in this instance a grave offense is earned.[18] According to the legal codes, it would seem this is a case of murder by *yakkha*.

When taken together these cases reveal the uneven and inconsistent relationship that exists between these two groups: in one case the monk kills the *yakkha*, while in the second the opposite occurs. It is remarkable that a Buddhist legal text acknowledges both of these situations as possibilities. These cases demonstrate how real these beings were to the monks who wrote the texts and remind us that the outcome of a confrontation between a monk and a spirit-deity was never considered a foregone conclusion.

An equally ambiguous set of circumstances seems to surround the issue of monks being possessed by spirit-deities. In the first chapter I summarized a tale in which a *yakkhi* possesses a former monk, who was her son in a previous life, in order to get him to reenter the monastery. Eventually the young man does so, at least in part because "[t]hey that lead the Holy Life, With such, ogres do not sport."[19] Other cases make it perfectly clear, however, that at times even monks and nuns who are still members of the monastic community are not immune from unwanted possession. For instance, the *Vinaya Piṭaka* lists possession by a *piśāca* as one of the valid reasons for breaking the rain retreat.[20] In a related set of circumstances from the same Vinaya, a nonhuman seizes, or possesses, a monk. Immediately afterward, a fellow monk begins to strike the possessed man in hope of driving out the spirit. Unfortunately, his overzealous actions end up killing the first monk. Despite the odd and violent nature of these circumstances, the text goes on to state that because the aggressor did not intend to bring about the death of the possessed monk, his actions are free from offense.[21] Only had he intended to cause the other monk harm he would have been guilty of a punishable offense.

There is even some evidence to suggest that monks could at times be prevailed upon to function as exorcists for the general public. The *Dhammapada Commentary* contains a rather complicated tale in which a monk takes

up residence in a cave. His presence turns out to be unbearable for a nonbelieving *yakkhi* who had been living in the same cave, and she is compelled to leave. Although she is powerless to force the monk to vacate her former home, she eventually comes up with a plan to trick him. The goddess possesses a lay donor's son and tells the family that only water used in washing the virtuous monk's feet will have the power to help the boy. After the monk rushes to the donor's home and provides the water to cure the possessed child, the *yakkhi* appears and tells the monk to stay away from her cave—on the grounds that he is a now a physician and not a monk. The monk ignores her threats and through his virtue casts her out of the cave permanently.[22]

In these few examples dealing with possession and exorcism, it is hard to determine exactly which circumstances help shift the outcome in favor of the monk or the spirit-deity. The legal texts seem most concerned with protecting individuals who seek to avoid being possessed or who try to help others who are suffering such a fate, despite their dubious success in doing so. In both the tale of the possessed novice and in the tale of the cave-dwelling monk, however, virtue and adherence to the monastic life are mentioned as criteria that are helpful in overcoming confrontational spirit-deities. Proper behavior may thus be, at least in part, the key to monastic success in such hostile dealings.

In some instances, however, Buddhist spirit-deities actually call upon the *saṃgha* to assist them in times of need. In one tale, also from the *Mūlasārvastivāda Vinaya*, a tree-dwelling spirit-deity whose home had been cut down in order to make a *vihāra* asks the Buddha for assistance in finding shelter for the coming cold season. The Buddha instructs one of the deities living in the monastery to share its home with the evicted spirit-deity. Although the deities are content to share a home, this incident draws criticism from other gods, who state: "Hah! These Buddhist Śramaṇas—they are completely corrupt in good practices. This is neither lovely nor in harmony with morality." As a result of these comments, the Buddha stipulates that:

> If a monk who is the Superintendent of Building Operations will in seven or eight days cut down a tree, at the root of that tree he should make a circle. He should as well offer perfumes and flowers and oblations. He should also read the *Tridaṇḍaka*. He should too assign the reward, and too he should further the paths of the ten good actions and declare what is blame worthy about the paths of ten bad actions. To the deity who dwells in that tree he should say: "Seek out another dwelling! This tree will be used for the needs of the Stūpa, of the Dharma, or of the community." After that, in seven

> or eight days, that tree is to be cut down. If a living thing appears it is not to be cut down. But if none appears it is to be cut. If a monk who is Superintendent of Building Operations does not insure that the rules of customary behavior are taken up and practiced as they were designated, he becomes guilty of an offense.[23]

Both the Buddha and the other monks described in the previous quotes are clearly concerned with keeping the spirit-deities placated. What emerges is the image of an uneasy truce whose success hinges on conformity to established modes of behavior that are set forth in the Buddhist monastic codes. These tales are all taken from texts that dictate rules of monastic behavior, in which the spirit-deities function as a means of enforcing the law. Although they demand adherence to the rules of behavior, the supernatural residents of the monastery also serve to defend the monks from ghostly attacks. This point was demonstrated when the "hungry ghost with goiters" was prevented from entering the monastery by the "gods and *nāgas* and *yakṣas* who were devoted to the Buddha."[24] It would seem that Buddhist spirit-deities protected the *saṃgha* from threats originating both outside the monastery and within.

There are several tales in which the monastery acts as a safe zone for those fleeing from dangerous spirit-deities and, in most cases, it is the powerful spirit-deities that reside in the monastery that are given credit for keeping the hostile, supernatural forces at bay. In the *Dhammapada Commentary*, a young mother rushes into a monastery in order to protect her infant from an ogress that seeks to devour the child. Once she crosses the boundary into the monastic complex, the spirit-deity of the monastery gate, Sumana, prevents the ogress from following.[25] Similarly, the *Petavatthu* contains a story about a ghost, *petī*, who was the mother of the great monk Sāriputta in a past life. This unfortunate spirit wants to seek assistance from her former son, but the spirits of Sāriputta's home won't let her enter. It is not until she explains exactly who she is that they finally relent.[26]

Although spirit-deities lived in the *vihāra*, it must be remembered that at no point were these nonhuman residents given the status of monks or nuns. The fact that new initiates are asked if they are "real human beings or *nāgas* in manly disguise" at their ordinations indicates that the *saṃgha* wished to maintain that distinction for humans alone.[27] The evidence suggests, rather, that images of spirit-deities within monasteries continued to function as objects of public devotion. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* states that certain austerities please spirit-deities. In particular, the practice of *upoṣana,* which involves speaking the truth, circumambulating an image of the deity, and only eating when the Buddhist monks do, was particularly pleasing to spirit-deities.[28] The pos-

sibility arises that *upoṣana* practices were performed for images of spirit-deities located within monastic complexes. That lay devotees were to circumambulate an image of a spirit-deity and only eat when the Buddhist monks did reveals that certain spirit-deities found worth in the emulation of Buddhist austerities and, more than likely, such beings would have been located within the monastic complex. This should not be surprising; given the previous references to monks' worship of spirit-deities, it seems logical that lay people would do so as well.

Even though the resident spirit-deities could not become ordained, there are several tales in which the opposite occurs, and a monk or nun is reborn among the nonhumans. The *yakkhas* Hemavata, Sātagiri, and Sūciloma were all monks in their previous existences.[29] Hemavata and Sātagiri were punished for wrongly adjudicating a monastic dispute, whereas Sūciloma received his *yakkha* birth due to sleeping on fine carpets in his cell. In a touch of karmic poetic justice, Sūciloma, whose name literally means "needle-hair," received his uncomfortable current form due to a desire for luxury that ran contrary to the monastic codes.

In a tale from the Vinaya texts, a monk dies and is reborn as a nonhuman. According to this tale, when the distributor-of-robes enters the dead monk's cell saying, "I distribute the bowl and robes," the deceased monk appears full of intense anger and wielding a club. The ghost demands that only "when you perform for me the removal of the body can you proceed with the distribution of the bowl and robe." Hearing this, the distributor-of-robes flees from the cell and tells the Buddha what transpired. The Buddha agrees with the ghost and speaks on the proper way in which to perform funeral rites for a dead monk. This same series of events occurs three times: a second time when the distributor-of-robes neglects to perform the honoring of the body, and finally when he fails to recite the Dharma and transfer the merit to the deceased. At each instance the Buddha agrees with the ghost and uses the opportunity to expound on the rules surrounding monastic funerary rites.[30]

A similar tale of a monk who becomes a spirit-deity is set in Śrāvasti and begins when a wealthy merchant joins the monastic community. Over time he accumulates a hoard of the requisites including robes, bedding, seats, bowls, and medicine for illnesses. Despite this abundance, he never shares with the other monks. Eventually he dies, and as a result of his greed he is reborn in his own cell as a deformed hungry ghost and still refuses to give up any of his hoard to the other monks. The text then informs us that "the Blessed One for the purpose of assisting that deceased son of a good family, for the purpose of instilling fear in the community of students, and for the purpose of making fully apparent the disadvantageous consequences of selfishness went to that

place." Once there, the Buddha shames the hungry ghost into realizing the fruitlessness of his actions and reminds him that "this hoarding of bowls and robes" is "conductive of your own destruction." For fear of being reborn in the hells the hungry ghost gives up the goods to the Buddha, who assigns him the merit of the gift. This simple donation is enough to cause the hungry ghost to die and be reborn among the "hungry ghosts of great wealth." After receiving a final lesson in the Dharma, the ex-monk departs.[31]

This wealthy hungry ghost is not the only being to have benefited from interaction with the *saṃgha*. Other spirit-deities have also profited from attentiveness to the Buddhist teachings and occasionally have gained new levels of insight. For instance, in one tale a spirit-deity who resides in Jetavana follows the Buddha about, shading him with the branch of a tree.[32] The Buddha recognizes the being's devotion and gives it instructions in the Dharma. As a result of this sermon, the spirit-deity gains the status of a "stream-winner" and vows to reside at the *stūpa* in constant veneration of the Buddhist relics. Gaining the rank of "stream-winner" (*sotapanna*) means that the spirit-deity achieved the first rank of Buddhist insight and, because he has destroyed the fetters that lead to improper action, he will now no longer be born into a life of pain.

The narratives discussed in this chapter reveal a complex interaction between spirit-deities and the *saṃgha* that operates on many levels. On one level the spirit-deities benefit from this interaction by having access to both the Buddhist teachings and the public. On another level it is the monks and nuns who benefit by having spirit-deities who are possessed of faith close at hand so that they can render assistance in times of need. Yet the spirit-deities also serve to regulate the actions of the community and ensure adherence to the monastic codes. Not only is a monk who breaks the code more susceptible to supernatural attacks but loyal spirit-deities may also report any infractions to the elders. Likewise, members of the *saṃgha* are confronted with the belief that if they are too greedy or too selfish they may find themselves listed among the ranks of the unhappy nonhumans. All of these interlocking relationships serve to reinforce proper modes of monastic behavior. After all, the Vinaya states that the Buddha confronted the hungry ghost of a former monk "for the purpose of instilling fear in the community of students, and for the purpose of making fully apparent the disadvantageous consequences of selfishness."[33] Recounting the frightening tales of what happened to those who broke the rules is an effective means of evoking correct behavior.

In all of these examples, the monks are far from being the conniving tricksters that were hypothesized at the beginning of the chapter. Rather, we see a group of people who are still very respectful and wary of the beings with

whom they share their homes. The monks and nuns, it seems, stepped carefully for fear of having to answer to an irate spirit-deity. Particularly when away from the monastery, the dangers of running across fearsome spirit-deities seem to have been amplified and, in some cases, these worst fears were realized.

In the tragic tale of the monk Saṃgharakṣita, the hero is forced to jump into the sea in order to save his lay companions from the wrath of powerful spirit-deities. In the story, Saṃgharakṣita was promised at birth to the Venerable Śāriputra but, before being turned over to the monastery, he was raised along with the other boys of merchant families in the town. Eventually Saṃgharakṣita entered the monastery, where he served his master well. One day, Saṃgharakṣita's friends came to the monastery and asked if he could accompany them on an ocean voyage so as to instruct them in the Dharma. Śāriputra gave Saṃgharakṣita permission to accompany his merchant friends on the voyage but warned, "You must endure fear and dreadful things." While at sea a group of fearsome *nāgas* began to rock the boat, and when the merchants asked, "May the god or *nāga* or *yakṣa* who lives here in the ocean tell us what he wants," a voice replied, "You must offer up the Noble Saṃgharakṣita to us!" Although the merchants were willing to die before giving up the monk, Saṃgharakṣita resolved himself to his fate and jumped overboard, thereby saving his friends.[34]

In this heroic and tragic tale, the young monk Saṃgharakṣita demonstrates that there are limits against which most monks cannot stand. Although most Buddhist tales involve monks who successfully convert spirit-deities, stories like this one remind us that for most members of the *saṃgha* spirit-deities represented fearsome forces that were preferably appeased or avoided. These Vinaya accounts demonstrate that with the exception of a few bold monks and nuns mentioned in the narratives, most members of the Buddhist community held beliefs about spirit-deities that in no way differed from those of the public.[35] As we have seen, the Vinaya texts employ spirit-deities, and the threat they represent, as a deterrent to improper actions. Needless to say, these threats would be empty were there not a corresponding belief in the possibility of their being acted upon.

But what of our brave monks and nuns who seek out the haunts of spirit-deities so as to effect conversions? Clearly some members of the *saṃgha* must have started this process, and the archaeological record suggests that the Buddhists continuously sought out haunted areas over which to build their monasteries. We are therefore confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, most monks and nuns seem to have been fearful of spirit-deities, while on the other hand, there is ample evidence to suggest that the Buddhist community was

responsible for an active process of confronting and converting these beings into supporters of Buddhism. How is it that certain monks faired better than others in confronting spirit-deities?

Success in these confrontations consistently hinges on the relative power of the two adversaries. Accomplished monks fare better against spirit-deities than those who easily give in to fear. In the attack by Māra, the Buddha had to overcome both the temptation of Māra's daughters and the fear generated by the onslaught of his army. But because the Buddha was grounded in the true nature of reality, he could not be swayed by emotional states like fear or desire. It is this level of spiritual attainment that is required to overcome the worldly tricks practiced by spirit-deities.[36]

In the narratives, monks who exhibit fear inevitably fail in their interactions with spirit-deities, whereas those who are unmoved manage to succeed. When the Buddha confronts the *yakkha* Sūciloma, the first words exchanged between them focus directly on the emotional state of the Buddha. Sūciloma says to the Buddha, "You are afraid of me, ascetic," and the Buddha responds, "I am not afraid of you, sir, nevertheless your touch is evil."[37] Likewise, in the conversion of the *nāga* Aravāla, the monk Majjhantika states that:

> Even if the whole world including devas would come and terrify me, there is none here who would succeed in causing fear and trepidation. Great nāga, even if you were to raise and hurl on me the whole earth together with the oceans and mountains, you would not be able to generate fear and trepidation in me. On the other hand, O nāga-king, that would be your own destruction.[38]

Once again the confrontation seems to hinge entirely on the emotional state of the monk. Even in the Vinaya tale of the cemetery-dwelling monk who takes the blanket from the hungry ghost with goiters, we are told that he succeeds because "a cemetery-dwelling monk is generally one of courage."[39] To remain unmoved seems to be the hallmark of an accomplished monk or nun.

Conversely, when the Buddha tells his fellow monks about his confrontation with the monk who had become a "nonhuman," we are told that he did so "for the purpose of instilling fear in the community of students."[40] Significantly, it is the neophytes that he is attempting to scare, not the more experienced monks, who are presumably advanced enough so as to not be easily swayed by fear or as likely to break the Vinaya codes. Ordinary monks and nuns, like the distributor-of-robes or the monks who discover the ghost of the greedy monk, are terrified by the sight of a spirit-deity and inevitably flee to enlist the aid of their superiors. Those who give in to emotion are ill-equipped to confront supernatural beings, whereas experienced monks who have

achieved advanced levels of insight consistently serve as protagonists in the tales of conversion.[41]

In a tale from the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, two holy men are meditating by the Ganges when the *nāga* Maṇikaṇṭha encircles the younger of the men and spreads his hoods over the ascetic's head. Eventually, the young holy man "through fear of this snake, became thin, wretched, of bad colour, yellowish, the veins showing all over his body." The elder holy man sees his friend's discomfort and suggests that he act rudely to the *nāga* so that the snake will doubt the man's holiness and no longer pay his respects. So the young man demands that the *nāga* give him his magical jewel, and this show of greed is sufficient to drive the *nāga* away. Ironically, the young ascetic soon becomes ill again, this time because he no longer gets to see the "beautiful snake."[42] Although this sudden change of heart may seem out of place, it serves to make an important point. The young man, who is not a Buddhist monk, first falls ill due to fear and then falls equally ill due to his desire. Both of these passions, when not quieted, are dangerous and leave one vulnerable to the powers of even the most well-intentioned spirit-deities.

Even though at first glance it may appear that the tragic tale of Saṃgharakṣita does not conform to the model I have described, it must be remembered that it is only after he faces his fear and resolves to jump from the boat that the *nāgas* quiet down.[43] Likewise, the text also implies that Saṃgharakṣita did not die as a result of his heroic actions but was instead taken by the *nāgas* to preach in their undersea realm.

These observations open new questions. If members of the monastic community who have achieved high levels of spiritual insight are capable of achieving feats beyond the reach of most, was their special status marked physically within the space of the monastery? And by what means were these various ranks and honors attained?

Monastic Relics

Although most of the evidence explicating the qualities needed to overcome spirit-deities has been garnered from narrative accounts, the writers of these tales had specific motivations and sought to convey certain understandings to their readers and listeners. Many of the tales quoted in this chapter have been collected from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* texts that stipulate the codes of monastic behavior. The motivation driving the writers of these legal texts must have been to convince the audience to obey the rules that were so diligently recorded. This is not a format in which tales that were understood as being

fictional would serve much purpose. Only accounts of events that held the weight of veracity would be useful in reinforcing the importance of the laws. Presumably it was this same motivation that inspired the authors to record these decrees as being the words of the Buddha himself.

Furthermore, when this narrative evidence is added to the physical evidence of spirit-deity conversions and the somewhat more historical accounts of the Chinese pilgrims, it becomes probable that the attitudes toward spirit-deities expressed by monks and nuns in the literature were also true of their real-life counterparts. Although we may not accept the fanciful accounts of monks squaring off against spirit-deities as historical, it seems clear that the Buddhist community did. And for those who did believe in the truthfulness of the tales, the act of building a residence over a cemetery did indeed require a huge amount of courage and equanimity.

The textual narratives help to explain the historical processes of Buddhist expansion to their audience. They interpret the events and frame them in ways that emphasize the importance of the Buddhist teachings and the spiritual worth of the monastic community. Because the tales work to elevate the status of accomplished monks, one wonders if there are physical expressions of this same process. Are there physical remains of objects or structures that displayed the spiritual accomplishments of important monks to the public?

An interesting story is told about the *stūpa* built to hold the remains of the great monk Śāriputra. In this tale, the householder Anāthapiṇḍada desires to construct a *stūpa* for the monk's remains. So he tells the Buddha: "I would build a *stūpa* for the Noble Śāriputra in a suitably available place. There the great multitudes of men and women would be allowed to do honor as they wish." The Buddha gives his blessing to the idea, but Anāthapiṇḍada returns asking for advice on how such a *stūpa* should be built. The Buddha tells him:

> "Make four terraces in succession; then make the base for the dome and the *harmikā* and the crowning pole; then having made one or two or three or four umbrellas, make up to thirteen, and place the rain receptacle on the top of the pole."
>
> Although the Blessed One had said a *stūpa* of this sort should be made, since Anāthapiṇḍada did not know if a *stūpa* of such form was to be made for only the Noble Śāriputra or also for all Noble Ones, the monks asked the Blessed One concerning this matter, and the Blessed One said: "Householder, in regard to the *stūpa* of a Tathāgata a person should complete all parts. In regard to the *stūpa* of a solitary Buddha the rain receptacle should not be put in place; for an Arhat there are four umbrellas; for one who does not return

> three; for one who returns two; for one who has entered the stream one. For ordinary good men the *stūpa* is to be made plain."[44]

In this passage the Buddha stipulates that the *stūpas* used to house the remains of various monks should visually express their level of spiritual attainment. Therefore Śāriputra's *stūpa* closely resembled that of the Buddha. And, like a *stūpa* of the Buddha, Śāriputra's remains are described as being the focus of intense public worship.

The account of Śāriputra's *stūpa* reveals an ongoing practice of interring the remains of monks inside *stūpas*. However, most of the physical evidence of monastic burial at Buddhist sites is not nearly as organized as the above passage would suggest. Although many early sites like Bhāja, Mathurā, and Bedsā contain *stūpas* dedicated to the monastic dead, there is little evidence to verify whether the variations in decoration correspond to degrees of spiritual attainment achieved by the occupant. In at least one instance there is a *stūpa* that can reliably be identified with the remains of Śāriputra, and the site bears some characteristics that associate it with the passage quoted above.

At Sāñcī we find a *stūpa* that was indeed dedicated to Śāriputra. Inside the dome of *stūpa* 3 two cubical boxes were found that contain bone fragments.[45] According to Marshall and Foucher, the monastic relics from Sāñcī all date to earlier periods but were later interred within Śunga-period structures.[46] Inscriptions label the human remains in the two boxes as belonging to the important disciples of the Buddha, Mahāmoggallāna (Maudgalyāyana) and Sāriputa (Śāriputra).[47] Although the presence of these labeled relics is impressive, it is also significant that the placement of the *stūpa* seems to correspond with what is stated in the Vinaya. According to the text, when Anāthapiṇḍada asks the Buddha where *stūpas* dedicated to monks should be located, he replies:

> As Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana sat when the Tathāgata was seated, just so the *stūpa* of one who has passed away into final Nirvāṇa is also to be placed. Moreover, in regard to the *stūpas* of each individual Elder, they are to be arranged according to seniority.[48]

Significantly, Sāñcī *stūpa* 3 is located directly adjacent to *stūpa* 1, the Great *Stūpa*. Although there is no inscriptional evidence to verify whose relics rested inside this immense *stūpa*, its grand size and lavish decoration make it very likely that is was dedicated to Śākyamuni himself. If so, then the arrangement of the Sāñcī *stūpas* corresponds to what is stipulated in the Vinaya, with the only exception being that Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana are here sharing a single *stūpa*. Also in accordance with the Vinaya is the fact that the *stūpa* con-

taining the relics of less renowned monks is positioned farther away from the Buddha's relics than those of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana.

Located down the hill from *stūpas* 1 and 3 is Sāñcī *stūpa* 2. This *stūpa*, like *stūpa* 3, is unusual in that this single mound contained the relics of several monks. The relics of at least ten important monks were found in four reliquaries, which were, in turn, contained within a larger stone box.[49] Each of the reliquaries, which Marshall and Foucher refer to as relic caskets, bears inscriptions identifying the monks whose ashes and bones are contained within. Casket one bears the names Kāsapagota, Majhima, and Hāriputa; casket two mentions only Vāchi-Suvijayita; Mahavanāya, Āpagira, and Koḍiniputa are mentioned on casket three; and Kosikiputa, Gotiputa, and Mogaliputa are contained in casket four. All these names are preceded in the inscriptions by the term *sapurisa*, which Marshall and Foucher translate as "saint," and on the relic box the monks Kāsapagota and Vāchi-Suvijayita are referred to as *ara* or *arhat*.[50] If they are correct that the same title, *arhat*, can be used for all the monks, it may be that all of the men interred here shared a similar level of spiritual attainment.[51] Unfortunately it seems likely that this translation is in fact incorrect and that nowhere do early inscriptions on burial sites make reference to classical terms for spiritual attainment.[52]

Scholars have argued convincingly that the term *ara* is not the spiritual title *arhat* but may in fact simply be the term *ārya* or "noble."[53] Because *sapurisa* translates literally as "a good or worthy man," this explanation clarifies why the two terms (*ara* and *sapurisa*) are used interchangeably on the Sāñcī inscriptions. The presence of titles on these monastic *stūpas* does not, therefore, seem to correspond to levels of spiritual insight as expressed in the Vinaya*s*. And even if the rationale behind the placement of these various relics in a single *stūpa* were linked to a variant system of monastic ranking, in the absence of further evidence there is no way to prove it definitively.

It is also difficult to discern any significance in the way the monks' remains have been placed into the four caskets. Marshall and Foucher refer to the possibility that the monks Kāsapagota and Majhima were colleagues on a mission to the Himalayas and that the monk Mogaliputra was the pupil of Gotiputra.[54] So it can tentatively be suggested that the monks whose remains are interred together in a single casket were associates in life. Beyond these two brief correlations little else is known about these monks and their accomplishments.

Relics from some of these same monks can be found at the nearby sites of Andher and Sonārī, suggesting that they had an importance within the entire region. Gotiputra, Majhima, Kāsapagota, and Kosikiputa are named on caskets from Sonārī, whereas Gotiputra, Hāriputa, and Mogaliputa are named on in-

dividual caskets from Andher.[55] Others of the monks listed at Sāñcī may also have relics at these neighboring sites but, if so, their names have been given slightly variant spellings. Nevertheless, it would seem that according to whatever standard by which they were measured, these monks were considered important throughout the region. And although the exact criteria for interment in a *stūpa* remain elusive, there can be no doubt that some monks earned this honor, while many others did not.

At Bhājā a series of fourteen moderately sized *stūpas* are carved entirely from the face of the cliff. These *stūpas* vary in diameter from 6 feet 3 inches to 4 feet 8 inches. Based on the epigraphy and artistic style of these monuments, Vidya Dehijia has dated them to between 70 and 50 BCE.[56] Although the inscriptions on these *stūpas* have been badly eroded, James Fergusson and James Burgess have determined that they are the names of various monks.[57]

These monuments to the monastic dead of Bhājā vary in their decoration and elaboration. All these *stūpas* are decorated with the rail pattern around the upper portions of their drums, but some have simple, square carved *harmikās* on their domes, whereas others are capped by elaborate stone crowns. The three most elaborately decorated *stūpas* have stone umbrellas (*chattras*) carved into the roof of the cave itself (figure 6.1). Only one of these *stūpas* is connected

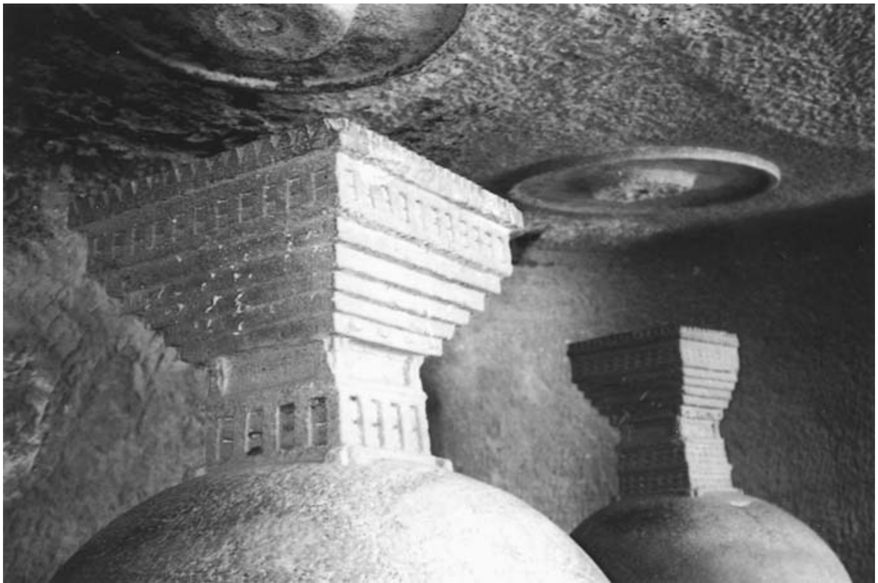

FIGURE 6.1. Monastic *Stūpas* and Rock-Cut Umbrellas. Bhājā. Ca. 100–70 BCE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

to its carved umbrella with a stone shaft, however, so it is assumed that the other two at one time held wooden shafts connecting their domes to the roof. Two of the *stūpas* actually contain small holes with lipped depressions around the edges that, at one time, may have been fitted with lids and used for holding relics. Also, on four of these *stūpas* (the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth by Burgess's counting) inscriptions have been located.[58] As was previously mentioned, these inscriptions are badly weathered, but the only titles attributed to these monks are the terms *thera* or "elder" and *bhadanta* or "reverend," and these titles have no correlation to the complexity of the *stūpa* on which they are found.

Sites such as Sāñcī and at Bhājā provide us the earliest examples of monastic burials within *stūpas*. This architectural form was previously used by the Buddhists only to contain the relics of buddhas. It was presumably the spiritual power and authority of the Buddha that was being engendered at these sites, so that adherents could reap the spiritual and karmic benefits generated through acts of devotion performed there. In the first century BCE, a parallel trend can be identified in which the relics of important monks were enshrined, and presumably venerated, granting them an authority whose expression in architectural media, at least, rivals that of the Buddha. Yet despite the importance of this process, we are still uncertain of the criteria by which a monk was deemed worthy of this honor.

This does not mean that there was *no* system of monastic ranking at work. Perhaps in an alternate system the titles *ara* and *thera* held particular significance, or perhaps the qualities that entitled one to burial in a *stūpa* were not designated through titles at all. Ultimately, all we can say about monastic ranking and burial practices is that not every monk had the honor of being interred in a *stūpa*. Giuseppe De Marco has pointed out that only rarely were people buried in ancient India, and only those who were in some way remarkable or different were given this special form of burial.[59] This form of funerary practice demarcated the resting-place of important (or feared) individuals, including *yogins* and kings. The pre-Buddhist history of this form of burial makes the simple act of placing monastic remains in *stūpas* a noteworthy action.

Funerary sites are not the only locations in which evidence of monastic ranking can be found, however. Monastic hierarchy is also evident in the remains of certain Buddhist monastic structures. Cave 12 in Ellora, the Tin Thal, has three levels that can only be accessed from a single staircase. At each level the stairwell has a small room set off from it, which may imply that a monk was stationed here to regulate access to the upper levels. This configuration of the cave has led some to speculate that the plan of the cave may be "related to Buddhist practices in which three stages might be identified: an initiation or

introductory phase, a more advanced practice, and finally, the stage for the true *ācāryas*, or highly developed spiritual masters. Such use of levels in architecture is found in Nepali Buddhism, and it is probable that the Nepali practice was based on an Indic precedent such as this."[60] Likewise, in the *Mahāvaṃsa* a description of a monastic building is given in which in each level of the structure is assigned to monks of a certain rank. The text states:

> When the Lohapāsāda [an *uposatha*-house] was completed, the king assembled the Sangha. . . . The bhikkhus who were yet worldlings, stood on the first storey; and masters of the Tipiṭaka on the second. Those starting with Stream-winners—each on a storey—stood on the third storey and so forth. The Arahants stood on the highest four storeys.[61]

The titles used in this text provide evidence that distinctions were at times made between monks of varying degrees of spiritual attainment. Xuanzang describes a similar type of differentiation between monks in his account of the northern monastery of Nālandā. He writes that "those who cannot discuss questions out of the Tripiṭaka are little esteemed," and that "If men of other quarters desire to enter and partake of the discussions, the keeper of the gate proposes some hard questions; many are unable to answer, and retire."[62] When all of this evidence is taken together, it seems certain that the *saṃgha* did indeed have ranks that were not based solely on seniority but rather on levels of knowledge or insight.

So far we have examined two ways in which certain members of the *saṃgha* were given special distinction, that is, in terms of burial practices and of access. Yet there is no way to link such forms of monastic hierarchy to success in dealing with spirit-deities. It is true that many of the monks and nuns who confront spirit-deities in the texts are referred to as "accomplished," but we have no way of knowing how that accomplishment was measured or marked. In fact, there is only one reference I know of in which specific spiritual practices of the monk are associated with his success in taming a spirit-deity. In the Vinaya tale in which the cemetery-dwelling monk takes the blanket from the hungry ghost, we are told that "a cemetery-dwelling monk is generally one of courage," which implies that this practice of the *dhutangas*, which includes taking up residence in a cemetery, hardens monks against fearful apparitions.[63]

The evidence does suggest, however, that monastic hierarchies did matter. Only certain members of the *saṃgha* were honored with special distinctions. And even though we do not know how the achievement of a rank was measured, it seems clear that these levels were well understood at the time. This prevalence for establishing hierarchies in various aspects of monastic life and

the frequency with which low-ranking monks run to their superiors when faced with a spirit-deity suggests that only certain members of the community were recognized as being "accomplished" enough to confront spirit-deities. This would help explain the somewhat bipolar relationship the *saṃgha* had with supernatural beings. On the one hand, the *saṃgha* actively confronted and converted spirit-deities for the benefit of the larger community; on the other hand, these same beings were used to scare members of the monastic community into obeying the Vinaya laws. By recognizing that only certain monks and nuns were skilled enough to brave the danger presented by such beings, both circumstances can be satisfactorily explained. The presence of spirit-deities as guardians at the periphery of a *stūpa* or monastic complex could have served as a potent marker of the spiritual authority held by the person or relics contained within.

We remain, therefore, uncertain as to which qualities made one monk or nun more capable of confronting supernatural beings than any other. Although it is clear that qualities like equanimity, patience, and courage characterize members of the *saṃgha* who defeat spirit-deities, it is yet unclear if these are personal traits or qualities that are indicative of a certain level of spiritual attainment. Clearly more than simple age or seniority is at work, because in some texts even mere novices have the ability to overcome spirit-deities. However, such initiates are often described as being extraordinary in their skill or gifted with supernatural assistance.[64]

Fortunately, the uncertainty lies in regard to what qualities a monk or nun needed to defeat a spirit-deity, not in whether or not they did. The evidence overwhelmingly suggests that monks and nuns were believed to have converted spirit-deities and actively incorporated these beings into the Buddhist fold. And they seem to have done so with an intense fervor. As Buddhism traveled from the north of the subcontinent to the south, the same techniques were employed as local and regional deities were absorbed into the Buddhist belief system. Yet this methodology for expansion did not stop at the borders of modern India. Similar processes can be identified everywhere Buddhism spread.

7

Passage from India

"When I become a *nat,* I wish to have the appearance and radiance of excellence and dominion (and) I wish to have long life, to be free from illness, have a good appearance, melodic voice, good figure, to be loved and respected by all men and gods. . . . At the end, having enjoyed bliss as man and *nat*, I wish the state of arahantship which is noble . . . and the tranquil and serene peace of *nibbāna*."

—Donative inscription of Queen Phwā Jaw
(Pwazaw) of Pagan, 1271 CE

Strategies of Expansion

What happens to spirit-deities as Buddhism spreads outside of India? Do changes in the importance of Indian spirit-deities abroad mean that such beings fail to play a continued and important role in the spread of Buddhism? I believe that the issue is one of geography, not chronology. Buddhism does not "outgrow" spirit-deities, it simply does something that they cannot easily do: it travels. Most Indian spirit-deities, with a rare few exceptions, are local in nature and could not travel with Buddhism as it spread. Instead, Buddhism adapted to the new environments into which it expanded and incorporated aspects of local tradition appropriate to its new environs.

The majority of spirit-deities were associated with a specific monastery, forest, lake, or town. As Buddhism spread, only a few

particularly significant spirit-deities were carried along with it; the *nāga* Mucalinda and the *yakṣa* pair Kubera (or Jambhala) and Hārītī are ubiquitous.[1] These three are all noteworthy due to their special status or close association with the Buddha. In most cases, however, rather than import spirit-deities into new areas, the Buddhists usually sought out gods, ghosts, or spirits that were indigenous to the lands into which they were expanding and then assimilated them into the Buddhist fold. The same method of expansion employed inside India was used outside, as well. Local beliefs, spirits, and the care of the dead were consistently usurped by the Buddhist community, thereby altering the shape of local religious practice and the shape of Buddhism itself.

Even as Buddhism spread from the north of the subcontinent to the south it was entering different kingdoms with different languages, customs, and practices. Here the Buddhists represented themselves in regional ways that were appropriate to their new contexts. It was mentioned in a previous chapter that several important south Indian families traced their lineage to *nāga* or *nāginī* ancestors; likewise, the inscriptional evidence from Andhran sites reveals that the term *nāga* frequently appears in both lay and monastic names.[2] This prevalence attests to the local importance assigned these particular beings. At Amarāvatī alone, numerous lay devotees with names like Nāgabuddhi and Nāgaśri are mentioned, while two monks named Nāga and Nāgasena and a nun, named Nāgamitra are all recorded in the donor inscriptions at this single site.[3]

Given that *nāgas* played a more important role in south Indian spirit religion than they did in the north, it is significant that we find visual representations of the Buddha meditating under the *nāga* Mucalinda almost exclusively in southern art.[4] At most Andhran sites one also finds numerous depictions of the *nāgas* worshiping at *stūpas*, and scenes representing the *stūpa* of the Buddha's relics that was established in the *nāgas'* undersea realm (figure 7.1). This propensity for *nāga*-related imagery and nomenclature in the south contrasts sharply with what we find in the north of the same period and suggests a regional preference to which the Buddhist community quickly adapted. This process of adaptation and incorporation is even more noticeable if we look at the forms Buddhism took as it entered cultural traditions vastly different from those we find in north India. This is particularly true of areas outside the boundaries of South Asia that had little or no exposure to Vedic Sanskrit traditions prior to the arrival of Buddhism. Although one could examine many cases of this interaction between Buddhism and indigenous forms of belief, such as Shinto in Japan or Bon in Tibet, I will look at only two examples here. First I will consider one brief example from the long history of Buddhism in

FIGURE 7.1. *Nāga Stūpa*. Amarāvatī. 2nd–3rd c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Amarāvatī. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

China and then undertake a more detailed look at the emergence of Buddhism in Burma (Myanmar).

China: The Ghost Festival

Scholars have noted that as Buddhism entered China it quickly merged with Taoism and devotion to the Buddha often occurred alongside the worship of important popular deities.[5] The implication in such observations is that

Buddhism in China, as in India, became ingrained in local practice by associating itself with popular forms of religious expression. Although a complete analysis of the incorporation of Buddhism into Chinese culture is well beyond the scope of this work, examining one example of Buddhist co-option of a Chinese popular practice can help to elucidate the process.

In its most basic form, the Ghost Festival is a yearly ritual in which food and other offerings are left out for the dead, who on this one day can visit their living relatives. In his book on the performance of this ritual in medieval China, Stephen F. Teiser argues that the Ghost Festival predates both Buddhist and distinctly Taoist influence.[6] He goes on to point out that the hero of the tale around which the festival is based, Mulian, was originally an epic hero and shaman who was later reinvented as a Buddhist monk. Significantly, even as a monk Mulian still carries a sword, which in China is a symbol of both a warrior and a shaman.[7]

In the Buddhist version of the tale, which has become the standard, Mulian is a Buddhist monk who wishes to locate his deceased parents in the underworld and teach them the Buddhist Law. He finds his father in the highest heaven, but he must search through all of the levels of the underworld before he locates his mother in the lowest hell. The crime his mother committed to be placed here is, alternatively, the refusal to give food to hungry monks or the presentation of contaminated food to monks. In either case, Mulian attempts to ease his mother's suffering by offering her food in the traditional Chinese method. His attempts are fruitless, however, as the rice burns to dust before she can even get it to her lips. In desperation, Mulian turns to the Buddha, who describes the manner in which both relief and the merit may be transferred to the dead. As a first step, the family of the deceased must give food and other offerings to the *saṃgha*. Although this simple act of giving generates merit for the dead, it is the large feast prepared for the dead by the *saṃgha* that provides them with sustenance and relief, thereby allowing them to concentrate on the Buddhist teachings and improve their current conditions.[8]

Once again, we have an example in which the Buddhist monastic community serves as field of merit for both the living and the dead. In this Chinese example, the *saṃgha* has taken its familiar role between the public and their deceased relatives in order to serve as intermediaries and facilitators in the production of merit. As in India, they are able to generate monetary support and gain social relevance through their actions as experts in satisfying and aiding the dead. In fact, the Buddhist community in China was believed to have so much supernatural power that a series of laws were set up during the Tang Dynasty to regulate and limit the conditions under which a they might use their remarkable abilities.[9]

We know that the Tang emperors were great supporters of the Ghost Festival, but even after the decline of the Tang and the end of imperial support, the festival continued to thrive among the general populace.[10] So, as in India, the co-opting of a popular practice and its accompanying legends into Buddhism helped the *saṃgha* to secure its position in Chinese society and guard it from the fluctuating whims of imperial support. The Buddhists moved the site of the festival out of the home and gravesite and into the temple and monastery. In so doing, they linked the monastic community to the appropriate care of dead ancestors.

The Ghost Festival is by no means the only instance of Buddhism embedding itself in Chinese popular religion. In fact, 68 percent of all dated Northern Wei (386–534 CE) Buddhist inscriptions mention the dead as beneficiaries of the merit generated from donations, and 45 percent list the dead as the primary beneficiaries.[11] Although the Northern Wei, as members of the Toba clan, were a non-Han dynasty, they were the first political body in the region to accept Buddhism, and as such were very influential is shaping the way Buddhism was understood in the rest of China. It is not surprising, then, that many cases have been recorded from later periods in which whole monasteries were built to aid the souls of the dead.[12]

In one instance, which can serve as a typical example, a remarried widow donated her house as a monastery because she feared the anger of her husband's ghost, which resided inside.[13] Situations like this demonstrate how completely the *saṃgha* became associated with the tending of the dead. This control of the supernatural seems to have at times extended over popular deities, as well. Yijing mentions that the Upavasatha-day ceremony, as performed in China, appeased local spirits and brought fertility to the fields.[14] The effects of this monastic ritual were therefore understood as placating the supernatural residents of the region and ensuring the well-being of the community.

These patterns are familiar. Versions of the same methods employed by the *saṃgha* for expansion within the Indian subcontinent were utilized outside, as well. Even this brief glimpse at one aspect of Chinese Buddhism reveals an intimate connection between Buddhist authority and the monastic ability to quell the suffering of the dead. The Buddhist co-option of popular and Taoist religious practices is remarkably akin to the process by which the *saṃgha* gained control of Indian spirit religion. A version of this same pattern can be identified in every region and culture into which Buddhism spread. Although it is not possible to explore every case in the present work, one more example is worth examining in detail.

Burma (Myanmar): *Nats*, the Buddha and the King

Exploring the introduction of Buddhism into Burma presents us with certain benefits and challenges. Most of the extant information about the nature of early Burmese popular beliefs has been gathered from either royal chronicles or current Burmese practices. Any information derived from contemporary practices clearly has to be regarded with some skepticism when it is applied to circumstances in the eleventh through thirteenth centuries; the same caution is advisable when considering the textual sources, as well. The Burmese chronicles "were written mainly by secular members of the court for the benefit of their contemporary rulers" and always included verbatim large portions of earlier works.[15] The earliest extant chronicles date to the fifteenth century, and the tradition continued well into the nineteenth. In particular, the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, written in the early 1800s, has frequently been relied upon as a source for information on events that occurred during the Pagan period (eleventh through thirteenth centuries). Although this chronicle has undoubtedly preserved much of historical significance, I am uncomfortable relying heavily upon an early-nineteenth-century text for information on events that occurred many centuries earlier. Nevertheless, any discussion of popular religion in Burma must confront this text to some degree, if for no other reason than because it has been so often utilized by scholars as evidence of Pagan's earliest periods.

This text is well worth some consideration because it also reveals how the Burmese in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries came to understand the association between Buddhism and popular religion. It represents the endpoint of a process that began centuries earlier and embodies the culmination of Buddhist efforts at assimilation. It is also revealing to consider the ways in which scholars have interpreted the tales and events contained within the text. Often these interpretations reveal the assumptions that authors have held about the nature of Buddhism and Buddhist practice. Even by limiting the argument to material contained within the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, a significant amount of information can be found that contradicts and complicates many common assumptions.

Before we do any further analysis of the historiography, we first need to understand something about the nature of Burmese popular religion. At the center of Burmese indigenous practices are beings known as *nats*. In their most general form they are spirits who have influence over a specific locale or lineage and have some measure of control over health, wealth, and fertility.[16] This link with specific families seems to be related to the fact that most *nats*

come into being when someone (usually of importance) dies in a particularly untimely or unpleasant way. For this reason they are sometimes referred to as the "green dead," a descriptive term that suggests the sudden and tragic nature of their demise.[17]

The association of a lineage with a specific guardian *nat* seems to have functioned at times as a means of identifying familial associations and those who worshiped the same *nat* were frequently forbidden from intermarriage.[18] But even though these local, village-level *nats* may have always been the most common, they have not traditionally been considered to be the most important. This distinction was held by those *nats* who were directly linked to the royal line; they served as the state *nats* and functioned as the defenders of the kingdom and the rightful ruler.

The initial difficulty in applying this information about Burmese popular religion to historical developments lies in verifying whether or not these later descriptions can justifiably be applied to earlier periods. We cannot simply assume that *nat* worship was practiced during the Pagan period and was not, in fact, the product of later times. The problem in recovering this early evidence is very much akin to the problems faced in South Asia: namely, the use of impermanent building materials and the lack of written histories or documentation about popular beliefs from the earlier period make information on these practices sporadic at best. Fortunately, a number of inscriptions that date to the centuries of Pagan's sovereignty do mention *nats*—and most, if not all, of these occur within Buddhist contexts.

The inscriptions on well-known Buddhist monuments like the Shwezigon that make reference to *nats* are strikingly plentiful.[19] The dates of these inscriptions are rather late, however, and usually range from the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries. The inscriptions frequently include the *nats* as recipients of merit earned by donations to the monastery or mention them as guardians of the faithful. For instance, a 1408 inscription from the Ta Zaung monasteries offers merit for the well-being of "the guardian *nats* of the Religion, the earth, the trees and all other *nats* in the universe."[20] And a 1767 inscription describes the Buddha as the "preceptor" of "nats, men and brahmas."[21] Significantly, there are many similarly phrased Buddhist donative inscriptions that can be dated to the thirteenth century. The presence of these earlier inscriptions allows us to verify the importance of *nats* during the final century of Pagan's supremacy.

For instance, in the donative inscription of Queen Phwā Jaw (Pwazaw) that opens this chapter, we see that she desired to experience the blissful state of being a *nat* prior to her achievement of *nirvāna* (*nibbāna*).[22] Similarly, a 1230 inscription on the Lokananda *stūpa* refers to *nats* as the residents of the Tāv-

atiṃsa heaven.[23] In a 1266 inscription the donor requests for the recipient of his gift's merit: "may he live in the 6 heavens as a *nat*, may he arrive at the state of *nibbāna*."[24] Even royal donations from this era mention these supernatural beings, as can be seen in an inscription by King Alaungsithu. He dedicates a "a lofty cave-pagoda built and adorned with several small pagodas and statues of *nats* in honour of the excellent and virtuous Buddha" who had, during his lifetime, "set upon the welfare of men and *nats*."[25] Such evidence points to the gradual incorporation of *nats* into Buddhist contexts as both guardians and adherents, and makes it clear that by the thirteenth century *nats* were already deeply embedded in Burmese Buddhist traditions.[26]

In fact, references to *nats* can even be found from the preceding (twelfth) century on some of the very earliest inscriptions in the Burmese language. These terra-cotta Buddhist votive tablets contain inscriptions in archaic Burmese that have been dated by G. H. Luce to his "transitional period," which places them between 1113 and 1174 CE.[27] One such tablet from Chitsagon states:

> The boon I desire is this. When I die, if born a man, (may I be) the object of worship by men. If born a spirit, (may I be) the object of worship by spirits. So often as I am born in Samsara, may I never be born a into a mean existence"[28]

In this inscription the word that has been translated as "spirit" is in fact *nat*, demonstrating that by the 1100s Buddhism and popular beliefs had already begun to merge into a coherent system in which *nats* were seen as one of many possible rebirths subject to the cycle of *saṃsāra*. A similarly dated inscription, also found on a Buddhist votive tablet, dedicates the merit from an offering "to all spirits of the four aeons (?) of universes."[29] Once again the word for "spirit" was originally *nat*, and it is intriguing to note that this inscription situates *nats* within a larger Buddhist cosmological system.

If inscriptions like these can be found in the twelfth century with no explanation or justification, it seems reasonable to assume that similar ideas were current during the reigns of the previous kings of Pagan, as well. I suspect that the reason we don't find references to *nats* prior to the twelfth century is that previous donors left their inscriptions in Pali, Mon, and Sanskrit rather than in Burmese. In these cases, mentions of *devas* and *devatās* may well have been understood as being references to *nats* by a Burmese audience.[30] Given the unbroken series of donative inscriptions stretching back to at least the early twelfth century and the information they reveal about the importance of *nats*, there are legitimate grounds for concluding that popular religious practices in early Pagan were reasonably similar to those described in the later chronicles.

If we want to trace Buddhism in its spread into the Burmese regions of Southeast Asia, however, we must be aware of the differences in cultural context and the challenges these pose to our analysis. First, it must be recognized that Buddhism entered Burmese society at a relatively late date and that this transmission was not due solely to direct contact with Indian society. Scholars have traditionally dated the widespread acceptance of Buddhism in Burma to a decision in 1054 by King Anawrahta of the Kingdom of Pagan to sponsor the construction of a Buddhist monastery in his capital. Buddhism had been prominent in the region centuries earlier, however, among the Mon and Pyu populations. Although it is generally assumed that Buddhism was introduced to the Burmese by the Mon during Anawrahta's reign, there is some evidence, taken primarily from the chronicles, which suggests that a version of Buddhism was known in Burma prior to 1054 and was practiced by an enigmatic group known in the chronicles as the Ari monks.[31] Relatively little is known about the Ari and, given the clearly antagonistic relationship between the Ari and the court, what information we do have may be regarded with some suspicion. Nevertheless, the primary sources make a point of linking the introduction and acceptance of Buddhism to Anawrahta, a major figure in the royal line of Pagan, while deriding any who may have reason to claim otherwise.

From the very start, then, it must be recognized that Buddhism in Burma was intimately linked to political power and authority in a way unlike anything found in South Asia. This was primarily because on the subcontinent there were always multiple means of expressing claims of political authority through religion, whereas in Burma Buddhism quickly became the primary acceptable means through which to express royal legitimacy. Likewise, the forms of spirit-religion indigenous to Burma were different from those in India and, once again, these forms of religious expression were frequently linked directly with royal power, especially before Buddhism became established in the court. These political motivations must be acknowledged as a driving force behind much of what is written in the chronicles, and go a long way toward explaining the king's role in relation to both religious systems.

According to the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, the foremost among the Burmese royal *nats* are a brother and sister who, like many *nats*, were originally human but due to tragic and untimely deaths were transformed into supernatural beings. The brother, Min Mahāgiri (Lord of the Great Mountain) was originally a blacksmith who was burned to death by a king who had become envious of his strength. Min Mahāgiri's sister is known by several names, but is most commonly referred to as Shwe Myet Nhā (Lady Golden Face). Although she became a queen during her lifetime, she killed herself when she realized that she had been tricked into helping destroy her beloved brother.

The Mahāgiri Nats, as this pair is collectively called, both met their end due to the unjust actions of a non-Burmese (Pyu) king. Upon their deaths their spirits inhabited a nearby tree and they sought revenge on any that ventured under their branches. The fearful king ordered that the tree be cut and floated down the river. When the Burmese king of Thiripyissaya heard of these events, however, he rescued the tree from the river and had two images carved from its wood. Soon after, these two *nat* images were enshrined near the capital on Mount Popa.[32] Since the time of their apotheosis, these two spirits have maintained a special link to the Burmese throne and have consistently served as the supernatural advisors and protectors of the rightful king.

The task of defending the king is much more significant than it may at first appear. According to the Burmese chronicles, every kingdom and king needed its own supernatural defender or else be vulnerable to attacks from the guardian *nats* of rivals.[33] The texts also make it clear that the more powerful the person, the more powerful the guardian *nat*.[34] When armies clashed or kingdoms vied for power they would often be accompanied by their respective spirits. This point is well illustrated by this passage from the *Glass Palace Chronicle*:

> Now there was a war between the spirits. Tepathin, guardian spirit of the city-gate of Pagan, Wetthakan, guardian spirit of Salin, the Kanshi guardian spirit and the Ngatinkyeshin spirit were wounded. (The New Chronicle writes, instead of Tepathin spirit, Thanpathin spirit.) And it came to pass, that on the same day when the army of Ngahsaunggyan perished, that the spirit who was ever want to attend the king's chaplain returned to Pagan and shook him by the foot and roused him from his sleep saying "This day hath Ngahsaunggyan fallen."[35]

This passage is significant for several reasons. Not only does it clearly illustrate the capacity of *nats* to fight and be wounded along with the people who reside in their territory but it also portrays the Buddhist community as having a special relationship to the spirits. The *nat* bearing the message of the terrible military defeat first reported to the king's chaplain, a Buddhist monk, and not directly to the king. The authors of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* thus identify the chief of the Burmese Buddhist community as an intermediary between the king and the *nats*. This is particularly significant because Tepathin is in all likelihood identical with Min Mahāgiri, the royal *nat*.

As was mentioned earlier, each region or village traditionally had its own protective *nat*. These regional forms of religious expression seem to have been an obstacle to the formation of a large unified state and a centralized kingship.[36]

King Anawrahta therefore issued a decree that consolidated the *nats* into a central group of thirty-six. With the addition of Indra, or Thagya, whose authority within this new group superseded even that of the Mahāgiri *nats*, the final number was settled at thirty-seven. Although this category of *nats* did not eliminate the worship of village or lineage *nats*, it did have the effect of limiting their authority and lessening their status in relation to the officially recognized thirty-seven.[37] This group of major *nats* or *Nat* Lords is still in place at the top of the Burmese pantheon of spirit-deities and, although there is some evidence to suggest that a few have been exchanged with newer additions, the number has remained consistently at thirty-seven.[38]

With Anawrahta's acceptance of Buddhism as the official religion of the state, a new level of complexity was added to the religious hierarchy developing at court. Anawrahta seems to have immediately recognized Buddhism as a means of unifying the disparate religious elements in his empire and used donations to the *saṃgha* as a means to demonstrate his authority. As we have seen in the inscriptional evidence, *nats* began to be seen as just one of many possible rebirths and were often associated with the heavens mentioned in the Indian Buddhist literature. For instance, in the Burmese version of the *Tathagatha Udāna* we find reference to the Tuṣita heaven as the fourth abode of the *nats*.[39] This association is supported by other sources that equate rebirth as a *nat* with rebirth in the heavenly *devalokas* mentioned in the Buddhist literature.[40] All the evidence suggests that rebirth as a *nat* was considered to be desirable but was ultimately secondary to the achievement of enlightenment. There are striking similarities between the gradual incorporation of spirit-deities into this new Burmese religious framework and the processes we have previously identified in India. In both cases, the Buddhists successfully established a new religious hierarchy with Buddhism securely at the apex.

As with Indian spirit-deities, however, just because *nats* were adapted into a new and predominantly Buddhist context does not mean that they lost all of their power or authority. For example, the Mahāgiri *nats*, who had a major shrine on Mt. Popa, continued to be the guardians of Pagan and the rightful king. The king was expected to climb the mountain each year and pay his respects. Indeed, the first time a new king undertook this journey it was considered to be an extremely significant event, and the date on which he achieved this accomplishment is often recorded in inscriptions. This pilgrimage to the *nats'* seat of power was vital to the ruler's continued kingship and in many ways rivaled his coronation in importance.[41] The Mahāgiri *nats* also continued to dwell within the city gate of Pagan, known as the Tharaba Gateway, where they had been installed when the city was established, perhaps as early as 849 CE.[42]

Despite this, the secondary sources often ignore the continued importance of *nats* within Burma or at times attempt to explain them away as unfortunate concessions to popular demand. As with the early secondary literature on Indian Buddhism, we can once again identify an imperialistic desire to read history in terms of a decline from a more "pure" past. For example, in 1891 Louis Vossion begins his work with praises for the "purity" of Burmese Buddhism, but he goes on to express his incredulity that "Pure Buddhism" can coexist with "geniolatry" (forms of spirit worship) that "retain a firm hold on the inferior classes of the population."[43] Likewise, Paul Ambrose Bigandet, who engaged in the translation of Burmese Buddhist texts during the early 1900s, expressed his satisfaction by stating "It would seem that the true form of Buddhism is to be found in Burmah."[44] However, he never does define exactly what he means by "true." Bigandet seems to have a decidedly ambiguous relationship toward Buddhism that can clearly be seen in this writing. Although he criticizes the religion for being "based upon capital and revolting errors," he also states that Buddhism "teaches a surprising number of the finest precepts and moral truths."[45] Yet in all this discussion of truth and purity, there is a general assumption that his readers understand and share his notions of what constitutes a pure Buddhism. In the end, one is left to deduce that this purity seems to be linked to Theravāda rather than Mahāyāna forms of practice and an assumed proximity to the words of the historical Buddha.

In 1921, R. Grant Brown wrote on the "Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese" and provides us one of the first European discussions of *nat* worship. Although his evidence is largely taken from the later chronicles and contemporary practice, he situates these religious systems in the remote past by labeling them Pre-Buddhist and thereby complicates any attempt to see these practices as contemporary or dynamic. Like Bigandet and Vossion, Brown begins with a statement on the purity of Burmese Buddhism. He writes, "Burmese Buddhism . . . contains, though to a much less degree than the Buddhism of other countries, some animistic beliefs which are probably inconsistent with the philosophy of the Buddha."[46] He goes on to caution that these animistic beliefs do exist, however, and states that:

> To the ordinary European mind it seems strange that there should thus be two religions existing side by side. Not only do the votaries of one not persecute those of the other, but they may actually be the same individuals.[47]

Rather than consider altering his own notions of what constitutes Buddhism, Brown, like his contemporaries writing on India, seems content to situate the problem among the local population. And just as the early European scholars

on India needed to identify a golden age from which they could track their invented notions of decline, so too the scholars of Burma sought an idealized period from which to track Buddhist practice. Ultimately, the royal chronicles provided them an excellent opportunity, and the Burmese golden age was quickly linked to the figure of Anawrahta, the first Buddhist king of Pagan.

Because the *Glass Palace Chronicle* refers to Anawrahta as having become interested in seeking the "true Law" and at the urging of the senior monk Shin Arahan to have undertaken a series of religious reforms, he becomes cast in the secondary literature as the champion of true Buddhism.[48] Brown identifies Anawrahta as a great reformer who sought to make Buddhism pure once again.[49] But, significantly, Brown assumes that Anawrahta's notions of purity are identical with his own and therefore involved the total purging of spirit religion in all its forms. For instance, he laments the fact that this move toward purity failed because *nāga* worship "has left traces even in the purer form of Buddhism now practiced in Burma."[50] In short, he assumes that Anawrahta's reforms sought to wipe out all expressions of Burmese spirit religion. Despite the fact that this assumption has little evidence to support it, it was quickly picked up and perpetuated by later scholars.

Even Gordon H. Luce, who was among the most influential and important scholars of Burmese art and history, tended to speak of Burmese Buddhism in terms of purity and decline. For instance, his work *Old Burma—Early Pagān* contains a section entitled "Aniruddha [Anawrahta] Maker of Burma, Champion of Buddhism."[51] He states that Anawrahta "wished to convert all Burma to a living faith in Buddhism. . . . No small feat when one remembers that his own people had not yet emerged from *nat*-worship and animal sacrifice . . . [and] that snake-worship was still powerful in the north."[52] This passage echoes the work of other authors in which Buddhist practices are set in strict opposition to the "lower" Burmese religions whose origins predate the arrival of Buddhism. In Luce's work, Anawrahta is described as a "valiant fighter" who "saved" Buddhism despite the fact that in the eleventh century it "was almost everywhere on the wane."[53]

It is particularly interesting that Luce continues to pay lip service to these notions of Anawrahta's role as the champion of pure Buddhism when so much of Luce's own work complicates any attempt to fit Anawrahta into this simple mold. He has stated that "the independent testimony if the *Cūḷavaṃsa* . . . may suffice to prove that Pagan Buddhism at the time of Aniruddha [Anawrahta] was not the degraded cult that later Burmese authors like to imagine."[54] Although Luce recognizes some of the discrepancies between the *Glass Palace Chronicle's* notion of a "degraded" Buddhism and his own, he never questions the source of those differences. Rather, he simply removes some of the credit

from Anawrahta and casts his successor, Kyanzittha, as a major force behind the religious reforms.[55] In so doing, Luce is faced with yet another problem in trying to reconcile Kyanzittha's role in promoting a restored Buddhism with the same king's avid support of *nats*, *nāgas*, and potential devotion of Viṣṇu.[56] To his credit, rather than make excuses for the varied forms of religious expression patronized by the kings, Luce simply acknowledges and accepts the eclectic spiritual interests of the Pagan court.

In addition to European authors, Burmese scholars have also, in many ways, been complicit in this process. Although they have been far less quick to insult the practice of *nat* worship, they often share some of Brown's assumptions about the nature of a pure Buddhism. Burmese academics were well aware of their potential audiences and strove to maneuver within the intellectual spaces to which political circumstances allowed them access. Furthermore, one can often find in the work of these scholars a tempered desire to problematize oversimplified readings of the past, but an equal unwillingness to invite criticism from the European community, particularly during the colonial period.

As early as the time of R. Grant Brown, there seems to have been a reluctance among Burmese writers to discuss spirit religions with outsiders, a reaction that was no doubt motivated, at least in part, by the likely reaction that such a discussion would bring.[57] I suspect that this reluctance to discuss *nat* worship was driven, to some degree, by a desire to preserve the previously mentioned claims about the nature of Burmese Buddhism. Specifically, I am referring to the often repeated claim that Burmese Buddhism is or is among the most pure. This point seems to have become a salient source of pride, as well as political expediency, that for many Burmese writers was well worth preserving. Any claims of prolific *nat* worship would have jeopardized notions of purity as they had been defined by the international academic community.

For instance, there is a strong ambivalence toward *nat* worship expressed in the writing of Maung Htin Aung. In his excellent book on *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*, he sets out to examine the influence of *nat* worship and other forms of indigenous beliefs on Burmese Buddhism; yet, he does so with a great deal of apology and justification. At one point while discussing the thirty-seven *nats*, he feels it significant to mention that his own family has a direct ancestral link to the very important and popular *nat* "Lady Golden Sides," who is both one of the thirty-seven and the guardian of Mindon. Htin Aung goes on to distance himself from such practices, however, by stating that in his family "she is remembered but never worshipped."[58] It is hard to quantify this type of ambivalence or to attribute it to a single motivation when many

factors were certainly at work. Clearly not all Burmese scholars were moved by the same desires, just as colonial aims did not drive the work of every one of their European counterparts. However, once these ideas found favor with an influential generation of scholars later academics were often their inheritors.

The same author's influential history of Burma, for example, assumes that Anawrahta sought to remove all Mahāyāna and animist practices from his kingdom. Likewise, the Buddhist advisor Shin Arahan is portrayed as a purist who "had to come to some compromise with spirit worshipers" in order to further his aims.[59] Conversely, any actions taken by Anawrahta to help establish the cults of particular *nats* are said to have been undertaken solely to appease the masses.[60] Although Htin Aung's work is more nuanced than most of the previously mentioned European examples, it still falls into the trap of creating an exclusionary dichotomy between Buddhism and spirit religions: to be pro-Buddhist one must, therefore, be anti-*nat*.

Htin Aung's scholarship consistently emphasizes tension between Buddhism and spirit religions in Burma, and ideas about Buddhism's purity or decay seem to be directly related to the presence of *nats*. For instance, Htin Aung describes Anawrahta's enthusiasm in establishing the thirty-seven *nats* as an attempt to suppress *nat* worship in general, saying that "Anawrahta was constrained to give some royal recognition to the existing cult of the Thirty-six Lords with the Lord of the Great Mountain as the chief *Nat* and now Anawrahta added the guardian of Buddhism, whose name was Śakra in Pali and Thagya in Burmese."[61] What is stated in this quotation in certainly true, but it ignores that fact that Anawrahta not only had a hand in establishing the importance of Thagya but is also credited with selecting the other thirty-six *Nat* Lords. Htin Aung sets up a framework in which Buddhism began to "decay" in the sixth century and was not "purified" until the arrival of Anawrahta in the eleventh.[62] This decay seems to be marked by the presence of Mahāyāna, which declined into popular cults until the time of Anawrahta.[63] The author accepts distinctions between "pure" and "decayed" without comment and concludes that the presence of Mahāyāna and Ari influence were "weeds in the garden of the national religion."[64]

In this schema, Kyanzittha is a backslider who for the sake of securing his tenuous kingship "turned a blind eye" to the "barbarous" practice of animal sacrifice and showed sympathy to the Ari monks.[65] Ultimately the pure practices of Anawrahta give way under these many concessions to the masses, and the author concludes that "As the *Nats* themselves were now shown to be worshippers of the Buddha, it was deemed proper for Buddhists to worship

the *Nats*."[66] I would argue that the reverse is true. The presence of well-known *nats* within the monastic centers served to demonstrate the worthiness of Buddhism, not the other way around.

When I express skepticism over the role of Anawrahta as the promoter of a pure Buddhism, I am not questioning his role as an important religious reformer; undoubtedly he was. Rather, I am taking issue with assumptions that underlie much of the secondary literature written about him. First, the previously cited histories are based on the assumption that Anawrahta, and by extension Shin Arahan, failed. That is to say, these men had intended to completely wipe out all traces of spirit religion in their kingdom, but due to popular pressures and social restraints they were prevented from succeeding. Yet to my knowledge there is not a single piece of credible evidence suggesting that this was their ultimate aim. In many ways, this first assumption is based on a second and more rudimentary one: namely, that Anawrahta's notions of the "true Law" or a purified Buddhism are identical to those expressed by scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In fact, the primary source for all of this information about Anawrahta's reign is the early-nineteenth-century *Glass Palace Chronicles*, but even within this text there is evidence that complicates the motivations underlying the king's reforms. If we assume for a moment that Anawrahta did indeed intend to eliminate spirit worship in his lands, several significant issues that cannot easily be explained confront us. For instance, if Anawrahta had sought to totally eliminate *nat* worship, why is he known for sponsoring the worship of the thirty-seven? And if his goal was to promote Buddhism at the exclusion of other forms of religious expression, it seems odd that the text would include a description of his decision to incorporate images of the thirty-seven *Nat* Lords into his foremost Buddhist complex, the Shwezigon.[67]

Some have suggested that Anawrahta was forced into accepting the *Nat* Lords due to social pressure. If that is the case, however, why are at least seven of the original thirty-seven royal *nats* potentially related to Anawrahta's own life? The *Nat* Lords known as Shingwa, Shwebyin Naungdaw, Shwebyin Nyidaw, and Mandalay Bodaw all met their ends on Anawrahta's spear or by his command. Shwebyin Naungdaw and Shwebyin Nyidaw were brothers who as great military leaders and potential rivals to the throne were put to death by Anawrahta. After their spirits began to haunt him he established a shrine for them at a nearby pagoda so that they might be appeased.[68] Mandalay Bodaw is recorded as having been the tutor of the two brothers, and Shingwa was his sister. Both were also put to death by Anawrahta for their role in training the brothers.[69] Likewise, the *Nat* Lord known as Nyaung-gyin is often associated with Manuha, the king of Thaton who was defeated and captured by Ana-

wrahta. Although Manuha is said to have died of leprosy rather than at Anawrahta's hand one, can well image that the king would wish to propitiate this once-powerful man in death.[70] Finally, the *nats* Htibyusaung and Htibyusaung Medaw were Anawrahta's father and grandmother, respectively.[71] In all, seven of the thirty-seven *nats* can be directly associated with the life of Anawrahta and some sources raise this number to eight by suggesting that the *nat* known as Shingon was also a contemporary of the king.[72] Regardless of the exact number, it is clear from these examples that the chronicle portrays the king as a man who was in no way reluctant to engage in the propitiation of spirits. Furthermore, given their intimate connections to his own life, the establishment of the thirty-seven *nats* must have been in many ways a deeply personal act.

Nor is Anawrahta's interaction with *nats* limited to the thirty-seven. The *Glass Palace Chronicle* mentions at least one other occasion on which Anawrahta established a structure in honor of a spirit. The *Chronicle* states:

> Later this minister Minyesishsin, builder of the town of Haingtek, devised evil against the king and met his punishment and died and became a spirit. . . . He [the king] built a *gu* and called it Minye after Minyesishsin his minister, founder of towns, who died and became a spirit. North of the town, moreover, he built a spirit-house for the people to worship.[73]

The term used to describe the first structure is *gu*, a Burmese word that derived from the Pali term *guha*, or cave. This term is usually reserved for reference to structures that can be entered and is often associated with Buddhist shrines. Given that the passage is taken from the description of Anawrahta's construction projects in the town of Haingtek, we are faced with one of two possibilities. Either the king built a Buddhist shrine for the spirit of the minister he had executed or he built a spirit-house for the deceased minister that was located near the Payahla *stūpa*. Even though the specifics of the first structure mentioned above may be uncertain, there can be little doubt about the second. It states that Anawrahta built a spirit house "for the people to worship." Needless to say, this is not the action of a king intent on eliminating spirit worship.

So if Anawrahta and Shin Arahan as represented in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* did not have the eradication of spirit worship as their aim, what was the purpose of their extensive religious reforms? The extent and nature of the changes initiated by both the king and the Buddhist community in Burma indicate a process that is similar to the types of Buddhist interaction with spirit-deities that were identified in India. Through these reforms Anawrahta was able to assist the Buddhists in incorporating local spirits into Buddhist contexts

while removing those elements that might run contrary to the Buddhist teachings. Yet his reasons for doing so were probably not entirely related to religious aims. By implementing these reforms, the text informs us, he helped to create a new royally sanctioned hierarchy with Buddhism at the top and gained a new source of legitimacy for his reign. In so doing he by no means stopped patronizing the *nats*; rather he simply took steps to demonstrate that they were appropriate additions to new Buddhist centers.

By placing the well-known protector of Buddhism, Śakra (Thagya), at the head of the thirty-seven and then locating images of these *nats* in attitudes of worship around the royal *stūpa* (Shwezigon), Anawrahta was indicating in no uncertain terms their new role as defenders and guardians of the Law. This role is attested in a late 1700s account by a traveler to Burma who wrote, "if a report presented to the Emperor shows that the number is great of those who observe the Law and attend charitable deeds, then do the Nat rejoice . . . they bring fertility, if men do good deeds they will become lords of Nats."[74] Although this quotation, like the chronicle itself, is the product of a much later time than the period of King Anawrahta, they both serve to demonstrate the relationship that eventually forms between Buddhism and the *nats*: proper behavior according to Buddhist ethical systems came to be seen as pleasing to the spirits who, in turn, would bring blessings to the populace. This is a system of reciprocity that looks very much like the relationship between the *saṃgha*, spirit-deities, and the public that existed in India and speaks to a continuity in the practices of the Buddhist community that spread well beyond South Asia.

These later sources also reveal the manner in which the king was understood to have been part of this process. As has been alluded to, aside from any religious motivations that may have inspired the king, there were also noteworthy political advantages to be gained though support of the Buddhist community. Most of the religious programs undertaken by Anawrahta can be understood as either working toward demonstrating his legitimacy or toward the consolidation of power. Those cases which are often cited as examples of Anawrahta's fervent hatred of spirit religions are more often than not attempts to eliminate divisive or fractious religious elements that might have detracted from a powerful centralized state.[75]

Whereas the *saṃgha* primarily sought legitimacy by demonstrating the Buddhist authority over spirit-deities, the king sought to expand his legitimacy by employing every means at his disposal. Not only did donations to the *saṃgha* serve as a way to visually demonstrate the king's authority; they also had the effect of helping to rein in the power of *nats* who were not part of the favored thirty-seven established by the king. Furthermore, the Buddhist monastic institution had the effect of limiting and containing, but not eliminating, the

power of the *nats* by making them into adherents of Buddhism and therefore implicitly imposing on them a secondary status. Even among the *nats* themselves, honored status was granted to the thirty-seven who had officially been identified as protectors of the king, the state, and the *saṃgha*.

This favored position occupied by the thirty-seven also had significant beneficial consequences for the king. When we recall that of the thirty-seven, up to eight relate to Anawrahta himself, two are the Mahägiri *nats* who have a special connection to the king, and one, Thagya, was installed by the king, a total of eleven of the *Nat* Lords directly demonstrate the importance of the ruler. The inclusion of *nats* that relate both to the deeds of the king and the welfare of the kingdom had the effect of equating the needs of the king and the state in the eyes of the public. By seeking legitimacy though both the sponsorship of Buddhism and the continued support of specific types of spirit worship, the king was better able to demonstrate his authority and ensure the continuation of his centralized state. Likewise, this form of authority based on a Buddhist system was more readily understood by rival or subjugated populations, like the Mon and Pyu, who did not practice *nat* worship but who had long been familiar with Buddhism.

If the reforms established at the urging of Shin Arahan and the Buddhist community had nothing to do with wanting to purge *nat* worship from existing practice, how can we explain references to Anawrahta as wanting to promote the "true Law"? How is "true" being defined in these instances, and if the corrupting force is not *nat* worship then what is it being defined against? Indeed, if any group is singled out in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* as bearing the brunt of Anawrahta's religious reforms it is not the proponents of spirit religion; rather, it is a group known as the Ari monks. Before we can examine why the king may have wished to eliminate this group, we need to understand who they were.

Given the paucity of reliable information about the Ari, determining who and what these people were is far from simple. Secondary sources have associated the Ari with practices as diverse as alchemy, astrology, *nat* worship, Mahāyāna Buddhism, tantra, Viṣṇu worship, and forest-dwelling monasticism.[76] And, although some or all of these might be true, there is very little trustworthy information provided in the primary literature about these people, and what information the literature does provide is often highly polemic. For example, the *Glass Palace Chronicle* states:

> Now the kings in that country for many generations had been confirmed in false opinions following the doctrines of the thirty Ari lords and their sixty thousand disciples. . . . It was the fashion of

> these Ari monks to reject the law preached by the Lord and to form each severally their own opinions. They wrote books after their own hearts and beguiled others into the snare. According to the law they preached a man might take the life of another and evade the course of *karma* if he recited a formula of deprecation.

In this passage we encounter what Htin Aung refers to as the "two Ari heresies." The first seems to be an insistence on the importance of individual commentaries and personal interpretation, while the second involves a belief in the recitation of formulas as a way to expiate bad *karma*. The removal of bad *karma* does not seem to be the point of contention, however; rather, it is the use of recitations for this purpose that seems objectionable. This point is made clear in an earlier part of the text, when Śakra advises Anawrahta in a dream to build pagodas in order to mitigate the evil deed of killing his brother.[77] This implies that donations which accumulate merit could ameliorate past misdeeds, but the recitation of ritual formulas to accomplish similar ends appears to have been unacceptable to Shin Arahan and his followers.

The text goes on to inform us of other inappropriate practices that the Ari engaged in, including one known as "taking the first flower." The *Glass Palace Chronicle* tells us:

> Moreover, kings and ministers, great and small, rich men and common people, whenever they celebrated the marriage of their children, were constrained to send them to these teachers at nightfall, sending, as it was called, the flower of their virginity. Nor could they be married till they were set free in the morning. If they were married without sending to the teacher the flower of their virginity, it is said that they were heavily punished by the king for breaking custom.[78]

The text has little explanation of this extremely odd reference, but clearly even the compilers of the text in the early 1800s found the implications a bit far-fetched.[79] In an explanatory interjection the compilers state that this "sending of the flower of virginity means an act of worship" involving a visit to the monastery on the night before marriage. The authors go on to reference stone inscriptions that refer to "the time of the first sending to the monastery" and entirely leave out any suggestions of impropriety. Nevertheless, it was undoubtedly necessary to at least mention the inflammatory insinuations found in some descriptions of Ari practice because they serve as a major justification for the king's harsh treatment of the group. The text tells us that:

> When the king and all the people forsook their own opinions and were established in the good Law, the Ari lords lost their gain and honor and bore great hatred against Shin Arahan. And the king fearing that the Ari would practice ill against him, took good heed and appointed guards enough to defeat the thirty Ari lords and their sixty thousand disciples. At that time there came many saints and novices from Thaton, and Shin Arahan made saints and ghostly councellors of those who were faithful in the religion. And the king unfrocked the thirty Ari lords and the sixty thousand followers and enrolled them among his spearmen and lancers and elephant-dung sweepers. And the king said: "Our royal grandsires and great-grand sires who ruled this kingdom in unbroken line, followed the doctrines of the Ari monks. If it were good to follow them again, I would fain follow them!"[80]

This long passage tells us that Anawrahta forcefully disbanded the Ari in a show of support for Shin Arahan and the like-minded monks from Thaton. Although the text provides us justifications for the king's actions, these may or may not be related to his actual motives for moving against the Ari in such a decisive way. Ultimately, we are left to speculate as to the real reasons for Anawrahta's actions. Perhaps the power held by this traditional priesthood was a threat to his throne, or perhaps the Ari emphasis on personal "opinions" over an established doctrine was a divisive force in the empire. Maybe the king's actions were in fact due to a sincere interest in Shin Arahan's version of Buddhism. Whatever the actual reasons, Anawrahta's actions appear to have been both decisive and final.

Faced with this uncertainty, some may argue that one of the factors in Ari practice that was considered objectionable was their association with *nat* worship.[81] Yet the above passage makes it clear that monks who "were faithful in religion" were appointed as "ghost counsellors" by Shin Arahan, which implies a direct relationship between followers of what the text considers "true Law" and spirit worship. In an earlier portion of the same text we are informed of yet another objectionable practice undertaken by the Ari: an early king of Pagan, acting on the advice of the "heretical Ari monks," constructed a series of pagodas and "in them he set up what was neither spirit-images nor images of the Lord and worshipped them with offerings of rice, curry, and fermented drinks night and morning."[82] Although it might be tempting to try and deduce what these inappropriate images actually depicted (bodhisattvas? Hindu deities?), for the purpose of this argument the most notable point is that the objectionable feature of these statues is that they are *not* images of spirits. If

anything, the Ari monks are being faulted for not being strict enough in their devotion to the Buddha and the *nats* by introducing a new, unnamed category of spiritual being.

Anawrahta's reforms as revealed in the chronicles were, therefore, not about eliminating the practice of spirit worship but rather with ensuring that the *nats* were associated with the appropriate form of Buddhism. Likewise, references to the "true Law" in the text can be shown to be defined against the practices of the Ari and not against the worship of *nats*. In this context, the incorporation of the thirty-seven *nats* into Shin Arahan's form of Buddhism can be seen as a move designed to demonstrate both royal favor and the appropriateness of this type of Buddhism over the religious practices of the Ari. This examination of the evidence makes it apparent that notions about "pure Buddhism" being divorced from the practice of spirit religions is largely an invention of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century preconceptions.

The *Glass Palace Chronicle* can thus be understood as describing a process of incorporation through which the *nats* became associated with Buddhist practice. For example, when Anawrahta sent his troops against the kingdom of Gandhala in order to capture the tooth relic, he sought to avoid a direct conflict by first capturing the immense copper image of the enemy's protector spirit, Sandi. Anawrahta ordered that the image be literally tied up and struck with his royal cane. As this happens, the spirit of the image cries out, saying:

> The future-Buddha, the king who reigns in Pugarama Arimaddana, is come desiring only to behold the sacred tooth; and, lo! the Utībwa, the ministers and all the people regard him not. . . . Me, therefore, he punisheth, and sorely.[83]

He is pained not by the power of the king himself but rather because the actions of his home city have caused a future-Buddha, the Burmese king, to strike him. Although the historicity of this tale might well be questioned, it is intriguing that it sets up a situation in which the king demonstrates his authority over the spirit guardians of his rivals. Furthermore, it is the virtuous nature of his Buddhist aims (his desire for relics) and his status as a future-Buddha that grant him this special capability. Like the miraculous tales of King Aśoka, the king of the Burmese Buddhist state is recognized for and by his virtue which, in turn, accords him authority over the spiritual world.

A similar type of hagiography can be identified in the reign of King Kyanzittha. One tale tells of a *nāga* who supposedly guarded the young Kyanzittha as he slept in the forest and hid him from the king's men, who would have killed him as a potential rival to the throne.[84] The tale seems to have been an important source of royal validation, given that, once he became king, Kyan-

zittha sponsored the construction of the Nagayon temple over the exact location where this miraculous event was said to have occurred (figure 7.2).[85] This temple features a central image of the Buddha being protected by the *nāga* Muchalinda, which draws a clear parallel between the events attributed to his own life and those of the Buddha.[86] It seems that Kyanzittha's campaign was indeed successful, because the compilers of the *Glass Palace Chronicle* felt it necessary to address the possibility that Kyanzittha was actually the son of a *nāga*. The authors conclude that the *nāga* protected Kyanzittha not because he was his son but rather because he would "uphold the great religion by his glory, power and authority."[87] As with Anawrahta, Kyanzittha is granted power over spirit-deities not only because of his royalty but also because of his role as a defender of the Law.

With the prominence of tales in which kings demonstrate their authority over local gods, one might wonder what role the monastic community played in this process. Although it is clear that the king is often described as having power over spirits due to his association with Buddhism, it is still the kings and not the *saṃgha* who are the protagonists in most of these tales. Part of the problem lies in the types of sources available. The chronicles were written to glorify the royal line, not the Buddhist community, so it is not surprising that

FIGURE 7.2. Nagayon. Pagan, Myanmar (Burma). Ca. late 11th–early 12th c. CE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

the king should be given the spotlight in most of these tales. Nevertheless, there are a few passages that make it clear that the king was no match for the monks when it came to interacting with spirits.

One tale in the *Glass Palace Chronicle* sets up a confrontation between a monk and the king. In this tale, the king Narapatisithu exiles the virtuous elder Panthagu when, due to a disagreement over the king's recent actions, the monk refuses to accept the king's alms. As soon as the monk sets off for Sri Lanka, a *bilu* (or ogre) appears on the Tharaba gate and will not let anyone pass. Despite their best efforts, neither the king nor any of his ministers or priests can make the creature budge. Finally, in an act of desperation, the king begs the exiled monk to return in hopes that he can set things right. As soon as Panthagu approaches the gate, the ogre immediately bows to the senior monk and disappears. After this event the monk and the king come to an understanding, and Panthagu once again is willing to accept alms from the king.[88]

This tale takes on particular importance when we realize the symbolic value of the Tharaba gate. The gateway not only marks the entrance to the Buddhist sacred center at Pagan but, more important, it is also the traditional residence of the Mahāgiri *nats*.[89] Given the importance of the gateway as a symbol of the king's authority, one can appreciate the crisis that this *bilu* must have presented. It is interesting that the tale relates a situation in which the king is portrayed as having authority over spirits only when he acts in accordance with the *saṃgha* and the Buddhist teachings. By acting against the *saṃgha*, he cut himself off from the legitimacy-granting institution by which his authority was made known. The king needed the sanction of the *saṃgha* in order to validate and manifest his authority both in Burmese society and in the world of the spirits. The ability of the king to rule both humans and spirits successfully was contingent upon his merit. Ultimately kings must rely on the *saṃgha* for the continuance of that beneficial merit.

The tale of Anawrahta's death, however, makes it clear that not even the monks could forestall the effects of bad *karma* forever. According to this section of the chronicle, one of Anawrahta's defeated enemies is reborn as the spirit of a tree. Soon thereafter Anawrahta walks past the spirit's tree and, when this spirit refuses to pay honor to the king, he has the tree beaten with his royal lance. Because of the power held by the righteous king and the might of the lance, which was a gift from Śakra, the spirit is compelled to flee. Fortunately for the king, as long as his *karma* remains strong the spirit is powerless to exact revenge; but when the king's merit begins to wane, the spirit seizes its chance. It takes the form of a crazed bull, and when the people implore Anawrahta for help in subduing it, the spirit manages to fatally gore the king. After

his death, even the king's corpse becomes an object of contention between the tree spirit and a *nāga*. The situation is finally resolved when Śakra intervenes and personally buries the body on a mountain.[90]

In both of the previous tales it becomes clear that even though the king is granted an enormous amount of authority over spirit-deities, he is ultimately beholden to acts of merit, and the *saṃgha*, as the source of that strength. Even the king's merit, like that of all people, will eventually be exhausted. It is significant, therefore, that a spirit which had been easily repelled in the past suddenly had the ability to take Anawrahta's life. Likewise, although Śakra was willing and able to preserve the king's corpse, even he does not seem to have been able to prevent the death. Despite his great strength, even the king is subject to the laws of *karma* and rebirth, bonds from which only enlightenment offers release.

A major component in the development of good *karma* involved making large donations to the monastic community. Perhaps the single most important donative project undertaken by King Anawrahta, as recorded in the chronicle, was the construction of a *stūpa* near the capital that was intended to hold the relic of the Buddha's frontal bone as well as images of the thirty-seven *Nat* Lords. The structure is known as the Shwezigon, and as it appears today is largely the product of rebuilding in the 1500s (figure 7.3). Nevertheless, the chronicles inform us that the construction of the *stūpa* was first begun by Anawrahta in the eleventh century and was concluded during the reign of Kyanzittha. The inscriptional evidence at the site makes no references to Anawrahta, however, and provides corroboration for only Kyanzittha's involvement in the building process.[91]

According to the literary sources, the Shwezigon *stūpa* was built when, after consulting Shin Arahan, Anawrahta attached the relic to a royal white elephant and vowed to build a *stūpa* wherever the elephant rested. To the king's dismay, the elephant knelt on a sandy area near the capital known as Nyaung-u. Because the land was not stone or soil, the king feared that this was an omen foretelling the eventual decline of Buddhism. Śakra appeared to the king in a dream, however, and reassured him that the religion would last five thousand years. Afterward Śakra personally strengthened the ground at the site with solid rock that was clamped all around with iron plates.[92] Although the frontal bone relic was installed as soon as the relic chamber was complete, construction on the site is said to have continued throughout Anawrahta's reign, and during that time the king made some important additions. For instance, after acquiring the Buddha's tooth relic Anawrahta also had it installed it at Shwezigon. The text states that he decided to place both relics in the *stūpa* when the royal elephant once again rested at this very important location.[93]

FIGURE 7.3. Shwezigon. Pagan, Myanmar (Burma). Ca. 11th c. CE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

At some point during his reign, Anawrahta is said to have installed images of the thirty-seven *Nat* Lords, which he placed near the central *stūpa* in attitudes of devotion.[94] Michael Aung-Thwin has suggested that this combination of Buddhist complex and *nat* shrine imagery allowed a "Buddhist temple to become also the ancestral stele of all Burmese royalty."[95] Both religious traditions could thereby be made to serve the legitimacy of the king while preserving the favored position held by Buddhism in this hierarchy. The original set of *nat* images remained in place for several centuries until they were stolen sometime in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century.[96] The British officer Richard Temple had copies of these images made, which verifies that the originals were

still in place at least until the late nineteenth century.[97] Despite this theft, a new set of images of the thirty-seven was quickly created to replace the originals, and this second set can still be found at the site. The important role of the *nat* images at Shwezigon is recorded in the Burmese sources and is attested by the unbroken continuity of their worship, as has been preserved by the hereditary attendants at the site.[98] Moreover, the Shwezigon complex presents us with a familiar situation in which the decorative program of the site serves to validate the importance of Buddhism in relation to indigenous forms of spirit worship.

The parallels between the placement of spirit images at Shwezigon and those found at Indian Buddhist sites like Bhārhut are striking. As in the Indian cases, images of important spirit-deities that had traditionally been placed at the center of their own shrines have here been placed at the periphery, while the central place of honor is occupied by the Buddhist relics. This expression of Buddhist spiritual authority parallels the importance to Buddhism demonstrated in the literature and, together with the use of visual culture, was a potent means of establishing a new spiritual hierarchy while endorsing the efficacy of Buddhist practice.

This superimposition of the symbols of the Buddhist Law onto spaces associated with *nats* is attributed to many sites that are associated with the reign of Anawrahta. E. Michael Mendelson has demonstrated the frequent association between *nats* and mountains or hills. He goes on to point out that many of these same mountains were the sites on which Anawrahta built Buddhist structures. For example, "all of the sites except two (the Lokananda and Shwezigon) chosen by the elephant when Anawrahta seeks guidance on where to enshrine the replicas of the Buddha's tooth are mounts: Tangyi, Tuywin, Thalyaung, Hkaywe, Pyek."[99] Furthermore, because the locations of these shrines were determined by the royal elephant, and by extension the relics themselves, the process was not linked directly to the king or the *saṃgha*, thereby freeing them from any responsibility in co-opting centers of *nat* worship. Significantly, this process of construction at sites associated with spirit religions is very similar to the pattern in India and, as in the case of India, marks the beginning of a long tradition of spirit-deities being associated with Buddhist centers. Today not only are the thirty-seven still associated with the Shwezigon, but so are several additional local *nats*, the best-known of which are the father-and-son pair known as Shwe Nyo Thin and Shwe Saga (figure 7.4).[100]

Despite the dramatically different context presented in the Burmese sources and the primacy given to the role of the king, we can still recognize the familiar methods of Buddhist expansion at work. Art and narrative are

FIGURE 7.4. Shwe Nyo Thin and Shwe Saga Nats. Shwezigon. Pagan, Myanmar (Burma). Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

mustered to create a new hierarchy between Buddhism and the preexistent forms of religious expression in the region that parallel the processes that were identified in India. The *nats* and *bilu* of Burma are reinvented into the roles of protectors and devotees, just as the *yakṣas* and *pretas* of India were. And just like their Indian counterparts, these occasionally troublesome spirits are housed in monastic institutions along with the monks and are thereby understood as being rendered less problematic. The close links between the *saṃgha* and the king in Burmese society naturally create some uniquely Burmese elements in this process, but the same methodology of expansion lies at the heart of these developments. Both in India and Burma it is the monastic desire to convert all beings to Buddhist thought that provides the basic mechanism for Buddhism's encounter with spirit religions. In so doing the *saṃgha* consistently finds a role as the keepers and the tamers of the troublesome spirits who, like all beings, are believed to benefit from their message. Once again, in notably different cultural contexts, the same patterns of Buddhist expansion can be identified. And although I have only given examples of this process from China and Burma, the same mechanisms can be seen everywhere Buddhism travels.

This page intentionally left blank

8

Confronting Their Demons

Moreover, the *yakṣa* Vajrāpaṇi constantly and always follows close behind the irreversible Bodhisattva so as to protect and defend him.
—*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika*. IV.8.2.7

Bodhisattvas and Spirit-Deities

As Buddhism traveled into new regions and mixed with distant cultures, it was gradually becoming less prominent in its own homeland. But before Buddhism faded entirely from the South Asian religious landscape it underwent numerous significant changes and gave rise to several distinct schools of thought. These sectarian distinctions within the *saṃgha* also had an impact on the representations of spirit-deities that can be identified throughout even the latest periods of Buddhism in India.

The evidence considered so far reveals that the Buddhist monastic community undertook an ongoing and intentional practice whereby various sorts of spirit-deities were transformed into Buddhist devotees. This process was not only propagated through literary accounts of monks and nuns who converted these dangerous beings into benign guardians but was also prominently expressed in the artwork. Images of spirit-deities were consistently positioned on the periphery of early monastic complexes to reveal the new status of these beings as supporters of Buddhism and to provide tangible

evidence for this shift in popular religion instigated by the *saṃgha*. The frequent placement of monastic centers over sites associated with supernatural activity reveals the widespread and consistent nature of these actions. The physical evidence allows us to understand the narrative accounts as more than just fiction by seeing them as part of a pattern of activity attested to in the material record. It is likely, moreover, that these practices ultimately found their validation in the accounts of the Śākyamuni's actions at Bodh Gayā.

The Buddhist desire to assist all beings, including spirit-deities, created a social function for the *saṃgha*. By turning spirit-deities to good purposes, the monks created a de facto role for themselves as mediators, capable of interceding between the public and potentially dangerous spirit-deities. Yet it also seems clear that this monastic role as spiritual intermediaries had its price. The *saṃgha* had obligations to these spirit-deities, and many members of the monastic community believed that they risked dire consequences if these responsibilities were ever ignored. Despite these costs and concerns, however, wherever we find evidence of Buddhism there is always some evidence of spirit-deities as well.

The impact of spirit-deity conversions was at its greatest as Buddhism first began to expand into new areas and the *saṃgha* worked to transition indigenous ghosts and gods into the Buddhist cosmological system. But even after Buddhism was well established, these supernatural beings continued to hold significant power within their new Buddhist contexts. It is importance to nuance this acknowledgment of spirit-deities as a consistent element in Buddhist practice, however, with the understanding that this role did change over time. It comes as little surprise to find that as various schools of Buddhism developed they often depicted and conceived of spirit-deities in slightly variant ways.

With the eventual growth in the importance of bodhisattvas new hierarchical relationships began to appear. Over time, bodhisattvas acquired more prominence than spirit-deities in some schools of Buddhist thought, and this emergence had a significant effect on the corresponding forms of Buddhist practice. Just as the early Buddhist community demonstrated its own importance by favorably positioning itself in relation to spirit-deities, the same dynamic appears to be at work in some images that depict bodhisattvas. There is a recurring iconographic motif that can be identified in examples of Buddhist sculpture dating from the fifth to the eleventh centuries which emphasizes the importance of bodhisattvas by placing them in relation to both ghosts and popular deities. For instance, among the sculpture made during the Pāla Dynasty, which was one of the last Buddhist strongholds in India (eighth to late eleventh centuries CE), there is a fairly common figural type which depicts

spirit-deities and ghosts seeking relief at the hands of bodhisattvas. These images typically depict a standing, male bodhisattva figure with his right hand extended downward and his palm upturned in the boon-granting gesture (*varada mudrā*). Although this gesture in itself is not noteworthy, it is significant that small, malformed figures begging at the bodhisattvas' feet seem to be the recipients of this generosity. Susan Huntington mentions this type of sculpture in the Pāla period and identifies it as a form of Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara known as *Pretasaṃtarpita* Lokeśvara or "*Preta*–satisfying Lokeśvara."[1] Related examples of this subject matter not only occur at relatively late Pāla-period sites but can also be found at sites that date to as early as the fifth century, such as Ajaṇṭā and Sarnath.

A series of images portraying begging ghosts and other beings can be seen in Ajāṇṭa Cave 26 (figure 8.1). These images are located on a band of decoration that lines an upper portion of the cave's interior. The register is broken into framed units that depict alternating seated and standing Buddhas. All of the standing Buddha figures have some manner of creature kneeling at their feet. Although some of these creatures are clearly animals and others appear to be human, a few depict skeletal or bloated figures prostrating themselves at the

FIGURE 8.1. Buddha with Hungry Ghost. Ajāṇṭa, Cave 26. 5th c. CE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

feet of the Buddha. No inscription exists which definitively identifies these monstrous beings, but their appearance closely resembles the literary descriptions of *pretas*, making it probable that these figures are intended to represent the dead, or more accurately, some manner of ghostly rebirth.

In Ajaṇṭā Cave 26 it is the Buddha, rather than the bodhisattvas that we commonly find in other examples of this motif, who is portrayed granting relief to the tormented ghosts. For instance, a fifth-century image from Sarnath, currently in the National Museum in New Delhi, shows two skeletal beings begging with cupped hands at the feet of a bodhisattva (figures 8.2a, 8.2b). They are positioned directly under the bodhisattva's right hand as if seeking relief through his generosity and mercy. This image and the relief carvings from Ajaṇṭā are both products of the fifth century, and the similarity of their

FIGURE 8.2a. Bodhisattva with Hungry Ghosts. Sarnath. Ca. 5th c. CE. National Museum, New Delhi. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

FIGURE 8.2b. Detail of Hungry Ghosts. Sarnath. Ca. 5th c. CE. National Museum, New Delhi. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

iconography suggests a parallel in the authority enjoyed by the Buddha and the bodhisattvas over spirit-deities and the dead. The choice to depict either a Buddha or a bodhisattva in this position of strength was more than likely linked to philosophic differences between Buddhist sects and directly related to which Buddhist school or lay donor commissioned the work. In both cases, however, the importance of Buddhism is highlighted with unmistakable clarity as the large and majestic Buddhist figure is placed in relation to the pathetic, needful ghosts.

A similar, but much later, representation can be found on the left-hand side of the entryway leading into the main monastery at Ratnagiri (figure 8.3). This image depicts the bodhisattva Khasarpaṇa-Lokeśvara, and once again under his right hand the emaciated, wretched figure of a hungry ghost can be

FIGURE 8.3. Khasarpaṇa-Lokeśvara with Hungry Ghost. Ratnagiri. Ca. 8th c. CE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

seen kneeling in supplication, perhaps awaiting a drop of heavenly nectar (*amṛta*) to fall from above. As with the previous examples, this sculpture leaves no uncertainty as to which figure is most important. The pleading ghosts are dwarfed by the size of the bodhisattvas and are clearly in dire need of assistance.

A related image from Nālandā, dating to the ninth or tenth century, depicts the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara granting aid to a small, narrow-snouted and pot-bellied creature (figures 8.4a, 8.4b). Although this small, piglike being looks quite different from the skeletal figure seen in the example from Ratnagiri, both figural types fit textual descriptions given of hungry ghosts. As was discussed in chapter 4, some of these unfortunate beings are said to be in a perpetual state of intense hunger because they have huge bellies, with proportional appetites, and tiny pinhole-sized mouths.[2] The figure in the Nālandā images matches this description closely. Although it is not entirely clear what the difference between the skeletal and bloated *pretas* may indicate, both figural types can be seen on examples dating to as early as the fifth century (at Ajaṇṭā) and continue to be seen even in some of the latest occurrences of this motif.

Pretas, of both figural types, are the beings most commonly represented in supplication to bodhisattvas; however, images of portly or kingly *yakṣa*-type (perhaps *rakśaṣa*-type) figures can also be found. In at least one example, a *yakṣa*-type figure appears in conjunction with the image of a hungry ghost. In this instance, seen in the eighth-century example from Ratnagiri, the fanged and multiarmed spirit-deity is situated on the left side of the bodhisattva, directly opposite the *preta* (figure 8.3). Hieratic scale is once again used to indicate the overwhelming superiority of the bodhisattva, and this dominance is further reinforced by the fact that the secondary figures have hands raised in supplication to the central figure.

Although these images represent ghosts and spirit-deities as being inferior to the powerful and benevolent bodhisattvas, this does not mean that they had lost all of their importance. Just as the art at Bhārhut served to express the dominance of the Buddhist relics by placing them in relation to images of spirit-deities, this variant hierarchy works to establish the great power possessed by bodhisattvas as well as to reinforce their authority over spirit-deities and the restless dead. By showing images of needy spirit-deities seeking succor at the feet of bodhisattvas, the art reinforces the importance of bodhisattvas in relation to the well-known and established figures of minor deities and ghosts. The same strategies used to convey the importance of the Buddhist relics several centuries earlier are here being employed to reinforce the importance of the bodhisattvas to the Indian audience. Just as the relics at early sites supplanted the traditional place of the spirit-deity in the center of the *caitya,* here the bodhisattvas assume the spirit-deities' roles as guardians and providers.

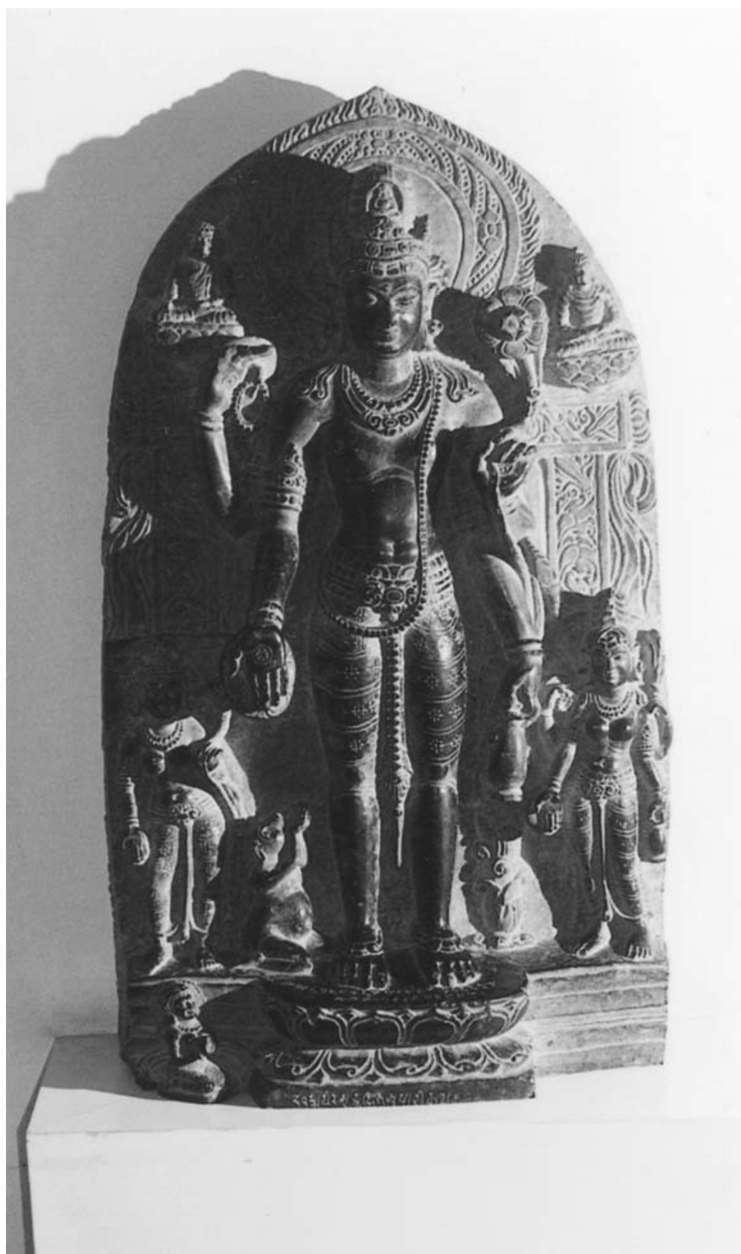

FIGURE 8.4a. Avalokiteśvara with a Hungry Ghost. Nālandā. 9th–10th c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Nālandā. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

FIGURE 8.4b. Detail of Avalokiteśvara with a Hungry Ghost. Nālandā. 9th–10th c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Nālandā. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

In an odd way, the later art (from the fifth century on) attests to the continued importance of spirit-deities in Buddhism. At the least, it demonstrates that spirit-deities continued to be significant enough to bother using them as a benchmark or counterpoint against which to position the importance of bodhisattvas. Although bodhisattvas gained popularity in certain forms of Buddhism, and the status of spirit-deities undoubtedly suffered as a result, the evidence suggests that even though the specifics of their role may have changed over time, spirit-deities consistently remained a vital part of Indian Buddhism. At times even the distinction between *yakṣas* and bodhisattvas becomes

blurred, and in at least one instance a *yakṣa* actually becomes identified as a bodhisattva.

According to some of the Buddhist literature, when the Buddha traveled to the northwest of the subcontinent he was accompanied by a very powerful *yakṣa* named Vajrāpaṇi who served as his loyal bodyguard.[3] Indeed, the figure of Vajrāpaṇi is frequently depicted in the art of Gandhara, and although he is portrayed in a few standard forms, most notably as either a bearded warrior or as a young man, he can consistently be recognized by the thunderbolt or large club that he carries. His notoriety extended well beyond the region of Gandhara, however, as both Xuanzang and Faxian refer to a Vajrāpaṇi *stūpa* in Kuśinagara.[4] According to their accounts, this *stūpa* was built over the spot where Vajrāpaṇi either fainted or dropped his mace after witnessing the death of the Buddha, whom he had protected for so long. In fact, according to some Buddhist traditions, Vajrāpaṇi's role as a protector seems to have extended beyond defending Śākyamuni. For instance, the *Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajnaparamita* states that:

> Furthermore, Vajrapani, the great Yaksha, constantly and always follows behind the irreversible Bodhisattva. Unassailable, the Bodhisattva cannot be defeated by either men or ghosts. All beings find it hard to conquer him, and his mind is not disturbed [by their attacks].[5]

These sentiments are echoed in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika,* as cited at the beginning of this chapter. According to both texts, any "irreversible bodhisattva" (meaning one who has achieved the merit needed to eventually become a Buddha) is guaranteed protection by this most powerful of spirit-deities.

Buddhaghoṣa identifies this great *yakṣa* as being identical to Sakka (Indra), whereas other sources refer to several Vajrāpaṇis as if they were an entire category of creatures.[6] Even though confusion surrounding the nomenclature used in referring to a specific spirit-deity is not surprising, Vajrāpaṇi is unique insofar as the Mahāyāna literature refers to him as being a bodhisattva. Specifically, the bodhisattva Vajrāpaṇi is credited with having compiled the *Mahāyānasūtras* and making them available to believers.[7] Likewise, in the Vajrāyāna, or Tantric, tradition of Buddhism Vajrāpaṇi is recognized as an important figure who is commonly identified as the *dhyāni*-bodhisattva of the Buddha Akshobya.[8]

The example of Vajrāpaṇi is perhaps most useful insofar as it demonstrates the profound impact that Indian spirit-religions had on Buddhism even in its later forms. As Buddhism grew and changed, so did the spirit-deities associated

with it and, as the case of Vajrāpaṇi reminds us, their impact can be traced to some noteworthy developments. Spirit-deities and their relationship to the rest of Buddhist practice and belief were by no means static. As forms of Buddhism grew and adapted, so did the spirit-deities that had become an integral part of the religion.

Even at the latest Buddhist sites in India one can find prominent, albeit less pervasive, sculptural representations of spirit-deities. Although the importance of these spirit-deities, which were vital to the spread of Buddhism, became less pronounced once Buddhism was well established, they remained a notable aspect of Buddhist practice throughout the centuries. The physical evidence suggests that those popular deities that were already in worship at Buddhist sites continued to enjoy devotion as long as the monastic centers were still in use. The majority of these sites were inhabited for centuries after their original construction, yet at no point is there any evidence that the images of spirit-deities were ever effaced, abandoned, or discarded by the Buddhist community. If anything, the evidence suggests the reverse; that occasionally, "intrusive" images of spirit-deities were at times added to the decorative program of monasteries, as was previously discussed in regard to Bedsā.

Other evidence for this trend can be found at Nālandā, where a great deal of late Buddhist material has been recovered, including various images of spirit-deities. For example, a large seventh-century image of a *nāga* was incorporated into the monastery's decorative program well after Nālandā had become a renowned center of Buddhist learning (figure 8.5). It would seem that the practice of including additional spirit-deities within monastic complexes could continue long after the monastery had been well established in the community.

One tends to find that fewer spirit-deities are depicted on later sites dating between the seventh through twelfth centuries. Instead of the large numbers of spirit-deities displayed on the early structures, these monasteries contain only a small number of prominent images. The images that we do find often depict spirit-deities who either have a direct connection to the particular monastery at which they are found or represent one of the few spirit-deities who enjoyed a widespread recognition. Most notably, the royal spirit-deity pair Kubera and Hāritī grew in importance over time and are consistently found even at the latest Indian Buddhist sites. For instance, the Buddhist complex at Ratnagiri in Orissa, which dates to between the eighth and twelfth centuries, contains numerous images of spirit-deities. But by far the most prominently placed of these spirit-deity images are representations of Kubera, the *yakṣa* king, and his consort Hāritī, which are located at the entrance to one of Ratnagiri's main

FIGURE 8.5. *Nāgaraja*. Nālandā. 7th c. CE. Archaeological Museum, Nālandā. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

monasteries (figure 8.6). These ubiquitously depicted spirit-deities in many ways take on a symbolic function, becoming emblematic of the entire pantheon of semi-divine Buddhist devotees.

It is notable that even at Ratnagiri, which is among the last monasteries to have been built in South Asia, we still see figures of spirit-deities in their familiar role as guardian, positioned at the entrances to the Buddhist sacred centers and protecting all that lies within. Images of spirit-deities were included in the decorative programs of monasteries and were persistently maintained by the *saṃgha* throughout the entire history of Buddhism in South Asia. Despite subtle shifts in their importance or function as understood by various sectarian groups, nearly every Buddhist monastic complex in India addresses these popular deities in some manner. This pervasive presence in the artwork

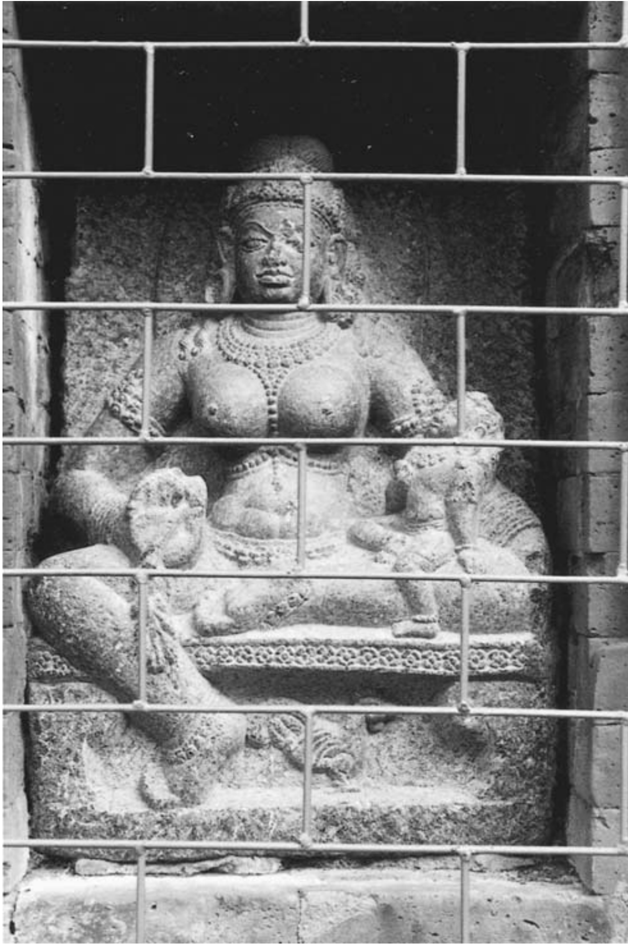

FIGURE 8.6. Hārītī. Ratnagiri. Ca. 11th c. CE. Photo by Robert DeCaroli.

is intimately tied to the vital role that these supernatural beings played in the development, spread, and continued support of Buddhism as an institution both within South Asia and abroad.

Conclusions

This work is framed by some deceptively simple questions, which have guided the discussion and have shaped the nature of the analysis. Why are images of spirit-deities, which are associated with worldly concerns, depicted on structures employed by a community dedicated to the pursuit of ascetic ideals? How

is it that the *saṃgha* gained popular support when it became necessary to seek broader sources of patronage? And, what social role did the *saṃgha* provide so as to maintain that support? Armed with hindsight, these questions can be understood as varied inquires into the same historical process. They are profoundly interconnected and one cannot be answered responsibly without reference to the others.

The historical processes documented here concern both the supernatural and the remarkably human. The myriad tales of spirit-deity conversions and ghostly dangers provided by the literature at times present a fanciful world that seems to have no bearing on historical fact. Yet embedded in those narratives are the rationalizations of a very human process, by which a new community of ascetics struggled to establish its place in a larger society while coming to terms with the religious and cultural milieu that surrounded them. Implicit in these accounts is a desire for public recognition that would attract the worldly support needed to perpetuate the monastic institution, while simultaneously allowing them to remain true to their vows and avoid public criticism. This could not have been an easy task.

Although the narratives alone may not provide sufficient evidence of the historical nature of this process, the artistic and archaeological evidence leave little doubt that the Buddhist community intentionally sought out and absorbed spirit-deities into its fold. When taken together, the textual evidence provides an explanation of the activities documented in the material record. By employing evidence from a variety of sources we can begin to understand not only what was done but also how the Buddhist community understood those actions. Although they believed this process of supernatural conversion to be fraught with danger, it was seen to be worth the risks because it ultimately served to benefit the *saṃgha*, the public, and the spirit-deities themselves.

This process demanded that the *saṃgha* confront their own fear of spirit-deities in order to build monasteries over locations known to be inhabited by the supernatural or in order to deal with those beings already residing within the monastic complex. As we have seen, this same fear served both to discourage inappropriate activities among the members of the *saṃgha* and kept the public appreciative of the Buddhists' spiritual prowess. Furthermore, the use of sculptural representation of spirit-deities within and around the monastery signified to the public the Buddhist success in controlling these capricious beings and marked the *saṃgha* as a group that was both worthy of support and capable of generating impressive amounts of merit.

Despite the complexities in dealing with the restless dead from within a system of rebirth, close ties between spirit-deities and the ancestral dead can be demonstrated. It seems likely that the *saṃgha's* skill in tending to spirit-

deities is just one part of the Buddhist proficiency in dealing with the dead in all their forms. The ability to transfer merit and to remove the threat posed by the dangerous dead provided the *saṃgha* with a social role that ensured its continued support and growth while allowing its members to remain separate from secular society. This process was so successful that it became an integral part of Buddhist practice and provided this emerging institution the mechanisms by which it could prosper and expand.

These realizations lead us to confront old assumptions about the nature of early Buddhist belief and practice. Buddhism even in its earliest forms was not simply an otherworldly ideology of transcendence. Parallel to this soteriological concern was a deep investment in mortuary practices and a persistent concern with strategies for coping with spirits and the dead. Rather than seeing the presence of spirit-deities as signs of flawed practices or as markers of decay due to excessive lay influence, it becomes clear that visual and textual references to spirit-deities are the hallmarks of a vigorous tradition. Instead of signaling periods of decline, the prominent display of spirit-deities often indicates times of active expansion and growth during which the *saṃgha* and the Buddhist teachings were influential enough to claim hegemony over potential rivals. The incorporation of popular deities into Buddhist contexts becomes simultaneously significant as a methodology for outward expansion, a means of signalling the *saṃgha's* purity, and as an act of monastic courage and compassion. Far from being marginal concessions to the public, spirit-deities played a central role in the development and growth of Buddhism in all of its contexts and in all of its forms.

This page intentionally left blank

Notes

CHAPTER 1

Epigraph source: *The Group of Discourses*, 1.33.

1. Schopen, "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions."

2. Ibid., 4–7.

3. De Jong, "The Study of Buddhism," 21.

4. Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 258.

5. Cole, *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art*, 13–15.

6. Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 264.

7. Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, 57.

8. Ibid., 62.

9. Smith, "Graeco-Roman Influence," 119; Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 258–259.

10. Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 34. Also cited in Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters*, 267.

11. Fergusson, *On the Study of Indian Architecture*, 34.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

14. Burgess, *The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta*, 112. Also cited in Chandra, *On the Study of Indian Art*, 45.

15. Hunter, "An Account of Some Artificial Caves," 301.

16. Sastri, *Nalanda and Its Epigraphic Material*, 117.

17. This term refers to the myriad popular religious practices in India which center of the propitiation and veneration of various local and minor deities. The term seems fitting because these beings hold a liminal position between the realms of ghosts (*preta, bhūta*) and the gods (*deva*) and frequently seem to share the nature of both. I do realize that combining several categories

of supernatural beings under one title also poses certain problems. Given the fluidity and frequency with which the primary sources use these categories interchangeably and the uniformity in the Buddhist response to all these types of beings, however, it is helpful to use this collective term within the confines of the present discussion. Conversely, if I were to limit the discussion to just cases of one type (*yakṣa*, *nāga*, or *devatā*) I would only be able to explore a fraction of the available evidence detailing the monastic response to preexistent, non-Brahmanical, nonsoteriological forms of religious expression that center on the appeasement of a deity or deities who possess explicitly limited power. This term is more fully explained in the following section.

18. This work was first published in 1928 and 1931 as Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, in 2 parts (Washington D. C., 1928, 1931). However, a recent reprint of the text has been published by Munshiram Manoharlal as Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, 2 vols. in 1. Unless otherwise stated, all references in this work are to the reprinted edition. An even more recent edited edition that incorporates previously unpublished notes and changes that Coomaraswamy made to this material later in his life has been made accessible as Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays in the Water Cosmology*.

19. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, 1.9–10, 32–33.

20. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays*, 15.

21. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, 1.33.

22. Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 26.

23. The texts by Coomaraswamy and Sutherland both focus on the nature of the *yakṣa*, as does an excellent work by Ram Nath Misra entitled *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*. Both Coomaraswamy's and Misra's works contain some discussion of other spirit-deities, as well.

24. *Jaina Sūtras II*, 206.

25. Ibid.

26. *The Ordinances of Manu*, 12.44.

27. Ibid., 12.47.

28. Ibid., 12.48–50.

29. *Mahābhārata*, ed. Sukthankar, 6.39.4.

30. *Markandeya Purāṇa* 45.18–40, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* 1.5, 59–65, as cited in O'Flaherty, *The Origins of Evil*, 52.

31. *Rāmāyaṇa*, 7.4.12–13, as cited in Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 10–11.

32. *Atharvaveda*, 7.10.8. (*Itarajanah* occurs in the *Paippalāda* version of the same text). For a full explication of the terms, see Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, 337.

33. See Monier-Williams, "devatā," in *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 495. He cites references to the *Laws of Manu*, the *Mahābhārata*, and the Pūraṇas, in which the term *devatā* is used in reference to sculpted images.

34. See the *Palāsa Jātaka* in *Jātaka*, 3.15–16, and Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 27–28.

35. See Rhys Davids and Stede, "bhūta and bhūtāni," in *Pali-English Dictionary*, 507.

36. Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 2 n. 7.

37. For a complete discussion see ibid., 2 and n. 3.

38. Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 49.

39. For information on the Pāli terms, see Rhys Davids and Stede, "Peta," in *Pali-English Dictionary*; and for the *yakṣa/piśāca* transformation, see Somadeva, *Kathāsarit-sāgara*, 6.130.32.

40. This term, found in the *Jātaka*, cannot be found in the Pāli dictonaries. It is perhaps a scribal error but, as Sutherland notes, it is most likely related to the Sanskrit term *udakarakṣa*, which seems particularly appropriate in this context. See Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 93.

41. For the *Devadhamma Jātaka*, see *Jātaka*, 1.23–27, and Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 93.

42. *Mahābhārata*, 2.10.3, 13.20.21.

43. Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 2, who cites *Amarakośa*, 1.1.6.

44. Patañjali, *The Mahābhāsya of Patañjali*, *vārttika* 3 on Pāṇini's *Sūtra* 6.3.26, as cited in Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, 337.

45. Somadeva, *Upāsakādhyāyana*, *karika* 477.

46. Jaini, "Is There a Popular Jainism?" 188. He translates *laukika* and *pāralaukika* as "mundane" and "supermundane," respectively.

47. Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhara*, 25–26. An almost identical tale can be found in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, 2.37–39.

48. Kautilya, *Arthaśāstra*, 2.4.15–17, pp. 69–70. He mentions the need for shrines to various minor deities (whose names seem to relate them to victory or success) as well as stating the importance of shrines to the tutelary deities of the city and the king. Numerous tales linking spirit-deities to city gates can be found. For instance, Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 92, cites a Tibetan story of a watchman who, after death, became the town's protector deity and resided in the gate. In the *Sutano Jātaka* (*Jātaka*, 3.201–203), the Bodhisattva brings a tamed *yakkha* back to his town, where the being dwells as the town's guardian.

49. In the *Gagga Jātaka* (*Jātaka*, 2.11–12) the Bodhisattva tames a *yakkha* that kills those who respond improperly after sneezing. He brings this creature to the town where the king employs it as a tax collector. Similarly, in Shattan, *Manimekhalaī*, 2–3, the city of Puhār is having a festival in honor of its guardian deity who resides at the main crossroads. This spirit is easily angered but, when appeased, uses his powers to watch the bazaars day and night looking for evildoers. When he finds them, he catches them in his rope, beats them to death, and eats them. For a discussion of the *Maṇimekhalai's* date, see Richman, *Women, Branch Stories, and Religious Rhetoric in a Tamil Buddhist Text*, 157ff.

50. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 10.103–104, and for the complete tale see chapters 9–10.

51. *Jātaka*, 2.251–259.

52. *Divyāvadana*, 391.

53. *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttara Nikāya)*, 4.12, also cited in Chanda, "Four Ancient Yakṣa Statues," 80–81. The Buddha repeats this advice to the minister of Ajatasattu, king of Magadha, in the *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta* 1.4 in *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 2.80.

54. Chanda, "Four Ancient Yakṣa Statues," 80–81, cites Buddhagoṣa, who in the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* explains that the Vajji *cetiyas* are *yakkha-cetiyāni*.

55. *The Ordinances of Manu*, 3.88–93 and 3.97–98.

56. Ibid., 4.21.

57. *Jātaka*, 3.15.

58. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 24–25, 41.

59. See ibid., 37, for a description of offerings made to Hāritī. For a description of Mahākāla, see ibid., 38.

60. Ibid., 38–39. Yijing also mentions that the *nāga* Mahāmuchilinda at the Mahābodhi near Gayā has similar powers.

61. *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* in *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 2.188.

62. See the *Padakusalāṇava Jātaka* (*Jātaka*, 3.298–302), in which a horse-faced *yakkhinī* can only maintain her power in an area 30 leagues by 15 leagues (with a river constituting one border). In *Mahābhārata*, 3.314.27–63, the Pāṇḍavas face the *yakṣa* of a haunted lake. The *Sutano Jātaka* (*Jātaka*, 3.201–203) tells the story of a *yakkha* who only has power over those who stand on the ground under the shade of his tree (the Bodhisattva circumvents his power by bringing sandals and an umbrella). And the *Gagga Jātaka* (*Jātaka*, 2.11–12) tells us of a supernatural being who can only harm those who enter a specific house outside the city and sneeze.

63. For an excellent overview of the history, developments, and origins of Hāritī, see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 73–77.

64. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 37.

65. For the Pāli version of the Sūciloma tale and a translation, see *The Group of Discourses*, 46; and for mention of Ajakālaka, see *Udāna*, 1.7. Also see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 114–115, 117–118, for a complete summary of references to these *yakṣas*.

66. Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 75, makes this argument exclusively in relation to *yakṣas* and their fluctuations in status and power over time.

67. *Mahābhārata*, 6.39.4.

68. *Śiva Purāṇa*, 19.16, and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 64.

69. *Vāmana Purāṇa*, 6.44–53, as cited in Kramrisch, *The Presence of Śiva*, 320–321: "Smitten by the arrows 'Insanity' (*unmāda*) and 'Torment' (*santāpana*) Śiva noticed Yakṣa Pāñcālika, the son of Kubera, and transferred to Pāñcālika his insanity, torment, and yawning (*vijṛmbhaṇa*), for he knew Pāñcālika to be capable of bearing these afflictions."

70. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays*, chapters 7 and 8.

71. Ibid., 62–63.

72. Buddhaghoṣa's *Dhammapadaṭṭhakathā*, as translated in *Buddhist Legends*, 1.146.

73. *Jātaka*, 3.15–16.

74. For the reference to Maṇibhadra, see *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 1..91, as cited in Chanda, "Four Ancient Yakṣa Statues," 51. For the reference to Purṇabhadra see *Antagaḍadasāo with Abhayadeva's Commentary*, 6.

75. Lévi, "Catalogue géographique des yakṣa"; for a summary of the discussion, see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, Appendix 1, 169–171.

76. *Mahābhārata*, 3.81.42, 177; or Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 30.

77. *Mahābhārata*, 3.81.9 refers to gaining cattle; 3.82.90 tells of removing the sin of abortion; and 3.81.19 mentions achieving the status of Gaṇapati.

78. For the narrative, see *Mahābhārata*, 2.52, and for an excellent analysis see Falk, "Wilderness and Kingship in South Asia," 4–5.

79. *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 9.17.

80. *Mānava Gṛhyasūtra*, 2.14.28, as cited in Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 20.

81. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 36.82.

82. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays*, 79–80.

83. *Jātaka*, 1.255.

84. Ibid., 1.126–128.

85. Ibid., 3.96–97.

86. *Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text*, 7.61.5, as cited in V. S. Agrawala's introduction to Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, ix.

87. Buddhagoṣa, *Buddha's Teachings*, 45.

88. *Antagaḍadasāo*, 86–90.

89. *Cāraka Saṃhitā*, 163–164, as cited and retranslated in Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 166–168.

90. *Buddhist Legends*, 3.207–211.

91. *Dhammapada Commentary*, 3.209.

92. *Vāmana Purāṇa*, 6.50–56, as cited in Kramrisch, *Presence of Śiva*, 320–321.

93. For information on possession in a Hindu context, see Moreno, "God's Forceful Call."

94. For a further discussion of Kubera's *naravāhana* (human vehicle) and an alternate reading of its significance see Raven, "The Secret Servants of Kubera."

95. For more information on the reliefs at Bhārhut, see Barua, *Barhut Stone*, or Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*.

96. The fact that Śākyamuni is not depicted in this scene is by no means uncommon. Prior to the second to third centuries CE, no images of the Buddha are found we can be sure of the interpretation of the narrative, however, due to the three other scenes from the Buddha's childhood that accompany the Śākyavardhana scene from Amarāvatī and their correlation to events detailed in the literature. For more information on the image, see Knox, *Amaravati Buddhist Sculpture*, 119, 121.

97. Ghosh and Sarkar, "Beginnings of Sculptural Art in South-East India: A Stele from Amaravati."

98. For the translation see ibid., 171, and for information on the Buddha's visits to this *caitya*, see *Buddhist Suttas*, 40, 58, and *Dīgha-Nikāya*, 102, 118.

99. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, 2.273, references the *Sāratthapakāsinī*, Buddhaghoṣa's commentary on the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. See *Samyutta-nikāya Commentary*, 2.128.

100. Lerner and Kossak, *The Lotus Transcendent*, 52–53.

CHAPTER 2

Epigraph source: I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 80.

1. *Divyāvadana*, 380–382, 389–393, or Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 219–220, 245–250.

2. *Divyāvadana*, 396–398, or Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 257–260.

3. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 5.154–168, and *Divyāvadana*, 419–429; or for a translation see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 221–227.

4. For the Aśokan Edicts see Mookerji, *Asoka*, 101.

5. Ibid., 109.

6. Ibid., 109, 119; and for the Sarnath inscription, see 193–198.

7. Ibid., 201–204.

8. Ray, *Monastery and Guild*, 181–183.

9. Ibid., 171–172, discusses the presence of Mauryan inscriptions at megalithic sites and Sastri et al., *Vaddamanu Excavations*, 10, mentions the presence of a Mauryan coin hoard found along with megalithic remains at Vaddamanu. For a discussion of the relationship between Buddhist monasteries and earlier megalithic settlements, see Schopen, "Immigrant Monks."

10. Thapar, *A History of India*, 1:151–153.

11. For the inscriptions at Sāñcī, see Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples*, Appendix 1, 186–188. For the inscriptions at Bhārhut, see Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, 127–143. And for the Bhājā inscriptions, see Burgess, *Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples*, 82–83.

12. For a discussion of the date see J. J. Jones's introduction to *The Mahāvastu*, xi.

13. For a summary of this tale, see Liu, *Ancient India and Ancient China*, 114, or *Mahāvastu*, 1.301–317.

14. Jaini, *"Śramaṇas,"* 41–44.

15. Ibid., 42.

16. Jaini, "Is There a Popular Jainism?" 187–188.

17. Although there is evidence suggesting that the presence of Buddhist monks or nuns at a ritual event was considered auspicious, there is no evidence to suggest that the *saṃgha* ever had a presiding role at such functions. For a discussion, see "The Ritual Obligations and Donor Roles of Monks in the Pāli *Vinaya*," in Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 72–85.

18. *Dhammapada Commentary*, 2.235–237.

19. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 1.121–123. This tale is frequently depicted in the art of Gandhara and occurs three times in the decoration of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.

20. For a complete list of textual sources for Hāritī, see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 73–77, and Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, 84–85.

21. This passage can be found in *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu, Gilgit Manuscript* (hereafter GMs.) iii.1.16.14. All of the references to the *Mūlasarvāsitivāda Vinaya* in this work have been quoted from *An Introduction to Mūlasarvāstivādin Sources for Monastic Buddhism in India during the Middle Period*, trans. Gregory Scho-

pen (hereafter Schopen, *Introduction*). I want to thank Dr. Schopen for allowing me to read and cite his work while it is still in progress. It has proven to be an invaluable resource. For the Gardabha tale, see 2.40–42.

22. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu,* GMs. iii.1.14.10–17.12. It is also worth mentioning that the name of the *yakṣa* associated with Mathurā in the *Mahāmāyūrī* conforms closely to the name given in this text. The present text gives the name Gardabha, and the *Mahāmāyūrī* associates a *yakṣa* named Gardabhaka with the region of Mathurā. Such consistency is unusual in the ancient accounts and may point to the importance of this particular spirit-deity. For a complete list of *yakṣas* and towns listed in the *Mahāmāyūrī,* see Lévi, "Catalogue géographique," 19–139.

23. GMs. iii.1.28.

24. *Dhammapada Commentary,* 3.270ff., and Longhurst, *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa,* 39.

25. See Longhurst, *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa,* 57, who recounts the entire tale and cites *Jātakas,* 1.206.

26. *Divyāvadāna,* 356–364, or see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka,* 187–190, for a translation of this passage.

27. Fa-Hien, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms,* 52.

28. *Mahāvaṃsa,* 19.19–22.

29. *The Book of the Discipline,* 3.337–338.

30. For information on the sixth-century date, see Richman, *Women, Branch Stories, and Religious Rhetoric,* 7. For the second-century date, see the introduction to Shattan, *Manimekhalaï,* xvi–xvii.

31. Shattan, *Manimekhalaï,* 66–67.

32. Ibid., 24, 26.

33. Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism,* 133.

34. For the account of the Buddha *avatāra,* see *Viṣṇu Purāṇa,* 18.21.30.

35. *Mahāvaṃsa,* 12.9–26.

36. Fa-Hien, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms,* 84.

37. Ibid., 52–53.

38. Ibid., 96.

39. *Mahāvaṃsa,* 37.43–44, and also see n. 25 for an explication of the passage.

40. Ibid., 9.22–23, 10.75–88, and page 1041 n. 25.

41. *The Maitrī or Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad,* 7.8; and for a translation see Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism,* 75.

42. *Jātaka,* 3.304–305.

43. *Mahāvaṃsa,* 5.23–30.

44. *Divyāvadāna,* 373, or see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka,* 209.

45. *Divyāvadāna,* 389–393, or see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka,* 245–247, 249.

46. *Divyāvadāna,* 433–434, or see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka,* 293–294.

47. See for example Shattan, *Manimekhalaï,* 66–67 (in which the young nun cures the passion of a Vidhyādhara); and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography,* 73–77 (for the account in the Hāritī's conversion and the tale in which a *yakṣi* hushes her son to sleep so she can hear the sermons at the Buddhist *vihāra*). Also the *Mahāvagga*

of the *Vinaya Texts*, 1.63, tells of a *nāga* who seeks to infiltrate the *saṃgha* and become a monk.

48. See Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 125, or for a complete account of the tale, see *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, 47–57.

49. *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 2.231, or Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 55.

50. For mention of the *yakṣa* chiefs as protectors, see the *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, or for a complete list of the forty-one *yakṣa* chiefs, see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 57.

51. *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1.211, also cited in Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 160.

52. *Jātaka*, 1.23–27.

53. Ibid., 3.201–203.

54. Ibid., 6.126–156.

55. Ibid., 1.269–271.

56. Ibid., 1.53–54.

57. Ibid., 3.96–97.

58. See Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 37, 45, and *Jātaka*, 3.96–99, 1.26–30.

59. *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 1.209, or Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 74–75.

60. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, 1.63.

61. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu*, GMs. iii.1.220.1–221.6 or Schopen, *Introduction*, 4.25.

62. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Śayabāsanavastu*, GMsSA (*Gilgit Manuscipt Sayanāsana*), 25.17–26.27, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 1.63.

63. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 23a.5–23b.3, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 1.64.

64. *Buddha's Teachings*, 44–47.

65. *Group of Discourses*, 46–47.

66. Ibid., 26–29.

67. *Jātaka*, 5.11–19.

68. Ibid., 5.246–279.

CHAPTER 3

Epigraph source: Shattan, *Manimekhalaï*, 90.

1. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudravastu,* Tog Ta 332a.4–335a.1, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 2.65.

2. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu*, GMs. iii.1.223.7–224.12, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 2.106.

3. Schopen, "Immigrant Monks."

4. For Goli, see Ramachandran, *Buddhist Sculpture from a Stūpa near Goli Village*, and Venkataramanayya, "Pre-Historic Remains in Andhra Pradesh." For Chandavaram, see Deshpande, *Indian Archaeology 1972–73*, 3.v.v, and Sastry, *Annual Report*, 17–24. For Panigiri, see Sreenivasachar, *The Archaeological Bulletin*, 5. For Vaddamanu,

see Sastri et al., *Vaddamanu Excavations*. For a further discussion, see Schopen, "Immigrant Monks," 2–4.

5. Rea, "Excavations at Amarāvatī," 88–91 and figs. 1–2.

6. Subrahmanyam et al., *Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*, 165–166, 212. Due to the flooding of the Nāgārjunakoṇḍa region caused by the construction of a dam, most of the early remains are no longer visible, and those that are were intentionally relocated to higher ground by archaeologists, so they cannot be considered to accurately represent their original contexts. As a result, I have based my conclusions on archaeological reports that predate the flooding of the valley.

7. Antonini, "Preliminary Notes," 16, and Banerji, *Mohenjodaro*, 117. Also cited in Schopen, "Immigrant Monks," 223–225.

8. Cunningham, *Four Reports*, 1, 79 pl. 26, contains information on the tumuli at Kusinārā. Also see Sewell, *Quelques points*, 5–6.

9. Rijal, "Archaeological Activities at Lumbini."

10. Schopen, "Immigrant Monks," 216.

11. Ibid., 237.

12. The remains of the Buddhist *stūpa* were identified under layers of both Jain and Hindu remains at Maniyar Math. For more information see Kuraishi, *Rajgir*, 20–26.

13. Ibid., 24.

14. Ibid., 25.

15. Ibid.

16. For an account of the Ānanda *caitya*, see the *Aṅguttara-nikāya Commentary*, 2.550; and for the Udena *caitya*, see *Dīgha Nikāya Commentary*, 2.554. Also see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 42, for mention of both texts.

17. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 2.167. Although Xuanzang himself disagrees with this etymology, it is sufficient to note that the commonly accepted explanation stated that the monastery was named for a local *nāga*. Regardless of its linguistic accuracy, the fact that such a claim was well known points to an association between the monastic complex and local spirit-deities.

18. Fa-Hien, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, 52, 96.

19. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu,* GMs. iii.1.14.10–17.12.

20. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 1.63–66.

21. Ibid., 2.320.

22. Although most would probably not question the identification of these statues as representations of spirit-deities, my attribution of the Parkham and two Patna images (and a fourth image of the *yakṣa* Manibhadra from Gwalior) as *yakṣas* is taken from a convincingly argued article on this topic by Ramprasad Chanda. See Chanda, "Four Ancient Yakṣa Statues." In this article he identifies these images as *yakṣas* on the basis of epigraphic evidence. Although similar work cannot be done on the Besnagar and Dīdārgañj images due to a lack of inscriptions, I feel it is safe to use the Parkham and Patna images as exemplary when identifying these types of images.

23. This *yakṣa* image was found along with a second figure, which Doris Meth Srinivasan has argued to be a representation of Agni. It is not known why the two

figures were found together, but it is not inconceivable that Agni would have been worshiped alongside a representation of a spirit-deity. See Srinivasan, *Many Heads, Arms, and Eyes.*

24. Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Report*, 40.

25. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays*, 79–80.

26. Lerner and Kossak, *Lotus Transcendent*, 52–53.

27. *Pariśiṣṭaparvaṇa of Hemachandra*, II, 8th story.

28. *Divyāvadāna*, 391, and Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays,* 55–56. See also *Sanghabhedavastu*, 1.48–49.

29. Coomaraswamy cites from the Tibetan *Dulva* text. His translation can be found in Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays,* 55.

30. Barua, *Barhut Stone*, 2.113.

31. Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, 69, identifies this as the *Chandra Kinnara Jātaka*, whereas Barua, *Barhut Stone*, 2.135, supports the assertion that this is the *Takkāriya Jātaka.*

32. Barua, *Barhut Stone*, 2.8.

33. See ibid., 2.64–65, 155, or Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, 27, 79–82.

34. *Buddhist Legends*, 3.56–60.

35. Susan Huntington has recently challenged the idea that the concept of aniconism, as defined by A. Foucher and others, is applicable to early Buddhist art. However, in an instance such as this where the inscription refers to a Buddha who does not appear in the artwork, I see no reason to avoid the term, since it seems that the Buddha's presence was intended but not actually depicted.

36. Barua, *Barhut Stone*, 2.155–158.

37. This tale is recounted in Cunningham, *The Stūpa of Bharhut*, 79–82, and it can be found in its entirety in *Jātaka*, 6.126–156.

38. For the tale of Ajakalāpaka, see *Udāna*, 1.7, and for a translation see *Udāna: Verses of Uplift*, 6. The tale of Sūciloma can be found in *Group of Discourses*, 33–34.

39. See Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 167, for a list of *yakṣas* and their residences as mentioned in the *Mahāmāyūrī.*

40. Barua, *Barhut Stone*, 2.61, refers to these sources. In the *Dhammapadakaṭṭhakathā*, 3.230–236, this *nāga* is called Erakapatta, but it is undoubtedly a referencẹ to the same being.

41. Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 169. The author also suggests that the town of Mayala may be identical to Malabara.

42. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog THA 354b.5–355b.3, and Schopen, *Introduction,* 8.8–9.

43. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,*. Tog THA 354b.5–355b.3, and Schopen, *Introduction,* 8.9.

44. For the passage, see Strong, *The Experience of Buddhism*, 80. The *Petavatthu* is replete with similar tales.

45. Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇi, Buddha."

46. Ibid., 374.

47. Ibid.

48. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, xli, and Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇi, Buddha," 377–378.

49. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, xlii, and Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇi, Buddha," 378.

50. Deshpande, "The Rock-cut Caves of Pitalkhora," 68–69. Sylvain Lévi also makes this connection between Pitalkhorā and Pitaṅgalya. See Lévi, "Catalogue géographique," 93.

51. For a full discussion of the large relief carvings, see DeCaroli, "Reading Bhaja."

52. *Mūlasārvasitvāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 332a.4–335a.1, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 2.65.

53. *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, 3.204, and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 40–41.

54. DeCaroli, "Reading Bhaja," 259–280.

55. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, xlii, and Cohen, "Nāga, Yakṣiṇi, Buddha," 378.

56. For a translation and a complete discussion of this daily recitation see Schopen, "Marking Time," 164–165.

57. For a complete discussion, see Peri, "Hāritī."

58. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 37.

59. Stone, *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*, 18–19.

60. *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 335b.6–337b.2, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 2.86. For a discussion of decoration within Buddhist monasteries, see Lalou, "Notes sur la décoration."

61. I disagree with James Fergusson and James Burgess, who suggest that this image was created by a squatter after the site had ceased to be used as a Buddhist monastery. Although it is true that this image seems to have been in worship for centuries by the local population, there is no reason to assume it was not created with the cooperation of the Buddhist occupants of the site. Unfortunately, the image is so badly worn that dating based on stylistic analysis proves to be exceptionally difficult. Even in Burgess and Fergusson's time, they were unable to determine the identity of this figure, and they bemoan the fact that the details had been lost due to a recent whitewashing of the entire cave. See Fergusson and Burgess, *The Cave Temples of India*, 231.

62. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 41.

CHAPTER 4

Epigraph source: *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu,* GMs. iii.1.220.1–221.6, or Schopen, *Introduction*. 4.25.

1. Vitebsky, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 9–10.

2. Ibid., 74 and figure 4.2.

3. Ibid., 67, 74.

4. Ibid., 135, 157–158.

5. Ibid., 138, 158.

6. Ibid., 53, 143.

7. Ibid., 22.

8. Ibid., 68.

9. For example, see Burlingame, *Buddhist Legends,* 1.170–175, or the *Sutano Jātaka* in *Jātaka*, 3.201–203.

10. Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities in Western India*, 16, 27, 76.

11. Ibid., 139.

12. Ibid., 136.

13. Ibid., 153–154, 198–200.

14. I am thinking specifically of the *Sutano Jātaka*, 3.201–203, and the *Devadhama Jātaka,* 1.23–27, both of which involve spirit-deities who, after being converted by the Bodhisattva, return to nearby towns as protectors.

15. Sontheimer, *Pastoral Deities in Western India*, 138–140.

16. For a general discussion of votive *stūpas* and their placement, see Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, chapter 7, 114–120.

17. *Jātaka*, 5.346.

18. Ibid., 3.298–306.

19. Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 162. Misra also mentions that the term for *yakṣa* currently used in western India is *jākha* or *jākhinī*. The similarity between this term and the name Jakkula strongly suggests that *yakṣas* served a totemic function with this group.

20. For information on Tail Nadu, see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 164, who quotes a K. Bharatha Iyer (without further reference); and for information about the *jakhin* of the Deccan see Hastings, *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 604.

21. For the *yakṣa* tale, see *Mahābhārata*, 18.4.18; 5.22; and for the *nāga* story, see *Mahābhārata*, 3.178.29–45. See also Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 28, and Sutherland, *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism*, 86.

22. Norman, *Sutta-Nipāta*, 46–47.

23. For a summary of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* material, see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 74.

24. *Buddhist Legends*, 1.170–175.

25. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas,* part 1, 14. He cites Von Schiefner, *Tibetan Tales*, 81. See also GMs. iii.2.12.3 for a different account of the same tale.

26. Handiqui, *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*, 419.

27. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 9.22–23.

28. *Āvaśyaka Sūtra*, 1.268, and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 147.

29. *Buddhist Legends*, 2.120.

30. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pānini*, 364. It is probable that Agrawala's idea and my own argument are both accurate. Agarawala's claims are supported by textual sources that attribute spirit-deities with the power to grant children, and in no way contradict the belief that this naming practice is also related to the appeasement of ancestors. The *Cīvaravastu* section of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* (GMs. iii.2.139.6–143.14) states that sons and daughters are only born if "Both mother and father are aroused and have coupled, the mother is healthy and has her courses and a gan-

dharva is standing by." This quote draws attention to the role that spirit-deities were believed to play in procreation.

31. This custom is found among the Sora and is believed to bring final emancipation to the ancestor. Vitebsky, *Dialogues with the Dead*, 15.

32. *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, 3.10.38, 4.2.26, as cited in Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 32.

33. *Divyāvadana*, 391, and Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays*, 55–56.

34. Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas: Essays*, 38–40, and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 111.

35. *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* 7.19, and Buddhagoṣa, who in the *Sumaṇgalavilāsinī* explains that the Vajji *cetiyas* are *yakkha-cetiyāni*.

36. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, 63.

37. Raven, "The Secret Servants of Kubera."

38. *Buddhist Legends*, 1.174–175, and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 89.

39. Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 147.

40. Ibid., 132, 145.

41. The cited passage, H.S. Gehman's summary of *preta* descriptions from the *Avadānaśataka*, is in his introduction to "*Petavatthu*: Stories of the Departed," 4.xi.

42. Ibid., 48–49, 94 and 84, 97, 105, respectively.

43. Ibid., 48–50.

44. Ibid.

45. For a discussion of the text's date see ibid., x–xii.

46. Ibid., 19, 56–63.

47. Ibid., 77, 101–102.

48. Ibid., 54–56.

49. Ibid., 3–4.

50. Ibid., 58–63.

51. Ibid., 79–80.

52. Ibid., 44–45.

53. Ibid., xi–xii.

54. "*Vimānavatthu*: Stories of the Mansions," 4.153.

55. For Taxila, see Marshall, *Taxila*, 1.240ff. For Sāñcī see Marshall, *A Guide to Sanchi*, 87–88. For Ratnagiri, see Mitra, *Ratnagiri*, 1.28, 43, 98–99. Also see Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 119–120, 122.

56. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 120.

57. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 82.

58. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 119, 122.

59. See Marshall, *Taxila*, 240ff., and Mitra, *Ratnagiri*, 28–29.

60. Mitra, *Ratnagiri*, 28–29.

61. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 120–123.

62. Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, 46–49.

63. Marshall, *Guide to Sanchi*, 87–88.

64. Carlleyle, *Archaeological Survey of India Report*, 26.

65. Mahpatra, *Indian Archaeology*, 3.

66. Sastri, *Nalanda and Its Epigraphic Material*, 11.

67. Ghosh, *Nālandā*, 18.

68. Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 115–118.

69. For Schopen's translation see ibid., 117.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid., 120–122.

72. Ibid., 121, gives this translation of the Tibetan *Raśmivimalaviśuddhaprabhādhāraṇī*.

73. Ibid., 121, translates from the *Sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśodhanidhāraṇī*.

74. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 24.

CHAPTER 5

Epigraph source: Śivadāsa, *The Five-and-Twenty Tales of the Genie*, 144–145.

1. Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex*, 33–34.

2. See *Mahābhārata*, trans. Van Buitenen, vol. 2, 3.82.73–88, and for a further discussion of the passage see Asher, "Gaya," 74, n. 2.

3. *The Ordinances of Manu*, 3.122–286, and for information on the *Vayu Purāṇa*, see Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex*, 24.

4. Asher, "Gaya," 74, 84. For a full analysis of the literary sources addressing the antiquity of the *śrāddha* rites, see Bhattacharyya, *The Bodhgayā Temple*.

5. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, 457. Also see Mitra, *Buddha Gayā*, 2–8.

6. Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex*, 22–23.

7. E.H. Johnston in his introduction to part 2 of his translation of *The Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha*, 2.xvii, favors a 50 BCE–100 CE range for Aśvaghoṣa. Nakamura places the text in the second century; see Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, 17.

8. Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, 16–17. He refers to Dharmarakṣa's translation of the text, called *P'u-yao-ching*, as well as to Divākara's 683 CE translations, entitled *Fang-kuang ta-chuang-yen-ching*.

9. Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha*, 16–17.

10. *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2.405.

11. Ibid., 399, 408.

12. Arthur Coke Burnell in the introduction to his translation of the *Manusmṛti* claims that the text was created between 100 and 500 CE and had begun to be assembled centuries earlier. Therefore, it is surprising that he places the ultimate date of the text as late as 500. However, his argument is based on some rather tenuous assumptions. I feel more secure in agreeing with Doniger and Smith and placing the date of the text in the "beginning of the Common Era." See *The Ordinances of Manu*, xxiv–xxvii, and *The Laws of Manu*, xvi–xvii.

13. For the *Nidanakatha*, see *Buddhist Birth Stories*, 186.

14. *The Ordinances of Manu*, 3.202, 206–208.

15. Ibid., 3.208–209, 261.

16. *Buddhist Birth Stories*, 187–188.

17. See *The Ordinances of Manu*, 3.214–217, and *Buddhist Birth Stories*, 186–187.

18. *Mahāvastu*, 280. The text is usually dated to around the second century CE and contains an interesting but highly abbreviated telling of the enlightenment tale.

19. For information on the modern rites, see Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex*, 3, 37–42, and for the ancient rites see *The Ordinances of Manu*, 3.215–223.

20. Bhattacharyya, *The Bodhgayā Temple*, 6. He identifies this dish as *charu*.

21. *Buddhist Birth Stories*, 187.

22. Ibid.

23. *The Ordinances of Manu*, 3.146, and Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex*, 37.

24. There is one passage in the *Buddhacarita* (1.142) that may provide further connections between the Buddhist understanding of Bodh Gayā and funerary rites. At the moment Śākyamuni chooses to break his fast, the daughter of the cowherd chief, here called Nandabala, offers the Buddha a mixture of rice and milk. Johnston translated the stanza:

> sā śrāddhāvardhitaprītirvikasallocanotpalā/
> śirasā praṇipatyainaṃ grāhayāmāsa pāyasam // 111 //

in this way:

> Her delight was enhanced by faith, and her blue-lotus eyes opened wide,
> as, doing obeisance with her head, she caused him to accept milk rice.

However, the manuscript is not firm here (see ibid., 1.142, n. 111). The word he translates as "faith" (*śraddhā*) could quite possibly be read *śrāddha*, which refers to the funerary rite performed for ancestors. This substitution would greatly alter the reading of the verse and would provide an explicit reference to the *śrāddha* in the Nandabala/Sujātā tale.

25. Bhattacharyya, *The Bodhgayā Temple*, 6–8.

26. *The Ordinances of Manu*, 9.185–187.

27. Ibid., 3.133.

28. *Group of Discourses*, 3.4.76–81.

29. *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2.404.

30. Ibid., 2.404–405.

31. Ibid., 2.408–410, 412.

32. Johnston, *Buddhacarita*, 2.185.

33. *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2.405.

34. Ibid., 2.406.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid., 2.425.

37. Ibid., 2.408–409.

38. Vidyarthi, *The Sacred Complex*, 44–45.

39. For a more complete look at Māra, see Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 84–86. My thanks to Janice Leoshko for drawing my attention to this source.

40. *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*, 1.115–116; also see Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 81.

41. Leoshko, "The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures," 86, cites the *Buddhacarita*, 137. See also Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 111–122.

42. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, 53–59; and Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 73–74.

43. Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 107–108.

44. *Mahāvastu*, 2.327, 330. The sons are named Sārthavāha and Vidhyupratiṣṭha. See also Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 114–115.

45. For a full discussion see Karetzky, "Māra," and *Suttanipāta*, 71–72. The *Saṃyutta-nikāya* refers to him as *Mahāntam Yakṣam* (Great *Yakṣa*).

46. *The Collection of Middle Length Sayings*, 1.333, and Boyd, *Satan and Māra*, 116. Moggallāna was known as Dūsī Māra and was the uncle of the Māra who confronted Śākyamuni.

47. Schopen, "Immigrant Monks," 1–11.

48. *Buddhist Suttas*, 211. This passage states that a monk who is diligent in adhering to his vows assists his family even after their deaths.

49. Some have suggested that the site of Sūciloma's conversion was the nearby Barabar Hills, which the texts seem to consider part of the region of Gayā. See *Buddhacarita*, 3.58 n 6.

50. *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2.423, for a description of the numerous beings gathered to witness the enlightenment, and see 2.405–409 in the same text.

51. *Divyāvadana*, 356–364, or see Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka*, 187–190, for a translation of this passage.

CHAPTER 6

Epigraph source: *Mūlasārvasitvāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta297a.6–298.5, or Schopen, *Introduction*, 4.10–20.

1. See I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 37, and Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 1.xli. Yijing states that images of this figure were carved in wood and rubbed with oil, giving them an oily appearance and giving the god his name. These images depicted the god "two or three feet high, holding a golden bag, and seated on a small chair, with one foot hanging down towards the ground." Likewise, he states that this god "naturally loves the Three Jewels, and protects the five assemblies from misfortune" (I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 38).

2. See I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 38–39.

3. *Āṭānāṭiya Sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, 3.204.

4. Ibid., 3.195.

5. *Udāna Commentary*, 4.4, and *Paramattha Dīpanī*, 3.103; also see Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 38.

6. *Dīgha-nikāya*, 3.195, and for the translation see Coomaraswamy, *Yakṣas*, 1.13.

7. *Buddhist Legends*, 29.17–19.

8. *The Minor Readings*, 178.

9. See Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 49, and Shah, "Yaksha Worship."

10. *Mūlasārvasitvāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta297a.6–298.5, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 4.19–20.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. *Mūlasārvasitvāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 265a.1–266a.2, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 4.4–5.

14. Shattan, *Manimekhalaï*, 2–3.

15. *Mūlasārvasitvāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 332a.4–335a.1, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 3.65. A very similar tale is told in the *Vinaya-piṭaka* (1.97), but in this version the actual corpse follows the monk back to his residence and falls at his door.

16. *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 1.146. The translator, Horner, also cites the *Commentary on the Vinaya* in her footnote, which explains that "The monk learned in exorcism, in freeing a person possessed by a yakkha may cut off a clay doll's head; then the yakkha dies, killed by him. But he may kill not only the yakkha but Sakka king of the Devas; therefore it is a grave offence." *Vinaya-piṭaka Commentary*, 475.

17. *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 1.146–147.

18. Ibid.

19. *Buddhist Legends*, 3.209.

20. *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 4.196.

21. Ibid., 1.147.

22. *Buddhist Legends*, 3.292–295.

23. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Vinayavibhaṇga,* Cha 279b.3–280b.7, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 8.13. A remarkably similar tale can be found in the *Buddhist Legends* (3.98), in which the tree-cutting monk actually cuts off the arm of the tree-deity's child.

24. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 332a.4–335a.1, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 3.65.

25. *Buddhist Legends*, 1.173–174.

26. *Petavatthu*, 30.

27. *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 1.63.

28. Somadeva, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, 2.231, and Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 55.

29. For Hemavata and Sātagiri, see Buddhagoṣa, *Buddha's Teachings*, 38–45. For Sūciloma see *Suttanipāta Commentary*, 1.301, as cited in Misra, *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*, 39. There are also instances in which monks are reborn as *nāgas* due to improper actions.

30. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Cīvaravastu*, GMs. iii.2.126.17–27.18, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 10.2.

31. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Avadānaśataka* 271.1–273.16; Tog 78, 384.4–398.3, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 10.4.

32. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Bhaiṣajyavastu,* Divyā 46.2–47.27; Tog Ka 438a.2–439b.6, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 1.55.

33. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Avadānaśataka* 271.1–273.16; Tog 78, 384.4–398.3, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 10.4.

34. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Pravrajyavastu*, GMs. iii.4.28.6–32.5, in Schopen, *Introduction*, V.52.

35. There is only one instance of which I am aware in which the Buddhists actually state that their understanding of the role of spirit-deities differs from that of the

public. This occurs in a text describing the role of *gandharvas* in the birth of a child. See *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Cīvaravastu*, GMsSA iii.2.139.6–143.14.

36. It is interesting that the ability to be unmoved by fear or desire is a prerequisite for success in dealing with spirit-deities. This capability may be a direct result of realizing the basics of the Four Noble Truths and the Buddhist teachings on the origins and impermanence of desire.

37. *Group of Discourses*, 34.

38. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 12.21–26.

39. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 332a.4–335a.1, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 3.65.

40. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Avadānaśataka* 271.1–273.16; Tog 78, 384.4–398.3 or Schopen, *Introduction*, X.4.

41. It should be pointed out that "experienced" and "advanced" monks and nuns are not necessarily those who are older. These terms refer to levels of spiritual attainment and not to age. The particularly gifted novice Culla Sumana (*Buddhist Legends*, 3.270ff.) and the young nun Maṇimekhalai (Shattan, *Manimekhalaï*, 66–67) both fare well against their supernatural opponents.

42. *Vinaya-piṭaka*, 1.248–251.

43. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Pravarajyavastu,* GMs. iii.4.28.6–32.5 or Schopen, *Introduction*, 5.52.

44. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 358b.5–386a.5 or Schopen, *Introduction*, 11.73.

45. Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sāñcī*, 1.296.

46. Ibid., 1.81–82.

47. Ibid., 1.296.

48. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu*, Tog Ta 358b.5–368a.5, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 11.73.

49. Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sāñcī*, 1.81–82.

50. Ibid., 1.289–291.

51. Marshall and Foucher suggest that the inscription refers collectively to all the monks "from Kāsapagota to Vāchi-Suvijayita," in which case the title *ara* or *arhat* would refer to more than just the two monks whose names are mentioned. Ibid., 1.294.

52. Schopen points out that the earliest inscriptional references to standard, textual levels of attainment occur at sixth and seventh century Kanheri. See *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks*, 188.

53. Ibid., 186–187.

54. Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sāñcī*, 1.291–293; and see Cunningham, *The Bhilsa Topes*, 120, 293.

55. Marshall and Foucher, *The Monuments of Sāñcī*, 1.291.

56. Dehejia, *Early Buddhist Rock Temples*, 154.

57. Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples*, 228.

58. Burgess, *Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples*, 82.188.

59. De Marco, "The Stūpa as a Funerary Monument," 224.

60. Huntington, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient India*, 272–273.

61. *Mahāvaṃsa*, 27.43–45.

62. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 2.

63. *Mūlasārvāstivāda Vinaya, Kṣudrakavastu,* Tog Ta 332a.4–335a.1, in Schopen, *Introduction*, 3.65.

64. Again, I am thinking, in particular about the tales of Culla Sumana (*Buddhist Legends*, 3.270ff.) and the young nun Maṇimekhalai (Shattan, *Manimekhalaï*, 66–67).

CHAPTER 7

Epigraph source: Luce and Pe Maung Tin, *Selections*, no. 40.103–4, translated in Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 41–42. For a slightly different reading, see Taw Sein Ko, *Inscriptions*, 126–127.

1. Yijing mentions that the *yakkha* Mahākāla was also known in China, but it is unclear if this is the same spirit-deity or if it is one with a similar name and characteristics. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 39.

2. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols*, 63.

3. For information on these inscriptions, see Chanda, "Four Ancient Yakṣa Statues" and "Some Unpublished Amarāvatī Inscriptions," 273; and Sivaramamurti, *Amaravati Inscriptions*, 290, 297, 298, 301.

4. Images of the Mucalinda scene are also prevalent in Cambodia, where the snakes had pre-Buddhist significance and were associated with the rains.

5. Liu, *Ancient India*, 141. It is notoriously difficult to differentiate between those practices that are best considered part of Taosim and those that may be more accurately grouped as part of the Chinese popular religious tradition. Here I have taken an inclusive view of Taoism.

6. Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, 35, 135.

7. Ibid., 7, 46, 164.

8. Ibid., 66–71, 90.

9. Ibid., 155–157.

10. Ibid., 83.

11. Liu, *Ancient India*, 163.

12. Ibid., 156.

13. Ibid., 168.

14. I-tsing, *A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 48–49.

15. Aung-Thwin, "Prophecies, Omens and Dialogue," 174.

16. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 2.

17. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 32.

18. Ibid., 33.

19. Luce, *Old Burma*, 1.7, 12–14, 34.

20. Taw Sein Ko, *Inscriptions*, 34.

21. Ibid., 12–14.

22. Luce and Pe Maung Tin, *Selections*, no. 40, 103–104.

23. Taw Sein Ko, *Inscriptions*, 99.

24. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 42; Luce and Pe Maung Tin, *Selections*, no. 21, 42.

25. Taw Sein Ko, *Inscriptions*, 74. It is worth noting that if Michael Aung-Thwin is correct in placing Alaungsithu's reign between 1111 and 1167, this inscription can be dated to the twelfth rather than the thirteenth century, thereby strengthening the argument for the early presence of *nats* at Pagan. See Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 22, fig. 1.

26. Luce, *Old Burma*, 1.275. Luce refers to this process as a form of conversion in which the old gods are shown to pay service to the new so as to induce a gradual transfer of devotion. Although I certainly agree with his analysis, I would add that this process never functioned to eliminate previous forms of devotion; rather, it simply located them in a new religious hierarchy.

27. Ibid., 1.76, 102

28. Ibid., 2.23, and plate 31.

29. Ibid., 2.38, and plate 47.

30. Ibid., 2.20, plate 27d. This inscription in Old Mon refers to *devatās*, while vol. 2.29 plates 38a and 38b make references to *devas* in both Mon and Pali. For more information on the use of various languages in inscriptions, see 1.96.

31. Although the first Southeast Asian contact with Buddhism probably dates to an Aśokan envoy in the centuries BCE, most link the widespread emergence of Buddhism in this region to the Mon state of Dvaravati in the seventh century. For a discussion of the Ari monks, see Htin Aung, *History*.

32. For the complete account of the Mahagiri *nats*, see *Hmannān Naha Yazawintawyī*, 44–46. Hereafter cited as *Glass Palace Chronicle*.

33. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 55–56.

34. Mendelson, "Observations," 802.

35. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 174.

36. For a discussion of how the unification of the *nats* into the thirty-seven is linked to the rise of a centralized kingship, see Mendelson, "Observations," 785.

37. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 2.

38. In particular, the *nat* Lord Sitthu was a Burmese king who lived after Anawrahta and therefore must be a later addition to the thirty-seven. Ibid., 84.

39. Bigandet, *Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha*, 5.

40. Sangermano, *Description of the Burmese Empire*, 8, 13.

41. Mendelson, "Observations," 788; Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 67–68; *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 41.

42. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 66.

43. Vossion, *Spirit-Worship*, 3–4.

44. Bigandet, *Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha*, vi.

45. Ibid., ix.

46. Brown, "The Pre-Buddhist Religion," 79.

47. Ibid., 80–81.

48. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 70–71.

49. Brown, "The Pre-Buddhist Religion," 79.

50. Ibid., 92.

51. Luce, *Old Burma*, 12.

52. Ibid., 18.

53. Ibid., 13–14.

54. Ibid., 43.
55. Ibid., 57, 61.
56. Ibid., 55, 67, 311.
57. Brown, "The Pre-Buddhist Religion," 77.
58. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 85–86.
59. Htin Aung, *History*, 32, 36, 138.
60. Ibid., 37–38.
61. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 83. Htin Aung's identification of Sakra as the Pali name for Thagya is quite unusual and may be in error. Most sources give "Sakka" as the Pali name for this deity and identify the Sanskrit version of the name "Śakra." Because most of the sources I have relied upon favor the Sanskrit version of the name, I have referred to this deity as "Śakra" throughout the chapter.
62. Ibid., 126.
63. Ibid., 134–136.
64. Ibid., 139.
65. Ibid., 75–76, 138.
66. Ibid., 4.
67. Ibid., 4, 75; Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 54.
68. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 83–84.
69. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 91, and Rodrigue, *Nat-Pwe*, appendix 24, 36.
70. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 91, and Rodrigue, *Nat-Pwe*, appendix 16.
71. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 90–91, and Rodrigue, *Nat-Pwe*, appendix 28, 29.
72. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 91. Shingon is also known as "Lady Hunch Back."
73. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 97.
74. Sangermano, *Description of the Burmese Empire*, 20.
75. The suggestion that Anawrahta's reformation of *nat* worship and his support of the thirty-seven *Nat* Lords might be related to the needs of a newly centralized state was first put forth by Mendelson, "Observations," 785.
76. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 1, 129–31. These citations make reference alchemy, astrology, *nat* worship, Mahāyāna Buddhism, and tantra, while arguing against those who believe the Ari to have been Vaishnavites or forest-dwelling monks.
77. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 65.
78. Ibid., 71.
79. G. H. Luce also could find no additional evidence to support these claims about the Ari. See Luce, *Old Burma*, 43.
80. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 74–75.
81. For example Mendelson, "A Messianic Buddhist Association," 578, suggests that the Ari may have had a hand in centralizing the *nat* cult, whereas Htin Aung associates the Ari with *nat* worship because of their shared association with Mt. Popa.
82. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 59.
83. Ibid., 80–83. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, gives the name of the spirit as Sanni and refers to the kingdom as Gandalarit, which he locates in the region of modern Yunnan.
84. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 66–67.
85. Ibid., 108, and Luce, *Old Burma*, 311.

86. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 113.

87. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 67–68.

88. Ibid., 147–148.

89. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 66. He places the date of the gateway to 849 CE.

90. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 99.

91. For a discussion of the structure's dating and patronage, see Strachan, *Imperial Pagan*, 57–58 and for the Burmese royal accounts see *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 86–87, 109–110.

92. *Glass Palace Chronicle*, 87–88.

93. Ibid., 91.

94. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 4, 75, 84.

95. Aung-Thwin, *Pagan*, 54.

96. Strachan, *Imperial Pagan*, 58. The author claims that an Italian collector purchased the original, stolen set of images.

97. Rawson, *The Art of Southeast Asia*, 64–65. The copies are now in Oxford.

98. Htin Aung, *Folk Elements*, 84.

99. Mendelson, "Observations," 788. In this passage he is referencing *Glass Palace Chronicles*, 91.

100. *A Guide to Shwezigon Pagoda Pagan*, 20, and for the story of their inhabitation of the site at Kyanzittha's request, see Luce, *Old Burma*, 275–276.

CHAPTER 8

Epigraph source: The translation is taken from *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*, 398.

1. Huntington, *Art and Architecture*, 392–393 and figure 18.5. Other examples of this sculptural type are represented in Huntington, *The Pāla-Sena Schools of Sculpture*, figures 75, 76, 84, 102, 138, 140, 178, 181, 184, and 243.

2. Gehman, *"Petavatthu,"* xi.

3. Lamotte, *History*, 335, 679.

4. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 2.36, and Fa-Hien, *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, 71.

5. *Perfect Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*, 205.

6. See Lamotte, "Vajrāpaṇi et Inde," 116–120, for a discussion of Vajrāpaṇi as Sakka, which includes the citations from the *Digha Nikāya Commentary*. Xuanzang refers to eight Vajrāpaṇis as part of a large entourage. Hiuen Tsiang, *Si-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records*, 2.22.

7. See Lamotte, *History*, 688, for a full set of references to Vajrāpaṇi as the compiler of the *Mahāyānasūtras*.

8. Getty, *The Gods of Northern Buddhism*, 50–51.

Bibliography

Agrawala, V. S. *India as Known to Pānini*. Lucknow: University of Lucknow, 1953.

Amarakośa. Edited by T. Devadatta. Varanasi, 1883.

Aṅguttara-nikāya. Edited by R. Morris, E. Hardy, A. K. Warder, M. Hunt, and C.A.F. Rhys Davids. 6 vols. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1979.

Aṅguttara-nikāya Commentary (Manorathapūraṇī). Edited by M. Walleser and H. Kopp. 5 vols. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1966–79.

Antagaḍadasāo with Abhayadeva's Commentary. Translated by L. D. Barnett. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1907.

Antonini, C. S. "Preliminary Notes on the Excavation of the Necropolises Found in Western Pakistan." *East and West* 14 (1963): 16.

Ārya Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa. Edited by T. Ganapati Shastri. 3 vols. Trivandrum: Trivandrum Sanskrit, 1921–25.

Asher, Fredrick. "Gaya: Monuments of the Pilgrimage Town." In *Bodhgaya: The Site of Enlightenment,* edited by J. Leoshko. Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988.

Atharva Veda Saṃhitā. Translated by W. D. Whitney. Edited by C. Rockwell Lanman. 2 vols. Harvard Oriental Series. 1905; reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984.

Aung-Thwin, Michael. *Pagan: The Origins of Modern Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985.

———. "Prophecies, Omens and Dialogue: Tools of the Trade in Burmese Historiography." In *Historical Essays in Honor of Kenneth R. Rossman,* edited by K. Newmyer. Crete, Nebraska: Doane College, 1980.

Āvaśyaka Sūtra with the Commentary of Malayagiri and Niryukti of Bhadrabāhu. 3 vols. Surat, 1928–32.

Banerjea, Jitendra Nath. *The Development of Hindu Iconography*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1956.

Banerji, R. D. *Mohenjodaro, A Forgotten Report*. Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, 1984.

Bareau, Andre. "Le Buddha et Uruvilvā." In *Indianisme et Bouddhisme Melanges offerts a Mgr. Etienne Lamotte*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1980.

Barua, B. M. *Barhut Stone as a Storyteller: Parts I, II and III*. New Delhi: Indological Book Corp., 1979.

Bhattacharyya, Tarapada. *The Bodhgayā Temple*. Kolkata: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1966.

Bigandet, Paul Ambrose. *The Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha of the Burmese*. 2 vols. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1911.

The Book of the Discipline (Vinaya-piṭaka). Translated by I. B. Horner. 6 parts. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1992–1993.

The Book of Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttara-nikāya). Translated by F. L. Woodward and E. M. Hare. 5 vols. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1994–1995.

Boyd, James W. *Satan and Māra: Christian and Buddhist Symbols of Evil*. Leiden: Brill, 1975.

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa. Bombay, 1912.

Brahmāndapūrana Translated and Annotated. Edited by G. V. Tagare. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983.

Brown, R. Grant. "The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese." *Folk-Lore: The Transactions of the Folk-Lore Society* 32, no. 2 (June 1921): 77–100.

The Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha. Translated by E. H. Johnston. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995.

Buddhagoṣa. Buddha's Teachings, Being the Sutta Nipāta or Discourse-Collection. Edited and translated by L. Chalmers. Harvard Oriental Series, 37, 1932; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997.

Buddhist Birth Stories (Jātaka Tales) and the Commentarial Introduction Entitled: Nidanakatha The Story of the Lineage. Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids. London: Routledge and Sons, 1937.

Buddhist Legends Translated from the Original Pāli Text of the Dhammapada Commentary (Dhammapadāṭṭhakathā). Translated by E. W. Burlingame. Harvard Oriental Series 28–30. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921.

Buddhist Suttas. Edited and translated by T. W. Rhys Davids, Sacred Books of the East 11. Oxford: Clarendon, 1881.

Burgess, James. *The Buddhist Stupas of Amaravati and Jaggayyapeta*. 1887; reprint, Delhi: Indological Bookhouse, 1970.

———. *Report on the Buddhist Cave Temples and Their Inscriptions: Being Part of the Results of the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Seasons' Operations of the Archaeological Survey of Western India*. London: Trubner, 1883.

Cāraka Saṃhitā. Edited and translated by P. V. Sharma. Varanasi: Caukamba Vidyabharana, 1970.

Carlleyle, A.C.L. *Archaeological Survey of India Report of Tours in Gorakhpur, Saran and Ghazipur in 1877–78–79 and 80*. Vol. 22. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1885.

Chanda, Ramaprasad. "Four Ancient Yakṣa Statues." *Journal of the Department of Letters,* University of Calcutta 4 (1921): 45–84.

———. "Some Unpublished Amarāvatī Inscriptions." *Epigraphica Indica* 15 (1919–20): 258–275.

Chandra, Pramod. *On the Study of Indian Art*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983.

Cohen, Richard. "Nāga, Yakṣiṇi, Buddha: Local Deities and Local Buddhism at Ajanta." *History of Religions* 37, no. 4 (May 1998): 360–400.

Cole, Henry H. *Catalogue of the Objects of Indian Art*. London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1874.

The Collection of Middle Length Sayings (Majjima Nikāya). Translated by I. B. Horner. 3 vols. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2000.

Coomaraswamy, Ananda Kentish. *Yakṣas*. 2 vols. in 1. 1928, 1931; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1980.

———. *Yakṣas: Essays in the Water Cosmology*. Edited by P. Schroeder. New ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Crooke, W. "Ancestor Worship and Cult of the Dead (Indian)." In *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Edited by J. Hastings. Vol. 1. New York: Scribner, 1908: 450–454.

Cunningham, Alexander. *Ancient Geography of India*. London: Trubner, 1871.

———. *Archaeological Survey of India Report of a Tour in Eastern Rajputana in 1882–83*. Vol. 20. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1885.

———. *The Bhilsa Topes or Buddhist Monuments of Central India*. 1854; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997.

———. *Four Reports Made during the Years 1862–63–64–65*. Archaeological Survey of India. 1871; reprint, Delhi: Indological Bookhouse, 1972.

———. *Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gaya*. London: W. H. Allen, 1892.

———. *The Stūpa of Bharhut: A Buddhist Monument Ornamented with Various Sculptures*. 1879; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1998.

DeCaroli, Robert. "Reading Bhaja: A Non-Narrative Interpretation of the Vihara 19 Reliefs." *East and West* 50, nos. 1–4 (December 2000): 259–280.

Dehejia, Vidya. *Early Buddhist Rock Temples: A Chronological Study*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1972.

de Jong, J. W. "The Study of Buddhism: Problems and Perspectives." In *Studies in Indo-Asian Art and Culture* no. 4, edited by P. Ratnam. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1975.

De Marco, Giuseppe. "The Stūpa as a Funerary Monument: New Iconographical Evidence." *East and West* 37, nos. 1–4 (December 1987): 191–246.

Deshpande, M. N. *Indian Archaeology 1972–73—A Review*. New Delhi: Indian Ministry of Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs, 1978.

———. "The Rock-cut Caves of Pitalkhora in the Deccan." *Ancient India Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India* 15 (1959): 72–90.

Dhammapada Commentary (Dhammapada Aṭṭhkathā). Edited by H. C. Norman. 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1906.

Dialogues of the Buddha (Dīgha-nikāya). Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids and C.A.F. Rhys Davids. 1921; reprint, London: Pali Text Society, 1995.

Dīgha-nikāya. Edited by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. Estlin Carpenter. 1903; reprint, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1995.

Dīgha-nikāya Commentary (Sumaṅgalavilāsinī). Edited and translated by T. W. Rhys Davids and J. E. Carpenter. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1931.

Divyāvadana. Edited by E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1886.

Fa-hian. Introduction to *Su-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records of the Western World*. Translated by S. Beal. 2 vols. 1884; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Fa-Hien. *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms: Being an Account by the Chinese Monk Fa-Hien of His Travels in India and Ceylon (A. D. 300–414): in Search of the Buddhist Books of Discipline*. Translated by J. Legge. 1886; reprint, New York: Dover, 1965.

Falk, Nancy E. "Wilderness and Kingship in South Asia." *History of Religions* 13, no. 1 (August 1973): 1–15.

Fergusson, James. *On the Study of Indian Architecture*. London: J. Murray, 1867.

———. *Tree and Serpent Worship: or Illustrarions of Mythology and Art in India in the 1st and 4th Centuries before Christ from the Sculptures of the Buddhist Topes at Sanchi and Amaravati*. Delhi: Indological Bookhouse, 1873.

Fergusson, James, and James Burgess. *The Cave Temples of India*. 1880; reprint, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1988.

Gaulier, Simone. *Buddhism in Afghanistan and Central Asia*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1976.

Getty, Alice. *The Gods of Northern Buddhism: Their History and Iconography*. 1928; reprint, New York: Dover, 1988.

Ghosh, A. *Nālandā*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1986.

Ghosh, A. and H. Sarkar. "Beginnings of Sculptural Art in South-East India: A Stele from Amaravati." *Ancient India: Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India* 20–21 (1964–65): 168–177.

The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipāta). Translated by K. R. Norman. No. 1. Vol. 44. London: Pali Text Society, 1984.

A Guide to Shwezigon Pagoda Pagan, Nyaung-oo, Myanmar. Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt, Yangon: Shwezigon Pagoda Trustees, 1994.

Handiqui, K. K. *Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture*. Sholapur: Jaina Samskrti Samrakshaka Sangha, 1949.

Hastings, James. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. New York: Scribner, 1912.

Hiuen Tsiang. *Su-Yu-Ki Buddhist Records of the Western World*. Translated by S. Beal. 2 vols. 1884; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Hmannān Naha Yazawintawyī: Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma. Translated by Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce. 1923; reprint, Rangoon: Rangoon University Press, 1960.

Htin Aung, Muang. *Folk Elements in Burmese Buddhism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1962.

———. *A History of Burma*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

Hunter, William. "An Account of Some Artificial Caves in the Neighbourhood of Bombay." *Archaeologia* 7 (1785): 286–294.

Huntington, Susan. *The Art and Architecture of Ancient India*. New York: Weatherhill, 1985.

———. *The Pāla-Sena Schools of Sculpture*. Edited by J. E. Van Lohuizen-de Leeuw. Vol. 10. Leiden: Brill, 1984.

An Introduction to Mūlasarvāstivādin Sources for Monastic Buddhism in India During the Middle Period. Translated by Gregory Schopen. Forthcoming.

I-tsing. *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Maylay Archipelago AD 671–695*. Translated by J. Takakusu. 1896; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966.

Jaina Sūtras II: The Uttaradhyāyana Sūtra and the Sūtra Kritanga. Translated by H. Jacobi. Sacred Books of the East 45. 1884; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968.

Jaini, Padmanabh. "Is There a Popular Jainism?" In *The Assembly of Listeners: Jains in Society*, edited by M. Carrithers and C. Humphrey, 187–199. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

———. "*Śramaṇas*: Their Conflict with Brāhmaṇical Society." In *Chapters in Indian Civilization*, edited by J. W. Edler. Vol. 1, pp. 39–81. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt, 1970.

The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births. Edited by E. B. Cowell. 6 vols. 1895; reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Karetzky, Patricia Eichenbaum. "Māra: Buddhist Deity of Death and Desire." *East and West* 32, 1–4 (December 1982): 77–92.

Kautilya. *Arthaśāstra*. Translated by R. P. Kangle. 3 vols. 2nd ed., 1969; reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992.

Knox, Robert. *Amaravati Buddhist Sculpture from the Great Stūpa*. London: British Museum Press, 1992.

Ko, Taw Sein. *Inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya and Ava. Translation with Notes*. Rangoon: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1899.

Kramrisch, Stella. *The Presence of Śiva*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Kuraishi, Mohammad Hamid. *Rajgir*. New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 1987.

The Lalitavistara Sūtra: The Voice of the Buddha, The Beauty of Compassion. Translated by G. Bays. 2 vols. Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1983.

Lalou, M. "Notes sur la décoration des monastères bouddhiques." *Revues des artes asiatiques* 5, no. 3 (1930): 183–85.

Lamotte, Etienne. *History of Indian Buddhism from the Origins to the Śaka Era*. Translated by S. Webb-Boin. Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, Institut Orientaliste, 1988.

———. "Vajrāpaṇi et Inde." In *Mélanges de Sinologie Offerts à Monsieur Paul Demiéville*. Paris: Presses Universitaires des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1966.

The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom. Translated by E. Conze. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

The Laws of Manu. Translated by W. Doniger and B. K. Smith. New York: Penguin Books, 1991.

Leoshko, Janice. "The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures of the Pala Period from Bodhgayā." Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1987.

Lerner, Martin, and Steven Kossak. *The Lotus Transcendent: Indian and Southeast Asian Art from the Samuel Eilenberg Collection*. New York: MMA/Abrams, 1991.

Lévi, Sylvain. "Catalogue géographique des yakṣa dans la Mahāmāyūrī." *Journal Asiatique Recueil de Memoires et de notices relatifs aux études orientales*. Vol. 11, series 5, Paris, 1915: 19–139.

Liu, Xinru. *Ancient India and Ancient China: Trade and Religious Exchanges AD 1–600*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Longhurst, A. H. *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjunakonda, Madras Presidency*. Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India 54. Delhi: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1938.

Luce, G. H. Assisted by Bo-mhu Ba Shin, Utin Co. *Old Burma—Early Pagān*. Locust Valley, N.Y.: Artibus Asiae, New York University, J. J. Augustin, 1969–70.

Luce, G. H., and Pe Maung Tin. *Selections from the Inscriptions of Pagan*. Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1928.

Mahābhārata. Edited by V. S. Sukthankar et al. 1933; reprint, New Delhi: Suryaprabha Prakasna, 2001.

Mahābhārata. Translated by J.A.B. Van Buitenen. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1975.

Mahāvaṃsa: The Great Chronicle of Sri Lanka. Edited and translated by A.W.P. Guruge. Colombo: Associated Newspapers of Ceylon, 1989.

The Mahāvastu. Translated by J. J. Jones. 3 vols. 1952; reprint, London: Pali Text Society, 1976.

Mahpatra, S. K. *Indian Archaeology: A Review*. New Delhi: India Department of Archaeology, 1995.

The Maitrī or Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Rāmatīrtha. Translated by E. B. Cowell. London: W. M. Watts, 1870.

Malalasekera, G. P. *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*. London: Pali Text Society, 1960.

Mānava Gṛhyasūtra: A Vedic Manual of Domestic Rites. Edited and translated by M. J. Dresden. Groningen: J. B. Wolters, 1941.

Marshall, John. *A Guide to Sanchi*. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1918.

———. *Taxila: An Illustrated Account of Archaeological Excavations Carried Out at Taxila under the Orders of the Government of India between the Years 1913 and 1934*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

Marshall, John, and Albert Foucher. *The Monuments of Sāñcī*. 3 vols. 1940; reprint, Delhi: Swat Publications, 1983.

Mendelson, E. Michael. "A Messianic Buddhist Association in Upper Burma." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 24, part 3 (1961): 560–80.

———. "Observations on a Tour in the Region of Popa, Central Burma" *France-Asie* 19 (1963): 780–807.

The Minor Readings, The Illustrator of Ultimate Meaning. Translated by Bhikku Ñāṇamoli. London: Pali Text Society, 1960.

Misra, Ram Nath. *The Yaksha Cult and Iconography*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1979.

Mitra, Debala. *Ratnagiri*. New Delhi: Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1958–61.

Mitra, Rajendralala. *Buddha Gayā: The Great Buddhist Temple, Hermitage of Sakya Muni*. Delhi: Indological Bookhouse, 1972.

Mitter, Partha. *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1977.

Monier-Williams, Monier. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. 1899; reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1993.

Mookerji, Radhakumud. *Asoka*. 1928; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962.

Moreno, Manuel. "God's Forceful Call: Possession as a Divine Strategy." In *Gods of Flesh, Gods of Stone: The Embodiment of Divinity in India,* edited by J. P. Waghorne and N. Cutler, 103–122. Chambersburg, Pa.: Anima, 1985.

Nakamura, Hajime. *Gotama Buddha: A Biography Based on the Most Reliable Texts*. Translated by G. Sekimori. Tokyo: Kosei, 2000.

O'Flaherty, Wendy Doniger. *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Oldenberg, Herman. *Buddha, His Life, His Doctrine, His Order*. London: Luzac, 1928.

Once the Buddha Was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra's Jātakamālā. Translated by P. Khoroche. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

The Ordinances of Manu. Translated by A. C. Burnell. Edited by E. W. Hopkins. 1884; reprint, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1995.

Paramattha Dīpanī, Dhammapala's Commentary on the Vimānavatthu. Translated by E. Hardy. Part 4. London: Pali Text Society, 1901.

Pariśiṣṭaparvaṇa of Hemachandra. Edited by H. Jacobi. Calcutta, 1932.

Patañjali. *The Mahābhāsya of Patañjali with Annotations*. Translated by S. Dasgupta. Edited by S. Bhattacharya. New Delhi: Indian Council on Philosophic Research, 1991.

Perfect Wisdom in 8,000 Lines and Its Verse Summary (Prajñapāramitās Aṣṭasāhasrika). Translated by E. Conze. Berkeley: Bolinas Four Seasons Foundation, 1973.

Peri, N. "Hāritī, la mère-de-démons." *Bulletin de l'Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient* 17, no. 3 (1917): 1–15.

Peta Stories: Elucidation of the Intrinsic Meaning: So Named the Commentary on the Peta-Stories (Petavatthu Commentary). Translated by U Ba Kyaw and P. Masefield. London: Pali Text Society, 1980.

"*Petavatthu*: Stories of the Departed." In *Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon,* translated by G. H. Gehman. Vol. 30, part 4. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1998.

Ramachandran, T. N. *Buddhist Sculpture from a Stūpa near Goli Village, Guntur District*. Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum, part 1. New Series. Madras: Government Press, 1929.

Rāmāyaṇa of Valmīki. Edited by G. H. Bhatt et al. Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1961–66.

Raven, Ellen M. "The Secret Servants of Kubera: The Naras or Guhyakas." In *Studies in South and Southeast Asian Archaeology: Essays Offered to Dr. R. Soekmono*. Edited by H.I.R. Hinzler, no. 2, pp. 105–128. Leiden: Kuntji, 1988.

Rawson, Philip. *The Art of Southeast Asia*. World of Art Series. London: Thames and Hudson, 1967.

Ray, Himanshu P. *Monastery and Guild: Commerce under the Sātavāhanas*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Rea, A. "Excavations at Amarāvatī." In *Annual Reports of the Archaeological Survey of India 1908–1909*. Calcutta: Government Press, 1912.

Rhys Davids, T. W., and William Stede. *Pali-English Dictionary*. 1921–25; reprint, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1997.

Richman, Paula. *Women, Branch Stories, and Religious Rhetoric in a Tamil Buddhist Text*. Syracuse: Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1988.

Ṛgveda Saṃhitā. Edited and translated by S. P. Sarasvati and S. Vidyalankar. New Delhi: Veda Pratishthan, 1977–87.

Rig Veda: A Metrically Restored Text with an Introduction and Notes. Edited by B. A. van Nooten and G. B. Holland. Harvard Oriental Series. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1994.

Rijal, B. K. "Archaeological Activities at Lumbini 1976–77." *Ancient Nepal, Journal of the Department of Archaeology* 30–39 (1975–77): 28–37.

Rodrigue, Yves. *Nat-Pwe: Burma's Supernatural Sub-Culture*. Translated by R. Flotats. Gartmore, Scotland: Paul Strachan, Kiscadale, 1992.

Salomon, Richard. *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhāra: The British Library Kharoṣṭī Fragments*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999.

Saṃyutta-nikāya. Edited by G. A. Somaratne, L. Freer, and C.A.F. Rhys Davids. 6 vols. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1975–1990.

Samyutta-nikāya Commentary (Sāratthappakāsinī). Edited by F. L. Woodward. 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1977.

Sangermano, Fr. Vincentius. *A Description of the Burmese Empire Compiled Chiefly from Burmese Documents*. Translated by W. Tandy. 1808; reprint, Rangoon: Government Press, 1969.

Sanghabhedavastu. Edited by R. Gnoli and T. Venkatacharya. Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ad Estremo Oriente, 1977–78.

Sastri, Hirananda. *Nalanda and Its Epigraphic Material*. No. 66. New Delhi: Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1942.

Sastri, T.V.G., et al. *Vaddamanu Excavations*. Hyderabad: Birla Archaeological and Cultural Institute, 1992.

Sastry, Krishna. *Annual Report of the Department of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Andhra Pradesh 1976–77*. Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1978.

Schopen, Gregory. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism." *History of Religions* 31, no. 1 (August 1991): 1–23.

———. *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.

———. "Immigrant Monks and the Proto-Historical Dead: The Buddhist Occupation of Early Burial Sites in India." In *Festschrift für Dieter Schlingloff,* edited by F. Wilhelm, 215–238. Munich: Reinbek, 1996.

———. "Marking Time in Buddhist Monasteries: On Calandars, Clocks and Some Liturgical Practices." In *Sūryacandrāya: Essays in Honour of Akira Yuyama on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday,* edited by P. Harrison and G. Schopen. Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica and Tibetica Publishing House, 1998.

Sewell, Robert. *Quelques points d'archaeologie de l'Inde meridionale*. Paris, 1897.

Shah, Haku. *Living Traditons of India: Votive Terracottas of Gujarat*. New York: Mapin International, 1985.

Shah, U. P. "Yaksha Worship in Early Jaina Literature." *Journal of the Oriental Institute* 3, part 1 (1953–54): 55–71.

Shattan, Merchant-Prince. *Manimekhalaï (The Dancer with the Magic Bowl)*. Translated by A. Daniḍlou. New York: New Directions, 1989.

Śivadāsa. *The Five-and-Twenty Tales of the Genie (Vetālapañcavinśati)*. Translated by C. Rajan. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1995.

Śiva Purāṇa. Translated by "A Board of Scholars" and edited by J. L. Shastri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973.

Sivaramamurti, C. *Amaravati Inscriptions in the Madras Museum*. Madras: Government Press, 1977.

Smith, Vincent A. "Graeco-Roman Influence on the Civilization of Ancient India." *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Calcutta) 58 (1889): 119–135.

Somadeva. *Kathāsaritsāgara: Ocean of Streams of Story*. Translated by C. H. Tawney. Edited by N. M. Penzer. London: C. J. Sawyer, 1924–28.

———. *Upāsakadhyāyana, with Jinadasa's Commentary*. Edited by K. C. Jain. Varanasi and New Delhi, 1964.

Sontheimer, Gunther-Dietz. *Pastoral Deities in Western India*. Translated by Anne Feldhaus. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Sreenivasachar, P. *The Archaeological Bulletin*. No. 2. Andhra Pradesh Archaeological Series. Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1963.

Srinivasan, Doris Meth. *Many Heads, Arms, and Eyes: Origin, Meaning, and Form of Multiplicity in Indian Art*. Studies in Asian Art 20. Leiden: Brill, 1997.

Stone, Elizabeth Rosen. *The Buddhist Art of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Strachan, Paul. *Imperial Pagan: Art and Architecture of Burma*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989.

Strong, John S. *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thompson, 1995.

———. *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aṣokāvadāna*. 1983; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1989.

Subrahmanyam, R., et al. *Nagarjunakonda (1954–60)*. No. 75. New Delhi: Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1975.

Sutherland, Gail Hinich. *Yaṣka in Hinduism and Buddhism: The Disguises of the Demon*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Suttanipāta. Edited by D. Andersen and H. Smith. London: Pali Text Society, 1990.

Suttanipāta Commentary. Edited by H. Smith. 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society, 1984–1989.

Taw Sein Ko. *Inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya and Ava: Translation with Notes*. Rangoon, Burma: Superintendent of Government Printing, 1899.

Teiser, Stephen F. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Thapar, Romila. *A History of India*. Vol. 1 of 2. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1966.

Udāna. Edited by P. Steinthal. Vol. 12. London: Pali Text Society, 1885.

"*Udāna:* Verses of Uplift." In *The Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon,* translated by F. L. Woodward. Part 2. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1996.

Udāna Commentary. Edited by F. L. Woodward. 1926; reprint, Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1977.

The Vamana Purana with English Translation. Edited by A. S. Gupta. Translated by S. M. Mukhopadhyaya. Varanasi: All India Kashiraj Trust, 1968.

Venkataramanayya, N. "Pre-Historic Remains in Andhra Pradesh." *Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society* 32 (1971–72): 37–58.

Vidyarthi, L. P. *The Sacred Complex in Hindu Gaya*. Delhi: Concept Publications, 1978.

Vidyarthi, L. P., and B. K. Rai. *The Tribal Culture of India*. Delhi: Concept Publications, 1977.

Vimāna Stories (Vimānavatthu Commentary). Translated by P. Masefield. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1989.

Vimānavatthu and Petavatthu. Edited by N. A. Jayawickrama. London: Pali Text Society, 1977.

"*Vimānavatthu*: Stories of the Mansions." In *Minor Anthologies of the Pali Canon*. Translated by I. B. Horner. Vol. 30, part 4. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1998.

Vinaya-Piṭaka: The Book of Discipline. Translated by I. B. Horner. Vol. 1. London: H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1938.

Vinaya-Piṭaka Commentary (Samantapāsādikā). Edited by J. Takakusu and M. Nagai. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1924.

Vinaya Texts. Translated by T. W. Rhys Davids and H. Oldenberg. 3 vols. Sacred Books of the East Series. 1885; reprint, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990.

Viṣṇu Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition. Translated by H. H. Wilson. Edited by Fitzedward. Delhi: Trubner, 1980.

Vitebsky, Piers. *Dialogues with the Dead: The Discussion of Mortality among the Sora of Eastern India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Von Schiefner, F. A. *Tibetan Tales Derived from Indian Sources*. Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1925.

Vossion, Louis. *Spirit-Worship among the Burmese and the Wild Hill Tribes of the Iraouaddy Valley*. Reprinted from the *Journal of American Folk-Lore*. Cambridge, MA (April–June 1891).

Zimmer, Heinrich. *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*. Edited by J. Campbell. Bollingen Series. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972.

Index

Page numbers in italics indicate illustrations.

Achharā, 71
Agni, 197n23
Agrawala, V. S., 92, 200–201n30
Ajakālako, 18, *19,* 71, 72
Ajaṇṭā, 76–77, 79, *175,* 175–176
Ajātaśatru, 33
Akshobya, 182
Alambusa, 71
Alaungsithu, 150
Āḷavaka, 25, 51
alcohol and other offerings to spirit-deities, *see* offerings to spirit-deities
Alīanasattu, 52, 53
amānussa, 12
Amarakośa, 13
Amarāvatī, 6, 56–57, 66, 144, *145*
Ananda, 123
Anāthapiṇḍada, 83, 136, 137
Anawrahta of Burma and promotion of "true law": acceptance of Buddhism in Burma, role in, 151, 153; Ari monks, disbanding of, 161, 163, 164; death of Anawrahta, 166–167; *nat* worship and, 158–161, 164; "pure" Buddhism, cast as champion of, 155–156, 157; Schwezigon and other sites, construction of, 167–169
ancestor worship, 87–91, 92–94, 102–103
Andher, 138–139
Aṅguttara Nikāya, 15, 61, 92
aniconism, 198n35
"animism," 8
Aṅkura, 95
Āpagira, 138
Apalāla, 38
apsarases, 10, 11
ara or *arhat,* 138
Arantuka, 24
Aravāḷa, 42
Ari monks, Burma, 151, 157, 161–164
Arthaśāstra, 14, 36
Arunāyana, 92
"Aryans," 5, 6
Asher, Frederick, 106–107
Asita, 66
Āsivisūpama, 43
Aśoka Maurya, 31–32, 44–45, 164
Aśokan inscriptions, 32, 100
assammukhīs, 10
asuras, 10, 11, 12, 118
Aśvaghoṣa, 108
Āṭānāṭiya Sutta, 16, 122, 123
Atharvaveda, 11
Aung-Thwin, Michael, 168
Avadāśataka, 95
Avalokiteśvara, 175, 179, *180, 181*
Avaruddhaka, 38
Āvaśyaka Sūtra, 91
Avīci hell, 113, 116

Ayācitabhatta Jātaka, 50
Ayakūṭa Jātaka, 25, 50

barbers, 97–98
Barua, B. M., 69
Bedsā, 84, *85,* 137, 183
Besnagar, *21, 22,* 62
bhadanta, 140
Bhagavat, 70
Bhagini Samagadhi, 58
Bhaiṣajyavastu of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya,* 56
Bhājā: public donations, inscriptions indicating, 34; *stūpas,* 100, *101,* 137, *139,* 139–140; *Vihāra* 19, 79–81, *80, 82, 83*
bhakti rites, 24, 63
Bhallika, 110
Bharama Kalan, 62, *65*
Bhārhut: Bhājā, *Vihāra* 19 figures compared to, 80–81; Bodh Gayā figures reminiscent of, 118; hieratic relationships at, 179; high point of Indian culture, viewed as, 6; iconography of, 68–76, *70, 72–74;* public donations, inscriptions indicating, 34; Shwezigon, Burma, compared, 169; spirit-deity statues at, 16–18, *17, 19;* worship scenes at, *27, 28*
Bhattacharyya, Tarapada, 110
Bhaumeyika gods, 11
bhūtāni, 12, 15
bhūtas: the dead and spirit-deities, link between, 94, 95; Gayā region haunted by, 115; terminological and classificatory issues, 10, 11, 15, 18
biased aspects of historiography, 4–8, 9–10, 154–156
Bigandet, Paul Ambrose, 154
Bimbisāra, 33, 58–59
Birdwood, Sir George, 6
Bodh Gayā: *dhāraṇi* texts found at, 100; funerary *stūpas,* 99; significance of site, 106–107, 113, 114, 117–119; spirit-deities portrayed at, 118–119, *119. See also* enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā
Bodhi tree, 27, 31–32, 41, 118
bodhisattvas and spirit-deities: conversion tales, 46–50; hieratic relationship between, 174–179, *176–178, 180, 181; yakṣas* and bodhisattvas, 179, 181–183
Bon, 144
Brahmā, 51
Brahmadatta, 49
Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 92
Brahmans and Brahmanism: Aśokan Edicts addressed to, 32; "decline" theories, 6; political rivalry with, 33–34; spirit religions defined against, 13–14; spirit religions important to, 15; *śrāddha* rites, 90, 92, 106–112, 114–115, 203n24
Bṛhatkalpabhāṣya, 123
Brown, R. Grant, 154–155, 156
Buddha: conversion of spirit-deities by, 38–40, 46–49, 51–52, 134; hieratic relationship with spirit-deities, 75, *175,* 175–177; honor due to spirit-deities, 15, 16; relics of, 114; response to *yakkha* Sūciloma, 3; self-definition against *laukika* terminology, 13–14; *stūpa* for Śāriputra, 136–137; Viṣṇu, as avatar of, 42. *See also* Śākyamuni
Buddha Kāśyapa, 34, 91
Buddhacarita, 107, 108, 112, 203n24
Buddhaghoṣa, 28, 92, 182
Buddhism: the dead, view of, 90; "decline" theories, 6; defined against *laukika* practices, 13–14; elements in spirit religions offensive to, treatment of, 25, 50; expansion outside of India, 143–145; inherited notions of, 7; Nepali Buddhism, 141; "pure" Buddhism in Burma, historiographical obsession with, 154–156; shift from royal to popular support, 31–35, 38. *See also* spirit-deities and early Buddhism
Burgess, James, 6, 199n61
burial sites, Buddhist monasteries built over, 33, 43–44, 55–58 *See also* the dead and spirit-deitiesss
Burmese Buddhism and spirit-deities, 148–171; ambivalence about *nat* worship, 156–158; Ari monks, 151, 157, 161–164; Buddhist temples and shrines, *nats* associated with, 168–169, *170;* conversion of spirit-deities, 208n26; elimination of *nat* worship and spirit religions, assumptions regarding, 158–161; *Glass Palace Chronicle,* 148, 151–152, 155, 158–159, 161–166; kings, role of, 164–169, 171; Kyanzittha, 156, 157, 164–165; popular spirit religion and *nats* in Burma, 148–150, 151–154; "pure" Buddhism in Burma, historiographical obsession with, 154–158; *saṃgha,* 165–167, 171; spread of Buddhism in Burma, 151–153; textual evidence, 148. *See also* Anawrahta of Burma and promotion of "true law"
Burnouf, E., 4
Butkara, 57

caityas, 20–25, 64; Ajaṇṭā and Pitalkhorā, 79; Bhārhut, 75; Buddha on, 15; Buddhist relics placed at, 179; incorporation into Buddhist monasteries, 61; Metropolitan Museum of

Art (New York) object, 28–29, 63–64; worship scenes depicting, 27–28
Cakravartin, 113
cannibalism, 52–53
Cāraka Saṃhitā, 25
Carlleyle, A.C.L., 99
cemeteries, Buddhist monasteries built over, 33, 43–44, 55–58. *See also* the dead and spirit-deities, under "dead"
Chada, 71, *74*
Chakavako, 71, *72*
Chaṇḍa, 91
Chanda Kinnara Jātaka, 69
Chanda, Ramprasad, 197n22
Chandavaram, 27–28, *29,* 56, 66
chattras (umbrellas), 20, *139,* 139–140
China's Ghost Festival, 145–147
Chinese Buddhist pilgrims, accounts of, 36. *See also* Faxian; Xuanzang; Yijing
Chitsagon votive tablet, Burma, 150
chthonic nature of spirit-deities, 9, 18, 112
Cittarāja, 15
cloth taken from the dead, 55–56, 113, 126–127
Cohen, Richard, 76–77
Cole, Henry, 4–6
colonialism and imperialism, effect of, 4–8, 154–155
contemporary ancestor worship, 87–91
conversion of spirit-deities, 38–50, 186; Bhārhut narratives, 71; Buddha's role in, 38–40, 46–49, 51–52, 134; Burma, 208n26; emotional turmoil, control of, 41–43, 50–51, 117, 134, 206n36; enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, 117–118, 119; ethical/moral basis for, 45–49; lay spiritualists involved in, 44; monastic buildings associated with, 39–40, 43–44; monks and nuns involved in, 40–41, 133–135, 142; nuns involved in, 40–41; offerings, conflicts over, 49–51; question and answer sessions, 51–52; rebirth of spirit-deities at higher plane, 132; royal power over supernatural, 44–46; social service of *saṃgha,* 43; *yakṣas'* disbelief in Buddha, 123
Coomaraswamy, Ananda, 7–8, 9, 20, 24, 63, 190n18
Cūḷavaṃsa, 155
Culla Sumana, 40, 206n41
Cunningham, Alexander, 62–63, 99

Daityas, 11
dakarakkha (udakarakṣa ?), 12, 191n40
Daṃṣṭrānivāsin, 45
dance, worship of spirit-deities by, 29, 64
darśan, 63
de Jong, J. W., 4
De Marco, Giuseppe, 140
the dead and spirit-deities, 86; ancestor worship, 87–91, 92–94, 102–103; Buddhist views of the dead, 90; Burmese *nats,* 148–150; cloth taken from the dead, 55–56, 113, 126–127; enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, 105–106, 111, 114, 117–119; ghost and god, spirit-deities falling between, 18–20, 94–103; human or holy site, association of the dead with, 90; Māra's association with, 115; megalithic burial sites, Buddhist monasteries built over, 33, 43–44, 55–58; reincarnation as spirit-deity, 91–94, 131–132; *saṃghas'* involvement with tending of the dead, 57, 85–86, 96–103; *śrāddha* rites, 90, 92, 106–112, 114–115, 203n24; *stūpas,* funerary, 98–100, *99, 101*
"decline" theories, 4–8, 9–10, 154–158
Dehijia, Vidya, 139
Deshpande, M. N., 77
Desires, Lord of (Māra), 115
Devadhamma Jātaka, 12, 47, 49
devajāti, 13
devaputras, 10, 113
devas, 11, 13, 95, 118, 150
devatās, 12, 20, 71, 94–103, 150
Dhammapāda Aṭṭhakathā, 91
Dhammapāda Commentary, 69, 73–74, 75, 123, 128–130
Dhammapādaṭṭhakathā, 20
Dhammapāla, 97
Dhangar, ancestor worship practices of, 88–89, 90
dhāraṇi texts, 100–102
Dharmarakṣa, 108
Dhoṇa, 13
Dīdārgañj, 62, *63*
Dīgha Nikāya, 61, 123
disease goddesses, 82–83
Divyāvadāna, 32, 40, 45, 47, 65, 92, 119
Dummedha Jātaka, 25, 49, 50

ecstatic spirit-possession, 25–26
elephant and construction of *stūpas* in Burma, 167, 169
Ellora, 140–141
emotions and passions: the dead, temperament of, 89–90; monks' emotional control and control of spirit-deities, 41–43, 50–51, 117, 134, 206n36; *pretas,* hunger of, 95
enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, 103; conversion tales, 117–118, 119; Māra, defeat of, 112–117; *saṃgha* and spirit

enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, (*continued*)
religions, 105–106, 114, 116–120, 174; site, significance of, 106–107, 113, 114, 117–119; spirit-deities and the dead, 105–106, 111, 114, 117–119; *śrāddha* rites and Sujātā's food offering, 106–112, 114–115, 203n24; textual accounts of, 107–114
Erāpatta (Erakapatta) narrative at Bhārhut, 69–71, *70,* 73–74
ethical basis for conversion of spirit-deities, 45–49
exorcists, monks as, 128–129
expansion of Buddhism outside of India, 143–145

Falk, Nancy, 24
Faxian: conversion tales, 40, 44; monasteries built over sites associated with spirit-deities, 61; Sāṃkāśya monks, *nāga* protector of, 76–77, 81, 122; Vajrāpaṇi *stūpa,* 182
Fergusson, James, 5–6, 199n61
festivals for spirit-deities, 24–25
folk religion, spirit religions defined as, 14, 15, 18
food and other offerings to spirit-deities, *see* offerings to spirit-deities
foreign travelers, accounts of, 36. *See also* Faxian; Xuanzang; Yijing
Foucher, Albert, 137, 138
funerary sites, Buddhist monasteries built over, 33, 43–44, 55–58. *See also* the dead and spirit-deities
funerary *stūpas,* 98–100, *99, 101*

Gagga Jātaka, 14, 191n49
Gaṇapati, 24
Gandhāran art, 6, 182
gandharvas, 10–13, 95, 118
Gangito, 71
Gardabha, 38–40, 61
Gayā, significance of, 106–107, 113, 114, 117–119. *See also* Bodh Gayā
gaze of *yakṣa* statues, 63
Gehman, G. H., 95
geographical restrictions on spirit-deities, 16–17, 90–91, 143–144, 192n62
Ghosh, A., 28
ghost and god, spirit-deities falling between, 18–20, 94–103
Ghost Festival, China, 145–147
ghosts, *see pretas*
Glass Palace Chronicle, 148, 151–152, 155, 158–159, 161–166
"golden age" theories, 4–8, 9–10, 154–158

Goli, 56
Gotiputa, 138
guardian figures: Bhājā, *Vihāra* 19, *80,* 80–81, *82*; Pitalkhorā, 77, 79; Ratnagiri, 184
guhyakās, 10, 11, 12, 81, *83*
guṇas, 11
Guruge, A. K., 44

Hāriputa, 138
Hāritī: ancestor worship, 91, 92; conversion tales, 38, 42; disease goddesses, 82–83; importance of, 183; Yijing on offerings by monks to, 16, 122
harmikās, 139
Hemavata, 52, 131
hieratic relationships: bodhisattvas and spirit-deities, 174–179, *176–178, 180, 181*; Buddha and spirit-deities, 75, *175,* 175–177; monks and spirit-deities, 55, 79, 81, 126–127; monks, hierarchies among, 140–142
Hinduism: Bodh Gayā's importance to, 106, 107; contemporary ancestor worshipers, 89. *See also* Brahmans and Brahmanism
historiography, 4–8, 154–158
Hkaywe, 169
Htibyusaung, 159
Htibyusaung Medaw, 159
Htin Aung, Maung, 156–157, 162
Hunter, William, 6–7
Huntington, Susan, 175

I-tsing, *see* Yijing
imperialism and colonialism, effect of, 4–8, 154–155
Indra, 25, 50, 76, 114, 153, 182
inscriptional evidence, 32, 36–37, 149–150
itarajanāḥ, 11

Jaggayyapetta, 57
Jaini, Padmanabh, 34–35
Jainism, 10, 13–14, 35, 123–124
Jakkulas, 91
Japan, 144
Jātakas, see specific texts, e.g. *Palāsa Jātaka*
Jayaddisa Jātaka, 52–53
Jetavana monastery, 55–56, 126–127, 132

Kālananda, 126–127
Kālavela, 44
Kalī, 91, 93
Kama, 115
Kamaloka, 115
Kānheri, 6–7, 76
Kaniṣka, 61
Karlī, 76

Kāsapagota, 138
Kathāsaritsāgara, 12, 46, 129
Kayashandikai, 41
Khara, 51, 118
Khasarpaṇa, 175, 177–179, *178*
Khuddapāṭha, 123
kiṃpuruṣas, 10
kings and royal dynasties: Burmese Buddhism, 164–169, 171; *saṃgha* support, shift in, 31–35; supernatural, royal power over, 44–46; *yakṣas* associated with, 14–15. *See also* names of specific kings and dynasties
Kinnāra Jātaka, 69
kinnāras, 10
Koḍiniputa, 138
Kolhua, Binar, 100
Kosikiputa, 138
Kṛmiśa, 45
Kṣudrakavastu of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya,* 55, 81, 83, 124
Kubera (Kubiro): Bhārhut images, 71, 72, *73;* god-like nature of, 18; importance of, 183; king of the *yakṣas,* 12, 18, 46, 48; protective powers, 122; Vessavana, 48, 122–123
kulas (funerary *stūpas*), 98–100, *99, 101*
kumbhāṇḍas, 10
Kuntī, 40, 82
Kuru-Dhamma Jātaka, 15
Kusinārā, 57
Kuśinagara, 182
Kyanzittha, 156, 157, 164–165

Lady Golden Sides (Shwe Myet Nihā), 151, 156
Lalitavistara, 107, 108, 112–114, 118
laukika practices or beliefs, 13–14, 18. *See also* spirit-deities and early Buddhism
legs of statues, crawling between, 64–65
Licchavis, 15, 92
literary sources, *see* texts
local or regional gods, spirit-deities defined as, 16–17, 90–91, 143–144, 192n62
Lokananda, 149, 169
Lokeśvara, 175, 177–179, *178*
Lord of Desires (Māra), 115
Luce, Gordon H., 150, 155–156

madhupiṇḍaka, 111
Magadhan kings, 32–33, 56, 92
Mahābhārata, 11, 18, 23, 91, 106
Mahābodhi Temple, 27, 118
Mahāgiri *nats,* 151–153, 161, 166
Mahākāla, 16, 122
Mahakoka, 71
Mahāmāyurī, 23, 73, 74, 77, 92
Mahāmoggallāna (Moggallāna, Maudgalyāyana), 116, 137–138
Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, 75, 100
Mahāsutasoma Jātaka, 52–53
Mahāvaṃsa: conversion tales, 32, 37, 40, 42–43, 44, 45, 47; ranking of monks, 141; reincarnation of the dead as spirit deities, 91; terminological and classificatory issues, 14–15
Mahavanāya, 138
Mahāvastu, 34, 73, 110, 116
Mahāyāna, 6, 108, 154, 157, 161
Mahāyānasūtras, 182
Mahiṃsāsa, 47
mahoragas, 10
Mahpatra, S. K., 100
Maitrībala, 46
Majhima, 138
Majjima Nikāya, 116
Mānava Gṛhyasūtra, 24
Mānavadharmaśātra, 109
Mandalay Bodaw, 158
Mani-*nāga,* 58, *61*
Maṇibhadra, 23
Maṇikaṇṭha, 135
Maṇimekhalai: conversion of spirit-deities, 37, 41; physical features, spirit-deities associated with, 55; spirit-deities, monastic relationships with, 126, 206n41; terminological and classificatory issues, 14, 191n49
Maniyar Math, 60–61
Manuha, 158–159
Manusmṛti, 11, 36, 109–111, 202n12
Māra, 40, 51, 69, 112–117, 119, 134
Marshall, John, 98, 99, 137, 138
material culture and texts, *see* texts
Mathurā, 137
Maudgalyāyana (Moggallāna, Mahāmoggallāna), 116, 137–138
Mauryan dynasty, 31–34, 44–45, 56
megalithic burial sites, Buddhist monasteries built over, 33, 43–44, 55–58. *See also* the dead and spirit-deities
Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) object, 28–29, 63–64
Min Mahāgiri, 151, 152
Minyesishsin, 159
Misakosa, 71
Misra, Ram Nath, 13, 49, 93–94
Mitra, Debala, 98
Mogaliputa, 138
Moggallāna (Mahāmoggallāna, Maudgalyāyana), 116, 137–138
Mohenjodaro, 57

monasteries and monks, *see* entries at *saṃgha*
Moon (Prince), 47
moral basis for conversion of spirit-deities, 45–49
Mount Popa, 152, 153
Muchalinda, 118, 165
Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya: conversion tales, 36, 38, 40; the dead, 87; physical evidence related to spirit-deities, 55–56, 81, 83; *saṃgha,* monks, and spirit-deities, 121, 124, 129, 135
Mulian, 146

Nagarjuna, 7
Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, 56–57, *66, 67,* 83, 197n6
nāgas: Ajaṇṭā, 76; Bhārhut representations, 71; Buddhist monasteries associated with spirit-deity sites, 58–61, *59, 61*; conversion tales (*see* conversion of spirit-deities); Erāpatta (Erakapatta) narrative at Bhārhut, 69–71, *70*; Gayā region, 114, 118; Kyanzittha as son of, 165; names containing *nāg-* in south India, 144; material culture and texts, 4; Nālandā image, 183, *184*; Pitalkhorā, 77, *79*; reincarnation of the dead and ancestor worship, 92–93; *saṃgha,* monks, and spirit-deities, 135; Sāṃkāśya, monks of, 76–77, 81–82, 122; *stūpa* worship, 144, *145*; terminological and classificatory issues, 10, 11, 94. *See also* specific names
Nagayon temple, *165*
naivāsika, 12
Nālandā, 61, 100, 141, 179, *180, 181,* 183, *184*
Nandā, 92
Nandabala, 107, 112, 203n24. *See also* Sujātā
Narapatisithu, 166
Nāsik, 76
nats, see Burmese Buddhism and spirit-deities
Nepali Buddhism, 141
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art object, 28–29, 63–64
Nidanākathā, 107, 108–112, 114, 116
nirvāna (nibbāna), 149
nonsoteriological nature of spirit-deities, 18
Northern Wei Dynasty, 147
number forty-nine, significance of, 110–111
nuns, conversion of spirit-deities by, 40–41. *See also saṃgha* and spirit-deities, relationship between
Nyaung-gyin, 158
Nyaung-u, 167

offerings to spirit-deities, 24–25; acceptable offerings, 75–76; Bhārhut representation, *27*; Chinese Ghost Festival, 146; conversion tales, 49–51; libations poured over stone statues, 62–64; *saṃgha,* monks, and spirit-deities, 16, 84, 85; *śrāddha* rites, 90, 92, 106–112, 114–115, 203n24; Sujātā's offering to Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, 108, 109–111, 114–115; unacceptable offerings, 25, 49–51
Oldenberg, Herman, 115

Padakusalamāṇava Jātaka, 44
Padumāvati, 71
Pagan period, Burma, *see* Burmese Buddhism and spirit-deities
Paharpur, 100
Paippalāda version of *Atharvaveda,* 11
Pāla dynasty, 174–175
Palāsa Jātaka, 12, 15, 23
Pāli Jātaka, 108
Pāli literature, 12
Pāñcālika, 18, 26
Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika, 173, 182
Pāñcika, 92
Paṇḍaka, 42
Pānḍavas, 24
Paṇḍukābhaya, 44
Panigiri, 56
Paṇini, 13, 92
Panthagu, 166
Pāpimā, 115. *See also* Māra
Pāpiyan, 113. *See also* Māra
pāralaukika, 13
Pariśiṣṭaparvaṇa, 64
parittas, 38, 41, 123
Pārivāsikavastu of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya,* 81
Parkham *yakṣa,* 62–63, 67
parvato Vipula, 58
Pāsaṇḍas, 32
passions, *see* emotions and passions
Patañjali, 13
Patna, 62, *64,* 67
peasant religion, spirit-religions defined as, 15
petas, see pretas
Petavatthu, 37, 95, 96–97, 130
Phwā Jaw (Pwazaw), 143, 149–150
physical culture and texts, *see* texts
physical evidence of spirit-deity worship prior to Buddhism, 62–68
physical features, association of spirit-deities with, 9, 20; burial sites associated with *saṃgha,* 33, 43–44, 55–58; local or regional gods, spirit-deities defined as, 16–17, 90–91, 143–144, 192n62; non-funerary sites associated with *saṃgha,* 58–62; nonsoteriological nature of spirit-deities, 16; perishable nature of, 58–60; urban and

rural locations, 14. *See also caityas,* and specific physical features
piṇḍas, 110–111
piśācas, 10, 11, 12, 94
Piṭaka, 41, 127–128, 135
Pitalkhorā, 77–79, *78, 79*
pitṛs, 10, 11
political aspects of historiography, 4–8, 9–10, 154–158
popular religion, spirit-religions defined as, 15, 18
possession by spirits, 25–26, 128–129
Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajnaparamita, 182
Prasenajit Pillar, 69, *70*
pre-Buddhist spirit-deities, 62–68, *63, 64, 65*
Pretaparvat, 107
pretas: conversion tales, 51; the dead and spirit-deities, link between, 94–103; Gayā region haunted by, 115; hieratic relationships with Buddha and bodhisattvas, 176, 179; terminological and classificatory issues, 10–12
Pretasaṃtarpita Lokeśvara, 175
Pretaśila, 107
protectors, spirit-deities as: appeals of monks to spirit-deities, 122–123; Kubera (Kubiro), protective powers of, 122; Sāṃkāśya monks, *nāga* protector of, 76–77, 81, 122. *See also* guardian figures
puṇyajanāḥ, 12
Purānas, 11
"pure" Buddhism in Burma, 154–158
Pūrṇabhadra, 23
Pūrṇaka narrative at Bhārhut, 69, 71, 74
Puśyamitra, 33, 45
Pwazaw (Phwā Jaw), 143, 149–150
Pyek, 169

racialist aspects of study of early Buddhist art, 4–8
rāja-Śreṇika, 58
Rajgir, *nāga* worship at, 58–60, *59, 61*
rākṣasas, 10–12, 25, 94, 115
Ramachandra, 89
Rāmagrama (Rampuri), 100
Rāmāyaṇa, 11
Ratnagiri, 98, *99,* 100, 177–179, *178,* 183–184, *185*
Ray, Himanshu, 33
rebirth, *see* reincarnation
regional or local gods, spirit-deities defined as, 16–17, 90–91, 143–144, 192n62
reincarnation: ancestor worship, 91–94; monks and nuns reborn as spirit-deities, 131–132; spirit-deities, rebirth of dead as, 91–94, 131–132; spirit-deities reborn at higher plane, 132; Sūciloma reborn as spirit-deity, 91, 131
relics, 114, 135–142, 167, 179
Ṛg Veda, 25
Rhys Davids, T. W., 12
rocks and stones, deities associated with, 20, 29
royal dynasties, *see* kings and royal dynasties. *See also* names of specific dynasties
Rummindei inscription, 32
rural religion, spirit religions defined as, 14, 15, 18

sacrifices to spirit-deitie, *see* offerings to spirit-deities
Sādhyas, 11
Sāgara, 114, 118
Sāgata, 40
"saints," 138
Sakka, 25, 50, 182, 209n61
Sakka Purindada, 95
Śakra, 157, 160, 162, 166–167, 209n61
Śākyamuni: gods in Tuṣita heaven asking future-Buddha to be born as, 69; presentation to Śākyavardhana, 15, 27–28, *29,* 65–67, *66, 67,* 92, 193n96; *yakṣa* Vajrāpaṇi as defender of, 182. *See also* enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā
Śākyavardhana, presentation of Śākyamuni to, 15, 27–28, *29,* 65–67, *66, 67,* 92, 193n96
Salomon, Richard, 13
Samagadhi, 58
Sambhava, 97
Saṃgharakṣita, 132, 135
saṃgha: burial sites associated with *saṃgha,* 33, 43–44, 55–58; Burmese Buddhism, 165–167, 171; China, 147; dead, involvement of monks with tending of, 57, 85–86, 96–103; enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, 105–106, 114, 116–120, 174; hierarchies among monks, 140–142; mediating role of, 10, 15–16, 174; moral authority of, 46; non-funerary sites associated with, 58–62; sectarian distinctions within, 173; shift from royal to popular support, 31–35, 38; *śramaṇas,* role as, 32, 34; *stūpas* for relics of important monks, 135–142; text types explicating popular support for, 35–37
saṃgha and spirit-deities, relationship between, 186–187; adherence to vows, 26, 124–126, 142; appeals of monks to spirit-deities, 122–123; appeals of spirit-deities to monks, 129–130; complexity of, 120, 121–122, 132–133, 141–142; dangers posed by

saṃgha and spirit-deities, relationship between, (continued)
spirit-deities to monks, 122–130; evolving nature of, 84–85; hierarchies between monks and spirit-deities, 55, 79, 81, 126–127; offerings to spirit-deities, 16, 84, 85; possession by spirits, 26, 128–129; rebirth of monks or nuns as spirit-deities, 131–132; spirit-deities as monks or nuns, 50, 130–131; spirit-deities living in monasteries, 129–131; tasks performed by spirit-deities for *saṃgha,* 84
Sāṃkāśya, monks of, 76–77, 81–82, 122
saṃsāra, 115, 117, 150
Saṃyutta Nikāya, 46, 115, 116
Sāñcī: early scholars' views of, 5, 6; public donations, inscriptions indicating, 34; spirit-deity representations at, 76; *stūpas,* 98, 99, 137–140
Sandi, 164
Saṅkārin, 77
sapurisa, 138
Śāriputra, 132, 136–138
Sarkar, H., 28
Sarnath, 32, *176, 177*
Sastri, Hirananda, 7
Sātāgira, 52
Sātagiri, 131
Sātavāhana kings, 33
sattva, 11
Schopen, Gregory, 4, 57, 100
Shin Arahan, 155, 157–159, 161–163, 167
Shingwa, 158
Shinto, 144
Shwe Myet Nihā (Lady Golden Sides), 151, 156
Shwe Nyo Thin, 169, *170*
Shwe Saga, 169, *170*
Shwebyin Naungdaw, 158
Shwebyin Nyidaw, 158
Shwezigon, 149, 158, 160, 167–169, *168, 170*
Singāla Jātaka, 24
Sirimā, 71
Śiva, 18, 26
Smith, V. A., 5
Sobana, 64
Somadeva, 13
Sonārī, 138
sonums, 88
Sora, ancestor worship practices of, 87–88, 89, 90
spirit-deities, pre-Buddhist, 62–68, *63, 64, 65*
spirit-deities and early Buddhism, 185–187; biased aspects of study, 4–8, 9–10, 154–158; cultural basis for spirit religions, 15–20; *devatās vs. pretas,* 94–103; elements offensive to Buddhism, treatment of, 25, 50; elite communities, appeal of spirit religions to, 10, 15–16; expansion of Buddhism outside of India, 143–145; Gayā as site significant to, 106–107, 113, 114, 117–119; ghost and god, spirit-deities falling between, 18–20, 94–103; material culture and texts, discrepancy between, 3–4, 5, 7; scenes depicting spirit-deity worship, 27–30; terminological and classificatory issues, 8–13, 18–20, 94, 95, 189–190n17
spirit-deities' continued importance in later Buddhism, 179–181, 182–185
śrāddha rites, 90, 92, 106–112, 114–115, 203n24
śramaṇas, 32, 34
Śreṇika, 58
standardized iconography, 67–68, 83–84
Stede, William, 12
Stone, Elizabeth Rosen, 83
stones and rocks, deities associated with, 20, 29
"stream-winner," 132
stūpas: funerary, 98–100, *99, 101*; important monks, relics of, 135–142; Lokananda, 149, 169; *nāgas* worshiping at, 144, *145*; Shwezigon, 149, 158, 160, 167–169, *168, 170*; Vajrāpaṇi, 182; votive, 114
Subhada, 71
Sūciloma: Bhārhut, 16–18, *17,* 71, 73; Buddha, conversation with, 3, 16–18, 51, 134; conversion of, 16–18, 51; Gayā, association with, 118; rebirth as spirit-deity, 91, 131
Sudasama, 71, 73
Śuddhāvasā realm, 113
suicides, 41
Sujātā, 107–114. *See also* Nandabala
Śūlapāṇi, 91
Śunga dynasty, 33–34, 38, 45
Sūpavaso, 71
Sutano Jātaka, 47–48
Sutasoma, 52–53
Sutherland, Gail Hinich, 10, 12, 18, 41
Sutta Nipāta, 3, 25, 51, 73, 111, 116
Sykes, W. H., 6

Ta Zaung monasteries, Burma, 149
Takkāriya Jātaka, 69
tamas, 11
Tang Dynasty, 146–147
Tangyi, 169
tantra, 161, 182
Taoism, 145–146, 207n5
Tathāgata, 137
Tathagatha Udāma, 153

Tāvatiṃsa heaven, 149–150
Taxila, 98
Teiser, Stephen F., 146
Temple, Richard, 168
Tepathin, 152
terminological and classificatory issues, 8–13, 18–20, 94, 95, 189–190n17
texts: agreement between material culture and texts, 29–30; Burma, 148; discrepancies between material culture and texts, 3–4, 5, 7; enlightenment of Śākyamuni at Bodh Gayā, accounts of, 107–114; *Jātakas* (*See* specific texts, e.g. *Palāsa Jātaka*); *saṃgha,* types of texts explicating popular support for, 35–37; spirit-religions not producing, 9; Vinaya texts, 106, 135–136. *See also* names of specific texts
Thagya, 153, 157, 160, 161
Thalyaung, 169
thera, 140
Tibet, 144
Tin Thal, 140–141
Tissa, 32
Toba Clan, 147
Trapuṣa, 110
tree deities: Anawrahta, death of, 166; Bhārhut images, *27–28*; *caityas,* 20–24; enlightenment at Bodh Gayā, 112, 113; limitations on powers, 16; Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) object, 28–29, 63–64; physical features, spirit-deities associated with, 9; *saṃgha,* monks, and spirit-deities, 129–130; *Sutano Jātaka,* 48
Triḍaṇḍaka, 129
Tuṣita heaven, 69, 153
Tuywin, 169

udakarakśa? (dakarakkha), 12, 191n40
Udena, 61
umbrellas *(chattras),* 20, *139,* 139–140
Upagupta, 40, 45, 119
Upaniṣads, 9, 44
upāsaka, 32
upoṣana, 130–131
urban locations for spirit-deities, 14
Uruvelā, 107, 108

Vāchi-Suvijayita, 138
Vaddamanu, 56, 100
Vairaṭṭasiṃha, 56
Vajapi, 71
Vajji shrines, 15, 92
Vajrāpaṇi, 173, 182–183
Vajrāyāna, 182
Varāhadeva, 76
Vāyu Purāna, 106, 107
Vedas, 9, 11, 13
vedikā rails, 20, 27, 68, 81, 118
Vedism, *see* Brahmans and Brahmanism
Vessavana, 48, 122–123. *See also* Kubera
Vetālapañcavinśati, 105
vetālas, 10
Vidhurapaṇdita Jātaka, 48–49, 71
Vidiśā, 62, 67
vidyādharas, 10, 41, 71
Vidyutprabhā, 24
village religion, spirit religions defined as, 14, 15, 18
Vimalaprabha, 113
Vimānavatthu, 97
Vinaya texts, 106, 135–136. *See also* specific texts
Vipula, 58
Virudako, 71
Viṣṇu, 42, 156, 161
Vītaśoka, 32
Vossion, Louis, 154
vṛkṣadevatā (rukkhadevatās), 10
Vyaggha Jātaka, 69
Vyantara gods, 10–11

water, deities associated with bodies or sources of, 9, 16
Western historiography, 4–8, 9–10, 154–158
wide-eyed gaze of *yakṣa* statues, 63
worship of spirit-deities, scenes depicting, 27–30, *28, 29,* 65–67, *66, 67*

Xuanzang: hierarchies among monks, 141; monasteries built over sites associated with spirit-deities, 61; Vajrāpaṇi *stūpa,* 182

yakkhas, see yakṣas
yakṣa-graha, 25
yakṣa tīrthas, see caityas
yakṣas: Bhārhut representations, 71; bodhisattvas and, 179, 181–183; Buddhist monasteries associated with spirit-deity sites, 61; conversion tales (*see* conversion of spirit-deities); Coomaraswamy's work on, 7–8; dangers to monks from, 123–124; the dead, relationship to, 91; earliest Indian freestanding sculptures, 20, *21, 22*; Gayā region, 118; Jakkulas claiming descent from, 91; Māra as, 116; material culture and texts, discrepancy between, 4; Pitalkhorā, 77, *78*; pre-Buddhist physical evidence of spirit-deity worship, 62–68, *63–67*; Pūrṇaka narrative at Bhārhut, 69, 71; reincarnation of the dead and ancestor worship, 91–94;

yakṣas: Bhārhut representations, (*continued*) royal dynasties, association with, 14–15; *saṃgha,* association with, 16; terminological and classificatory issues, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *See also* specific names
Yijing (I-tsing): Hāritī images, 83, 204n1; monks leaving food offerings for spirit-deities, 16, 85; relationship of monks to spirit-deities, 31, 122; source of information, treatment as, 37; Upavasatha-day ceremony, 147

Zimmer, Heinrich, 92