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The Pratityasamutpādagāthā and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics*

by Daniel Boucher

I. Introduction

Over the past one hundred and fifty years, thousands of clay seals, miniature stūpas, and images inscribed with the famous “Buddhist creed” (the ye dhamā hetuprabhavā... verse) have been excavated from sacred sites throughout the Buddhist world. The quantity and ubiquity of the finds has led Simon Lawson to state recently: “From late in the Gupta period until the end of the Pala period, this verse was what drove Buddhism.”¹ There has yet to be, however, a satisfactory explanation of the role of this verse in Buddhist cult practice. This paper is an attempt to address part of the problem—to explore both the literary and archeological milieu surrounding the use of this verse during the early medieval period (ca. 600-1200 C.E.). My efforts will be directed at tracing the early developments that may have inspired the use of this verse epitome of the pratityasamutpāda and its connection to consecrating stūpas as an alternative relic of the Buddha. More importantly, we may also be able to gain a clearer sense of one of the ongoing struggles within the Buddhist tradition: to maintain the presence of the all-too-absent Buddha.

The Buddhist tradition has since the death of the Buddha, or perhaps more precisely, because of the death of the Buddha, wrestled between two tendencies: to locate the Buddha in his corporeal body, especially as left behind in his relics; or to locate the “true” Buddha in the dharma, his teachings. This dichotomy manifested itself in two directions: the cult of the stūpa, which venerated the physical remains of the Buddha;² and the equation of the Buddha and his teaching in such pas-
sages as *Samyutta-Nikāya* III, 120, where the Buddha states: “He who sees the dhamma, Vakkali, sees me; he who sees me, sees the dhamma.”

As a corollary to this equation, the Pāli sources also identified the *paticcasamuppāda* (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*) with the dhamma. Since the “discovery” of the *pratītyasamutpāda* is intimately connected to the Buddha's enlightenment and therefore who he was as Buddha, it is not surprising to find it exalted as the premier dharma, the teaching par excellence. This doctrine has been taken as the very essence of the Buddha's teaching, the source of his Buddhahood, and has accordingly been expressed in a variety of ways in Buddhist canonical texts.

The intimate connection between the Buddha and the *pratītyasamutpāda* was taken up again in the *Śālistambasūtra*, a canonical reflection on the chain of causation known from Chinese translations to date to at least the third century C.E.

The bodhisattva Maitreya says to Śāriputra:

> He, monks, who sees the *pratītyasamutpāda* sees the dharma; he who sees the dharma sees the Buddha.

Then, he glosses this equation as follows:

> How does one see the *pratītyasamutpāda* there (i.e., in this verse)? The Blessed One has spoken on this matter: “He who sees this *pratītyasamutpāda*, which is eternal, [lifeless], without the life-essence, as it should be, auspicious, unborn, not become, unmade, uncompounded, unobstructed, unsupported, propitious, fearless, unseizable, undecaying, with unending self-nature—he sees the dharma. And he who likewise sees the dharma, which is eternal, [lifeless], without life-essence... and with unending self-nature, he sees the Buddha, whose body is the most excellent dharma, by attaining through right knowledge to the direct understanding of the noble dharma.

Early Mahāyāna literature repeatedly identified the dharma as the true body of the Buddha. By extension, therefore, a discourse on the Buddha's dharma (*dhammapāryāya*) would equal if not surpass the Buddha's physical body, especially as left behind in his relics. This equation found its fullest practical expression in the cult of the book, an early Mahāyāna adapta-
tion for establishing new cultic centers vis-à-vis the stūpa/relic cult. Briefly stated, the Mahāyāna sūtras reinforced their cultic innovation by consciously identifying the loci of their written dharmaparyāya with the well established pilgrimage site of Bodh-Gayā, the seat of the Buddha's enlightenment (bodhimanda). We find, for example, at AsP 28:

Furthermore, Kauśīka, just as those men or ghosts who have gone to the seat of enlightenment (bodhimanda), or to the vicinity of the seat of enlightenment, or to its interior, or have gone to the foot of the Bodhi tree itself, they accordingly cannot be harmed by men or ghosts, even with the help of evil animals, or be injured or taken possession of by them, except as a result of former deeds. Why? Because there the future, past, and present tathāgatas, arhats, [etc.] achieve enlightenment... In the same way, Kauśīka, where a son or daughter of good family will set up, preserve, [etc.] this perfection of wisdom, there, Kauśīka, beings cannot be harmed, [etc.] by men or ghosts except as a result of former deeds. Why? Because by this perfection of wisdom, Kauśīka, this spot of ground is made a true shrine (caityabhūta) for all beings, and is to be honored, worshipped...

In a concrete sense, the bodhimanda is the seat under the tree at Bodh-Gayā where Siddhārtha Gautama attained enlightenment and became the Buddha. It is to this seat, an established pilgrimage site, that the loci of the dharmaparyāya are equated. Simultaneously, in a more figurative sense, the bodhimanda is the source or essence (manda) of that experience under the Bodhi tree. It represents what Lamotte has called the “présence toute spirituelle de la Loi ou du dharmakāya des Buddha, et ceci indépendamment de toute localisation matérielle." A spot, therefore, where the dharmaparyāya is set up, recited, etc., is a true shrine (caityabhūta) because there the enlightenment experience of the past, present, and future buddhas is made present. Such a spot contains the quintessence of the Buddha himself and thus has no need of relics:

Why? There the body of the Tathāgata is deposited in its totality. At which spot of earth this dharmaparyāya would be declared, or taught, or recited, or chanted in chorus, or written, or having been written, would be set up in a book—at that stūpa,
honor, reverence, worship, and homage should be done... And furthermore, Bhaiṣajyarakṣa, all beings who would succeed in praising, worshipping, or seeing this tathāgata-caitya, they all, Bhaiṣajyarakṣa, are to be known as ones who come near to the most excellent, perfect enlightenment.\textsuperscript{14}

Parallelizing this link between dharma-text and the bodhimanda in the Mahāyāna literature is the appearance of reliquary inscriptions of the pratītyasamutpāda formula. From at least the second century C.E., inscriptions of a short sūtra detailing the pratītyasamutpāda were etched on relic caskets and other objects deposited inside stūpas in India and Central Asia. The earliest known archeological evidence of this practice is a Kharoṣṭhī inscription from the Kurram Valley in Peshawar. It was discovered on a copper relic casket “shaped like a miniature stūpa with harmikā and umbrellas, all complete.”\textsuperscript{15} This stūpa not only housed the Buddha’s bodily remains, but was simultaneously vitalized in some sense with the “remains” of his enlightenment experience:

Anno, 20, the 20. day of the month Avadunaka, at this instant Śvedavarman, the son of Yaśa, deposits a relic of the Adorable Sakyamuni in the relic stupa (erected by King M…) the property of the Sarvastivada teachers—as it has been said by the Adorable one: contingent on ignorance (are) the forces, contingent on the forces perception, contingent on perception name and form, contingent on name and form the six senses, contingent on the six senses contact, contingent on contact sensation, contingent on sensation thirst, contingent on thirst grasping, contingent on grasping existence, contingent on existence birth, contingent on birth age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, downcastness and despair. Such is the origin of this entire mass of misery—in honour of all beings. And this contingent origination [paticasamupada (sic)] has been written by Mahiphatika in honour of all beings.\textsuperscript{16}

Similar finds include the Devnimori relic casket inscriptions,\textsuperscript{17} the Kasia copper plate,\textsuperscript{18} the Gopalpur bricks,\textsuperscript{19} two important brick finds from Nālandā,\textsuperscript{20} a slab from Ratnagiri,\textsuperscript{21} as well as instances of the pratītyasamutpāda formula engraved on the base of miniature stūpas at Tun-huang.\textsuperscript{22}
In terms of Buddhist practice then, the cult of the book in early Mahāyāna consolidated the identification of the Buddha and the dharma by linking the locus of their written sūtras to the well established and popular pilgrimage center at Bodh-Gayā, where the Buddha was thought to be in some sense still present. The reliquary inscriptions of the pratityasamutpāda indicate a parallel attempt to appropriate the enlightenment experience of the Buddha—his cognizance of the chain of causation—into the stūpa cult that venerated his corporeal remains. Thus we see developing a dialectic between what could be described, for lack of better words, as the concrete and abstract modes of defining and locating the Buddha.  

By the late Gupta period (ca. 6th–7th cent. C.E.), the tradition of locating the Buddha in his concrete presence—at sites housing his bodily remains or at the bodhimanda where he attained enlightenment—and the tradition that identified him with his dharma most essentially embodied in the pratityasamutpāda became completely synthesized. After the sixth century, when the reliquary inscriptions of the pratityasamutpāda formula appear to end in the archeological record, we begin to find deposited in stūpas clay tablets and miniature stūpas inscribed or stamped with the verse epitome of the pratityasamutpāda (ye dhamā hetuprabhavā...). This four-line verse has been rather matter-of-factly regarded as some form of Buddhist “creed.” The function of this much-neglected verse and the complex of ideas surrounding it will be the focus of the remainder of this paper.

II. The Verse and Its Function

The verse itself is quite simple. It is composed in the āryā meter and occurs canonically in the famous conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna. These two brahmācārins, disciples of the mendicant Sañjaya, were unable to attain the deathless state. Sāriputta, having seen Assaji (one of the Buddha's five initial disciples) wandering in Rājagaha for almsfood, approached him to inquire who his teacher was and what dhamma he professed. Assaji replied:
Now I, dear Sir, am new [i.e., newly ordained], not long on the renunciant’s path, a newcomer to this dhamma and vinaya. I am not able to teach you the dhamma in detail. But I will tell you its essence (attha) concisely.

Sāriputta, satisfied with a gist of the dhamma, implored Assaji to instruct him. Assaji consented by uttering this dhamma-pariyāya (short exposition of the dhamma):

_{ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesām hetum tathāgato_}
_{āha tesāṃ ca yo nirodho evamvādī mahāsamaṇo 'ti._

Those dhammas which arise from a cause
The Tathāgata has declared their cause
And that which is the cessation of them.
Thus the great renunciant has taught.

Having acquired the “stainless eye of wisdom” through the hearing of this verse, Sāriputta conveyed this discourse to his fellow wayfarer Moggallana, to whom he repeated this formula of the dhamma.

Although relatively insignificant from a literary point of view, this verse appeared on clay seals and miniature stūpas virtually everywhere in the Indian Buddhist world during the medieval period (ca. 600–1200 CE). These clay balls, often regarded as among the most trivial of finds from Buddhist sites, functioned in many cases as far more than mementos. Because it would be impossible to consider every inscriptional instance of this verse in all its contexts, I will focus on those better reported finds for which the archeological context of the discovery is known. Only then can we get a sense of the import of this verse and its place in a history of Indian Buddhist cult practice.

Thousands of small clay seals inscribed with the _ye dhammā_... verse have been excavated from various stūpa sites—often from within the relic chamber itself. Many of these relic-seals are simple and unadorned, bearing only this verse. Such examples would include many from Kasia, Sārnāth, Bodh-Gayā, Ratnagiri, Lauriya-Nandangarh, Nālandā, Valabhi, Gaznī, and Mainamati to name just a few. Others, however, are stamped with specific representations. For exam-
ple, Alexander Cunningham unearthed from the ruined stūpas at Bodh-Gaiā several burnt clay seals only a few inches in diameter. In the center is the Buddha seated on the vajrāsana (diamond throne) in bhūmisparśamudrā, the posture of his enlightenment.36 Above the niche in which the Buddha sits is a straight-sided tower surmounted by an āmalaka, depicting the famous temple at Bodh-Gaiā. Branches of the Bodhi tree emanate from the top; small stūpas, found in abundance at Bodh-Gaiā, flank the niche. Below is etched the ye dharmā...verse in medieval characters.37 These seals, in effect, juxtapose both senses of the bodhimaṇḍa: they depict the enlightenment site at Bodh-Gaiā as well as the essence of the experience at that site. Furthermore, they are intentionally placed within repositories traditionally associated with the corporeal remains of the Buddha. Other tablets like these have been found at Sārnāth,38 Rājāḍīḍāṅgā,39 Sānci,40 Ratnagiri,41 Kasia,42 and in Sind,43 Burma44 and Thailand.45

Clay seals inscribed with the pratītyasamutpādagāthā were also frequently inserted into miniature clay stūpas, which in turn consecrated larger stūpas. Hsüan-tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who traveled throughout the Indian subcontinent in the seventh century, observed this practice in Magadha:

There is a practice in India of making incense powder into paste to make small stūpas 5 or 6 inches high. People write [pieces of] scripture and place them into the interior [of these small stūpas]. They call these dharmāśaṅkā. When a number [of these small stūpas] are greatly heaped up, they erect a large stūpa and gather them into its interior, constantly doing pūjā to it. This then is the practice of Jayasena: with his mouth he proclaimed the wonderful dharma, instructing his students in it, while with his hand, he made stūpas and acquired great merit by venerating them.... In 30 years he made altogether seven koṭis of dharmāśaṅkā-stūpas. Everytime he completed one koṭi, he erected a large stūpa, collected them into its interior, and performed copious homage to it.46

The archeological evidence is equally abundant. Miniature stūpas of baked clay, often only 2 or 3 inches high, were found en masse inside of stūpa no. 40 at Sārnāth:
Inside the *stūpa* near the bottom is inserted a little tablet with the Buddhist creed as is proved by other *stūpas* of this type which were found in a broken condition. The *stūpa* dates from about the 10th century A.D. Such *stūpas* were made in India in abundance in the time of Hsuan Tsang, and were called *dharma-śarīra*. That such *stūpas* were frequently built into larger ones is shown by the fact that the core of *stūpa* No. 40 to the north-east of the Main Shrine at Sārnāth was, in the main, constructed of *stūpas* of unbaked clay.47

Cunningham also discovered such clay *stūpas* at Bodh-Gaya: “Scores, and sometimes even hundreds, of these miniature *stūpas* were found inside of these larger *stūpas*, enclosing small clay seals.”48 Similar relics were excavated from Rājagṛha,49 Pāhārpur,50 Harwan (Kashmir),51 Čaznī,52 Mainamati,53 and Gilgit.54

Besides the plethora of archeological remains, there is also a short *sūtra* preserved in Chinese that specifically enjoins the practice of depositing the *ye dharmā…gāthā* inside *stūpas*. Divākara’s seventh century translation of the *Sūtra on the Merit of Building a Stūpa Spoken by the Buddha*55 articulates what was understood to be the nature and function of this verse at a time roughly contemporaneous with its appearance in the epigraphical record. Because the text is little known and since there is no known extant Sanskrit version,56 I will provide a complete translation below:

Translated by the Central Indian Tripiṭaka master of the T’ang dynasty, Divākara, whose name means in Chinese, the “Day Illuminator.”57

Thus have I heard at one time.58 The Buddha was in the heaven of the thirty-three *devas* on a pure jade seat, together with an immeasurable assembly of great *bhikṣus*, *bodhisattvas*, as well as the lord of the *devas*, Indra. At that time Brahmā, Nārāyaṇa-deva, Mahēśvara and the five *gandharva* kings, each with his retinue, came to where the Buddha was. They desired to ask the Tathāgata the method of building a *stūpa* and the amount of merit that would be produced by the *stūpa*.

In the midst of this assembly, there was a *bodhisattva* named Avalokiteśvara, who, knowing their wishes, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, and placed his right knee on
the ground. With palms together in salutation, he faced the Buddha and made this statement: “World-Honored One, the reason that these gods, gandharvas, and others have come here today is that they desire to request of the Tathāgata the method of building a stūpa and the amount of merit that would be produced by this stūpa. I only desire that the World-Honored One expound this for them, benefitting all the innumerable beings.”

At that time the World-Honored One explained to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara: “Noble son, among the heavenly beings present here and all the living beings of future generations, whoever is able to erect a stūpa wherever there is a place without one—whether its form be so exalted marvelously as to surpass the triloka or so extremely small as an āmalaka fruit; whether its mast ascends to the brahma heaven or is as extremely small as a needle; whether its parasol covers the great chiliocosm or is extremely small like a jujube leaf—and if inside this stūpa one encloses the [body of the] Tathāgata down to even one minute portion of his relics, hair, teeth, beard, or fingernails; or else if one deposits the twelve section scripture, which is the storehouse of the Tathāgata’s dharma, down to even one four line verse, this person’s merit will be as great as the brahma heaven. At the end of his life, he will be born in the brahma-loka. When his long life reaches its end in that realm, he will be born in the five pure abodes; there he will be no different than the gods. Noble son, of such matters have I spoken—the magnitude of these stūpas and the cause of their merit. You and all the heavenly beings should study and observe this.

At that time the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara once again addressed the Buddha, saying: “World-Honored One, I have accepted and upheld what you have just taught concerning the installing of relics or scriptures in the stūpa. But I do not understand the meaning of the four line (verse) of the Tathāgata. I only wish that this could be separately explained for me.”

At that time the World-Honored One uttered this verse:

All dharmas arise from a cause.
I have explained this cause.
When the cause is exhausted, there is cessation.
I have produced such a teaching.

“Noble son, this verse signifies the Buddha-dharmakāya. You should write [this verse] and place it inside the stūpa. Why? Because all causes and the dharma-nature of all things that are
produced are empty. This is the reason that I call it the dharma-
kāya. If a living being understood the import of such causes,
you should know that this person would then see the Buddha.

At that time, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the whole
multitude of heavenly beings, gandharvas, and so forth heard
what the Buddha taught. All were greatly delighted to faithfully
receive and carry out the Sūtra on the Merit of Building a Stūpa.

Several issues with regard to the medieval understanding
of the verse are raised here. First of all, this sūtra makes it clear
that the bodily relics of the Buddha and the ye dharmā...
verse were interchangeable—either may consecrate a stūpa. The extensive
archeological evidence as well as eyewitness accounts
more than confirm this.

Secondly, the ye dharmā...
verse is identified here with the
dharmakāya “because all causes and the dharma-nature of all
things that are produced are empty.” This equation of the verse
epitome of the pratityasamutpāda and the Mahāyāna doctrine of
śūnyatā can be traced back to Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakā-
karikās:

yah pratītyasamutpādāḥ śūnyatām tām pracaṅkṣmahe
sā praṛṇāptir upādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā.

That which is the pratītyasamutpāda, we call it emptiness. This
[śūnyatā] is a provisional term; it is indeed the middle path.63

In the eighth century, Haribhadra, the famous commen-
tator on the Aṣṭasāhasrikā, understood a similar connection
between the Mahāyāna notion of emptiness and the pratītya-
samutpādagāthā. In his gloss of the word “caityabhūta” at AsP 28,
Haribhadra elucidates the medieval conception of a “true
shrine”:

Caityabhūta: According to some, caityabhūta is this piece of
ground in so far as it is equal to other caityas because by its wor-
ship and the like it causes the accumulation of merit, and
because of the use of the word “bhūta” which signifies a simile,
as pitrabhūta means “like a father” (piteva). Candragomī explains:
Where a piece of ground is consecrated by the verse “ye dharmā hetu-
prabhavā and so on” which manifests the doctrine of the vacuity of the
self, a stūpa is considered to be; there furnished with the setting up and the like of the perfection of wisdom (lit. the mother⁶⁴), which illuminates the doctrine of the non-existence of self-nature in all things, a stūpa does indeed exist in its entirety. Consequently, caityabhūta is a true shrine in the sense of having the same nature as one, as a sākṣībhūta is a “true witness” (sākṣyeva).⁶⁵

Thus a spot that is made a true shrine (caityabhūta) by the presence of the prajñāpāramitā—which illuminates the doctrine of the non-existence of self-nature in all things—is equivalent to a stūpa supported by the pratītyasamutpādagāthā, which manifests that doctrine. That is to say, the spot consecrated with the perfection of wisdom was equivalent to what was obviously recognized in Haribhadra’s time as a true shrine: a stūpa infused with the dharma-verse relic of the Buddha.

Finally, one who understands this verse on causation can be said to “see the Buddha.” This linking up of the pratītyasamutpādagāthā, the dharmakāya, and “seeing the Buddha” echoes the very same relationship we saw earlier in the Śālistambasūtra. If the connections seem a bit subtle in Divākara’s translation, they are unmistakably clear in the Ārya-pratītyasamutpādanāma-mahāyānasūtra:

Then the Blessed One spoke the pratītyasamutpāda verse:

Those dharmas which arise from a cause
The Tathāgata has declared their cause.
And that which is the cessation of them,
Thus the great renunciant has taught.

As for this, Avalokiteśvara, this pratītyasamutpāda is the dharmakāya of the Tathāgatas. He who sees the pratītyasamutpāda, sees the Tathāgata.⁶⁶

The use of the ye dharma...verse-relic would appear therefore to represent a move toward complete synthesis of the relic/dharma dichotomy stemming essentially from the death of the Buddha.⁶⁷ The early Mahāyāna sūtras, while appreciating the importance and popularity of the relic/stūpa cult, attempted to establish alternative cultic sites centered around the written dharma. By setting the new books up as the true source of the
Buddha’s enlightenment, they were able to link their cultic innovation to the established pilgrimage site of Bodh-Gaya, the seat of enlightenment for all buddhas. The reliquary inscriptions of the pratītyasamutpāda formula demonstrate a parallel attempt to infuse the stūpa cult with what had long been recognized as the central achievement of the Buddha’s enlightenment experience—the sine qua non of his Buddhahood.

The medieval shift to the ye dharmā...verse transformed dharma into relic. Unlike the sacralization of the written word in early Mahāyāna, the use of the pratītyasamutpādagāthā took over the institutional context of the relic cult, the stūpa. It borrowed the already recognized cultic import of the pratītyasamutpāda and reduced it to its essence. It is this essence, expressed in a four line verse, that manifests the Buddha’s “true body,” his dharmakāya. It effected in a sense a redefinition of what constituted a “piece” of who or what the historical Buddha was, and therefore how he was to be located and maintained at cultic centers.

The pratītyasamutpādagāthā has also been found in a decidedly Tantric context outside of India proper and generally later than the bulk of our evidence (after the ninth century). Giuseppe Tucci personally collected hundreds of clay seals from Tibet and the surrounding Himalaya region inscribed with the ye dharmā...verse in both Indian and Tibetan scripts. Many of the seals are also inscribed with dhāraṇīs or contain Tantric iconographical features. Several are of the mold we saw so frequently at Bodh-Gaya and Sārnāth:

The Buddha, dressed in monk’s robes, is seated in the vajrapāryaṅka on the throne, bodhimanda. His left hand is in the pose of meditation, dhyāna-mudrā, and the right touches the earth invoked as witness to the conquest of truth, in the pose of bhumisparsa-mudrā...Traces of inscription in Indian characters of the IX-X century. Below...hy avadat tesām ca yo nirodha, i.e. the usual formula....The tsha-tsha is very similar to those found in Bodhgaya, published by Cunningham and spread somehow everywhere in India.68

Walter Liebenthal has published several brick inscriptions from Yunnan (South China) in which the ye dharmā...verse is sandwiched among dhāraṇīs. The gāthā were written in a
medieval brāhmī script that came to China with Tantra and "was reserved strictly for the purpose of copying dhāranīs." Although these inscriptions do not occur on the clay seals that we are accustomed to seeing, their context is unmistakably similar: "The bricks are found inside the walls of pagodas. They cannot be seen from the outside, becoming visible only if the building is in decay and parts of it are tumbling down. They were used instead of a relic (she-li, a Sanskrit sarīra) or as a spiritual relic." 

In later Tantric literature, the consecrating power of the ye dharmā...gāthā is adapted to specific Tantric rituals. In the Adi-karmapradīpa, we find it used to consecrate miniature stūpas:

OM! Homage to the Blessed One, the radiant king of the sun, the tathāgata, arhat, perfectly enlightened one. OM! subtle, unequalled, calm, subdued, unobstructed, independent—rescue us! Famous, mighty, possessed of undisturbed nirvāṇa, empowered by the empowerment of all Buddhas—SVĀHĀ! One should make a caitya by reciting this dhārani twenty-one times over a lump of clay or a lump of earth. As many atoms as there are in that clay (or earth), that many kōtis of caityas will be made. Furthermore, one should consecrate it with the verse:

Those dharmaḥ which arise from a cause
The Tathāgata has declared their cause.
And that which is the cessation of them
Thus the great renunciant has taught.71

Besides the widespread appearance of the ye dharmā...verse on clay seals and miniature stūpas, images were frequently inscribed or stamped with this verse. For example, the Adikarmapradīpa just cited specifies that after making the small shrine of earth and paying homage to it, "Then the disciple makes the small reliquary mound into an image for worship with the ritual of smiting, that the shrine may open and reveal the Buddhahood within...." Also, a short sūtra translated into Chinese by the T'ang monk Yi Ching in 710 gives an account of the making of miniature stūpas and images and infusing them with the ye dharmā...gāthā. The relevant part of this Sūtra on the Merit of Bathing the Buddha has the Buddha declare:
Noble son, all Buddhas, World-Honored Ones have three bodies. They are known as the dharmakāya, the sambhogakāya, and the nirmānakāya. After my nirvāṇa, whoever wishes to do homage to these three bodies, should do homage to my relics. But there are two kinds: the first is the bodily relic; the second is the dharma-verse relic. I will now recite the verse:

All dharmas arise from a cause.  
The Tathāgata has explained their cause.  
The cessation of the cause of these dharmas  
This the great śramaṇa has explained.

"If men, women, or the five groups of mendicants would build an image of the Buddha; or if those without strength would deposit one as large as a grain of barley; or build a stūpa—its body the size of a jujube, its mast the size of a needle, its parasol equal to a flake of bran, its relic like a mustard seed, or if someone writes the dharma-verse and installs it inside the stūpa, it would be like doing homage by offering up a rare jewel. If in accordance with one's own strength and ability one can be truly sincere and respectful, it [the image or stūpa] would be like my actual body, equal without any difference.”

It appears that images and miniature stūpas, once consecrated with the ye dharma...verse, were in some way interchangeable. Yi Ching’s translation and travel account suggest that both images and miniature stūpas are to be infused with the “formula on causation” and that both may receive the bathing of the Buddha ritual. In the Tibetan context, Tucci has attempted to trace the word tsha-tsha (which can be in the form of seals or stūpas) to a Prākrit sacchāya or sacchāha, meaning perfect image or representation. Furthermore, we have a short text from the Gilgit manuscripts that, after enumerating the various substances of which an image of the Buddha can be made, states: buddha-pratimā karaṇīyakā vā dīrghaka vā hrasiukām vā sadhātukam vā sapratityasamutpādam vā (“images of the Buddha should be made either tall or short and with either a relic or with the pratityasamutpāda”).

The archeological evidence for image inscriptions of the ye dharma...verse is likewise abundant. There is, however, one find that deserves special mention. Inside stūpa no. 8 at Saheṭh-
Maheth, usually identified as the ancient Sravasti, a broken pedestal with only the legs of a bodhisattva figure was discovered. The pedestal contains a three line inscription datable on paleographical grounds to the early Kuśāna period (ca. first century C.E.). The fourth line contains the so-called Buddhist creed “added several centuries after the original record was carved.” The language is Sanskrit, incorrectly composed, and in characters datable to the eighth or ninth centuries. It would appear that someone, having only a piece of an ancient image, understood that even this piece, if inscribed with the pratīyāsamutpādagāthā, would sacralize a stūpa in a way that the image alone would not.

III. Conclusion

Given the wealth of evidence that the ye dharmā...verse sacralized stūpas with what was perceived to be a relic of the Buddha, it is very difficult to take this verse as a “Buddhist creed” as has been so commonly done. A creed is generally regarded as a statement of religious belief, a confession of faith, such as the Nicene Creed or the Apostles’ Creed. If Assaji’s instruction of the essence of the Buddha’s dhamma to Sāriputta was meant to serve as a confession of faith—and we have no reason to believe that it was—it is certain that this was not how the verse functioned in the medieval period when it began to appear in inscriptions. In fact, much of the epigraphical evidence suggests that this so-called creed was frequently inscribed by “someone who did not know what he was writing.” The ye dharmā...verse had become more than an epitome of the Buddha’s enlightenment. It became a manifestation of the Buddha’s real presence at cultic centers—what Bénisti has called “le principe vivant”—in the same way as relics were thought to infuse the living presence of the Buddha in stūpas.

This early medieval development may thus help us examine a more fundamental problem in Indian Buddhism. Unlike Hindu gods and gurus, who are physically present for devotional contact, and the Jain tīrthaṅkara Mahāvira who is wholly absent to his followers, the Buddha was both absent and present. On the one hand, Buddhists took his parinirvāṇa
literally. They located the “true” Buddha in his dharma, which led to the developments in Abhidharma and later Mahāyāna speculation on the bodies of Buddha. But they also tried to represent him—to regain physical contact with him via his bodily remains, sacred sites, and images.82 While we have no reason to believe that a seventh-century Buddhist incorporated or even understood all of these developments when he or she stamped clay tablets with the ye dharma...verse, by transforming the notion of Buddha-as-dharma into relic, medieval Buddhists were able to harmonize the impulse to fix the Buddha in real time and space with the long established scholastic definitions that, apparently, could not be ignored. This dialectic could have important implications for our understanding of the entire historical development of the conceptions of the Buddha. However, much more work remains to be done.

NOTES

Abbreviations:
ASIAR—Archeological Survey of India, Annual Report
AśP—Aśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra (P. L. Vaidya, ed., Darbhanga, 1960)
BEFEO—Bulletin de l’École Francaise d’Extrême-Orient
BSOAS—Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
EI—Epigraphia India
JAOS—Journal of the American Oriental Society
JIABS—Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies
JRAS—Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society
PTS—Pali Text Society
Skt.—Sanskrit
SN—Samyutta-Nikāya (PTS)
SP—Saddharmapundarikāsūtra (Kern and Nanjio, ed., St. Petersburg, 1912)
Vaj—Vājracchedikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra (Conze, ed., Rome, 1957)

*I would like at this point to extend my profound gratitude to Dr. Gregory Schopen who provided critical advice during the early stages of research on this project. I should also thank Drs. Ludo Rocher and Victor Mair for their careful readings of an earlier draft of this paper; their comments were invaluable.


2. For a discussion of this cult, see André Bareau, “La construction et le culte des stūpa d’après les Vinayapiṭaka,” BEFEO 50 (1962): 229-274; also, a short but worthwhile paper by David L. Snellgrove, “Śākyamuni’s Final Nirvāṇa,” BSOAS 36 (1973): 399-411. More recently, Sugimoto Takushū has
contributed a large monograph on the cult of the stūpa in Japanese; *Indo butō no kenkyū: butō sūhai no seisei to kiban* [Studies in the Buddhist Stūpa-Cult in India] (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1984).


4. *Majjhima-Nikāya* (PTS) I, p. 190–91: *yo paṭiccasamuppādam passati so dhammam passati, yo dhammam passati so paṭiccasamuppādam passati... (“He who sees the paṭiccasamuppāda sees the dhamma; he who sees the dhamma sees the paṭiccasamuppāda...”).*


6. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *Bouddhisme, Études et Matériaux: Théorie des Douze Causes*, (Gand: Luzac & Co., 1913), p. 69. De La Vallée Poussin notes here that although the Tibetan version labels this a Mahāyāna sūtra, beside the fact that it is promulgated by the bodhisattva Maitreya, there is nothing distinctively Mahāyāna about it. In fact the *Sālistamba* is cited by Yasomitra, an eighth century Sautrāntika commentator.


9. There are many such references in Mahāyāna sūtra literature. See for example *Vaj 26a–b,* *Samādhīrajāśūtra* in K. Régamey, *Three Chapters from the Samādhi-rāja-sūtra* (Warsaw, 1938) 51 and 58; *Swarna-nābha-sottamasūtra* (J. Nobel ed., Leipzig, 1937) 18; among the many references in the *Lotus Sūtra* that equate the written dharma with the Tathāgata, see especially *SP* 227, 231, 338, 344. While there are five references to the *dharmakāya* in the *AsP* (Vaidya ed. 48, 50, 168, 228, 253), the earliest Chinese translations omit all occurrences but one. In Lokakṣema’s second century translation (*Taishō* 224; vol. 8, 468c18), the term *dharmakāya* is rendered as “body of the Buddha’s sūtras” (“jo ching shen”). See Lewis R. Lancaster, “The Oldest Mahāyāna Sūtra: Its Significance for the Study of Buddhist Development,” *The Eastern Buddhist* n.s. 8, no. 1 (May 1975): 30–41. I should note, however, that Lancaster’s conclusions with regard to the earliest Mahāyāna conceptions of the Buddha are probably somewhat prema-
ture. I am currently engaged in a project to investigate the earliest conception of the dharmkāya on the basis of a broader range of early Chinese translations of Mahāyāna sūtras.


11. The importance of Bodh-Gayā as a sacred site is well known. In the Mahāparinibbānasutta it is one of the four sites the Buddha tells Ananda is to be visited after his death. A preoccupation with Bodh-Gayā continued throughout the history of Indian Buddhism. In the Mahāparinibbānasutta (ca. 5th cent. C.E.) the Bodhi tree is worshipped in a manner proper to worship of the Buddha himself (Geiger, trans., pp. 122–35). Epigraphical evidence suggests that Bodh-Gayā continued as a site of great importance through the 15th c. by Buddhists outside of India: “No one can read through the inscriptions of Burma and Siam without being struck by the immense veneration in which the holy land of Buddhism was held—the Majjhima-desa, where the Great Events of the Buddha’s career took place, and especially Bodhgaya, the scene of the Enlightenment, with its Mahābodhi tree and its Vajrāsana, the centre of the universe” [A.B. Griswold, “The Holy Land Transported: Replicas of the Mahābodhi Shrine in Siam and Elsewhere,” in Paranavitana Felicitation Volume (Colombo, 1965), p. 173]. For a recent monograph that discusses the complex and often confused history of Bodh-Gayā, see Janice Leoshko, ed., Bodhgaya: the Site of Enlightenment (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988).

12. punar aparāṇam Kausika tad yathāpi nāma ye bodhimaṇḍagataḥ vod bodhimaṇḍapa-risāmamanta-gatāḥ vā bodhimaṇḍābhyaṁantaragatāḥ vā bodhikaṇḍamulagatāḥ vā manuṣyāḥ vā ānūṣyāḥ vā tiryagyoni-gatān apya upādāya yāvan na te sākhyā manuṣyayā vā ānūṣyayā vā viheśayitum vā vyāpādayitum vā āvesāyitum vā sthāpayitum vā pūrva-karmavipākam. tat kasya hetoh? tatra hi atītānāgatapratyuyāpānas tathāgataḥ arhantaḥ... abhisambudhyante ca... evam eva Kausika yatra kula-putra vā kuladuḥhitā vā imām praṇāpāramītām udgṛhiyati dhāraṇīyati... tatra hi Kausika sattvaḥ na sākhyā manuṣyā vā ānūṣyā vā viheśayitum... sthāpayitum vā pūrva-karmavipākam. tat kasya hetoh? anyāayāhi hi Kausika praṇāpāramītāyaḥ prthi-pradaśeḥ sattvānām caityabhūtaḥ kṛṣṇo vandantiyo mānāniyāḥ... See also SP 340 and 391; Vaj 8; AsP 228; Schopen has discussed this phenomenon in greater detail, op. cit., 172 ff.

13. Étienne Lamotte, La Concentration de la Marche Héroïque (Śūramagamasmādhisūtra), Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhique, vol. XIII (Bruxelles, 1965), p. 221, note 242; Lamotte continues: “Conçu primitivement comme un lieu sanctifié par la présence du corps matériel des Buddha, le bodhimanda est considéré par plusieurs Mahāyānasūtra comme le symbole ou la quintessence du Dharma ou de la vérité bouddhique.”

Haribhadra, the eighth century commentator on the AsP, confirms this connotation (Vaidya ed., Abhisamayālamkārāloka, pp. 360.33–361.1):

bodheṛ maṇḍaḥ sārō treti bhūpradaśaḥ pāryānākārānto bodhimandaḥ.

“The bodhimanda, the unsurpassed seat, is a spot so named because the maṇḍa, the quintessence (sāra) of enlightenment, is present there.” I have followed Lamotte’s rendering for the most part; see The Teaching of Vimalakīrti (Vi-malakīrtitinirdesa), rendered into English by Sara Boin (London: PTS, 1976), p. 94,
note 105. Lamotte gives a long series of references to the term bodhiṁaṇḍa in other Buddhist sources.


18. F.E. Pargiter, “The Kasia Copper-Plate,” ASIAR 1910–11, pp. 73–77. This inscription was discovered in the relic chamber of a large stūpa behind the Nirvāṇa temple at Kasia, the ancient Kuśinagara. Most of the epigraph is written in ink on a plate that covered the mouth of a copper reliquary vessel. Pargiter dates the inscription to the second half of the 5th cent. C.E. on the basis of coins of Kumāragupta (d. 455) found within the copper vessel.


23. The traditional distinction between rūpa-kāya and dharma-kāya is not adequate here. Not only is the semantic domain of these terms far from consistent, but we are in fact dealing with both cultic and literary expressions of the nature of the Buddha, the relationship between which is yet to be worked out.

24. See E. Burnouf, Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1852), pp. 525–6 for the metrical difficulties of this verse. Burnouf proposed, not altogether convincingly, that the verse was originally composed in a popular dialect and became redacted in the ārya meter when this creed spread to those familiar with the classical language. To assume the Pāli to be anterior to the Sanskrit redaction on the basis of metrical conformity (and only after emendation) ignores the fact that the ārya meter does not appear in Indian literature until after the common era, indicating the late date of this verse. See Edward J. Thomas, The Life of Buddha as Legend and History (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1927), p. 94, note 1. For a somewhat more plausible suggestion, see E. Hardy, ed., The Netti-Pakarana (London: PTS, 1902), p. xxiii, note 5: “Supposing the texts of the Pāli canon to have been remodelled again and again, before they assumed their final shape, I venture to advance the hypothesis that later on, when the Ārya was employed with a special predilection for versus memoriales of every kind, the ancient formula of the Buddhist Creed came to be turned into the Ārya, being before extant only in prose.”


27. J. Ph. Vogel, “Excavations at Kasia,” ASIAR 1906–7, p. 60. Eighty clay tablets with the “Buddhist creed” were found among the ruined stūpas at Kasia. They were produced from eight different dies and range in date from the 7th to the 11th century.
30. A large number of terracotta tablets and stone slabs with the *ye dharma*...verse have been excavated from Ratnagiri (Orissa). Debala Mitra has discussed these finds in *Ratnagiri (1958–61) [Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India, no. 80]* (New Delhi, 1981), vol. 1, especially pp. 27–32 (pis. XIV, XIX, etc.). Although the *in situ* context of most of the seals is not known, many were found amidst the *stupa* ruins that so inundate the site.
31. Debala Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments* (Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971), p. 84. Clay seals with the figure of the Buddha or with the “Buddhist creed” in characters of the 6th or 7th centuries were found at the base of the mound labeled “A” at this site.
33. Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, p. 142. At this important scholastic center were discovered “many terracotta tablets with the Buddhist creed in characters of about the seventh century A.D.”.
35. F. A. Khan, *Mainamati: A Preliminary Report on the Recent Archaeological Excavations in East Pakistan* (Pakistan, 1963). A large number of terracotta seals with the *pratītyasamutpādagāthā*, some with a small *stupa*-figure in relief, were discovered in the central shaft of the *stūpas* at the Kotila Mura site.
36. The singular importance of this posture in Buddhist art during the period we are focusing upon is noteworthy. “Despite all the different events that occurred at Bodh-Gaya which could have been depicted in art, the image of the Buddha in *bhūmisparśa-mudrā* was almost exclusively rendered as the image of the site during the Pāla period” (Janice Leoshko, ed., op. cit., p. 34).
37. A. Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 51 (see also Plate XXIV). We must be very cautious in assigning dates to these seals strictly on the basis of paleography. While Cunningham has frequently dated the various inscriptions at Bodh-Gayā on the basis of the form of the *brāhmī* letter “y”, Marshall has excavated seals with this verse that in fact exhibit “both the tripartite and the bipartite forms of the letter ya” on the very same seal (“Excavations at Saheth-Mahešt,” *ASIAR* 1910–11, p. 19).
39. Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India. Report for the Year 1871–72*, vol. III (Calcutta, 1873), pp. 156–9. Cunningham discovered here a large *stūpa* of solid brick known locally as *Bīrdbān*. On the west side of the mound was excavated a large earthenware jar from a chamber that enclosed at least 2,700 lacquer seals. Although four different kinds of seals were discovered, at least one of the types is similar to the ones we noted above: “the figure of the Buddha, the ascetic, seated under the holy pippal tree of Buddha Gaya, with rows of small *stūpas* on each side.” Underneath, of course, is the *ye dharma*... verse, in characters that Cunningham dates to the 10th or 11th century.
41. From Stūpa 253 were found six plaques with the Buddha on a lotus seat in bhūmisparsamudrā, outlined by a halo and flanked by bodhisattvas; branches of the Bodhi tree project up in the background. Below is the creed in three lines in characters of the 9th or 10th century. See D. Mitra, *Ratnagiri (1958–61)*, pp. 98–9 (pl. XLIX).
43. Henry Cousens, "Buddhist Stūpa at Mirpur-Khas, Sind," *ASIAR* 1909–10, p. 88. See also Cousens' summary of the Sind finds up to 1929 in "The Antiquities of Sind with Historical Outline," *Archeological Survey of India*, vol. XLVI, Imperial Series (Calcutta, 1929), pp. 92–3. An interesting feature of this site is the discovery of coins with Arabic inscriptions amidst the same stūpa ruins as the clay seals. Thus we know that the cult practice centered around this stūpa continued after the Arab conquest of Sind. Note also the eighth century account of the Arab usurpation of Chach, the Indian ruler of Sind:

“When he [Chach] reached the temple, he saw the Sāmāni [Buddhist priest] sitting on a chair, engaged in worship, and having some clay in his hand with which he was making idols, he had something like a stamp with which the figure of the buddh (sic) was made on the clay, and when it was finished he placed it on one side.” Sir H.M. Elliot, K.C.B., *The History of India As Told By Its Own Historians*, Vol. I (London: Trübner and Co., 1867), p. 149. The author of this account is not known; the work was translated into Arabic by Muhammad 'Ali bin Hamid bin Abu Bakr Kufi in the early 13th century. See Elliot, p. 136ff. for the dating of this account.
44. Charles Duroiselle, "Exploration—Burma," *ASIAR* 1926–7, pp. 182–3. At this excavation in Prome were also found seals with the Buddha in the "earth-witnessing" attitude flanked on each side by stūpas and containing the “Buddhist creed” in characters of the 8th or 9th century.
47. Daya Ram Sahni, *Catalogue*, p. 309. Many other miniature stūpas were found at Sārnāth and recorded by Sahni; see pp. 309–10.
48. Alexander Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 46–7. Also on p. 52, Cunningham notes the discovery of a great number of small clay balls and miniature stūpas containing unbaked seals with the Buddhist creed.
49. John Marshall, "Rājagṛha and Its Remains," *ASIAR* 1905–6, p. 96. During the excavation of a large mound west of New Rājagrha, a number of miniature clay stūpas, two inches high and one inch in diameter, were found within the remains of brick walls (The mound in question is marked H on Plate XXXV). “The presence of these miniature stūpas suggest that a large stūpa, the core of which was of earth and debris, was built over the remains of the brick walls mentioned above. Inside each of them was a tiny tablet with the Buddhist formula ‘ye dharmā hetu-prabhavā, etc.’ inscribed in characters of the eighth or ninth century.”
50. Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments*, p. 243: "Within the trapezoidal temple-compound were noticed as many as one hundred and thirty-two votive stūpas of varying shapes and sizes, the largest and smallest being respectively 25 ft. and 2 ft. 9 in. in diameter. In the relic chamber of one of these stūpas were found several thousands of miniature votive stūpas of clay, each containing two circular clay tablets with the Buddhist creed placed face to face."

51. Ram Chandra Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir* (London, 1933; repr. New Delhi, 1971), p. 107 ff (pl. XVIII). Amidst the stūpa and chapel rubble, a few clay tablets with miniature stūpas in relief were discovered. Below the Kashmir-style stūpas is the ye dharmā…verse in brāhmī characters that Kak dates to the 4th century. The quality of the plate makes it impossible to examine the script, but we must be highly suspicious of such an early date in light of the developments and collateral evidence traced above.

52. Maurizio Taddei, op. cit., p. 80: "the clay tablets are often placed inside the miniature stūpas; their function would thus be that of consecrating the other ts'a ts'as—in the form of mch'od rtens—which in their turn could be placed inside larger stūpas."

53. F. A. Khan, *Mainamati*, p. 30 ff. From the central shafts of the main stūpas at the Kotila Mura site were excavated several hundred clay miniature stūpas which enclosed both bone relics and sealings upon which the ye dharmā…verse was inscribed.


55. *Fo-shuo tsao t'ai kung-te ching*; *Taishō* 699, vol. 16, p. 801.

56. There is however a Tibetan text that parallels Divakara's translation quite closely and which N. Aiyaswami Sastri has reconstructed, not altogether satisfactorily, into Sanskrit, known as the Āryapratītyasamutpādanāma-mahāyāna-sūtra. See Aryā-Sālistambha sūtra (Adyar Library, 1950), pp. 25–7.


Whichever faithful son or daughter of a good family, Avalokitesvara, who, having made a stūpa no bigger than an āmalaka fruit ("bru—seed?) at an unestablished place (i.e., where there is no stūpa), with a mast (srog shing=yasti) no bigger than a needle, and with a parasol no bigger than a vakula fruit, and places within the dharma-relic verse of the pratītyasamutpāda, he would produce brahma merit.

60. Skt. catuṣpādikagṛthā; the four line verse motif has a long history in Buddhist literature. In Mahāyāna literature, see among others Vāj 8, 11, 12, etc.; SP 224, 344, 395, etc.; Kṣaṭyapaparivarta (von Stael-Holstein ed.) 159; Vimalakīrti-nirdesa (Lamotte, trans., rendered into English by Sara Boin, London: Pāli Text Society, 1976) 250–1. For a discussion of the extent of this motif in other literature, see Étienne Lamotte, Histoire du bouddhisme indien: Des origines à l’ère Śaka (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958, repr. 1967), pp. 546–7 and also Lamotte, Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse, pp. 688–89.


62. Although the ye dharma... verse is rather formulaic in Sanskrit, with only minor deviations, it has been variously translated into Chinese, and at times, transliterated. Hajime Nakamura has listed some of the renderings in his Gōtama Budda: shakuson no shōgai* [Gotama Buddha: The Life of Shakyamuni] (Tokyo, 1969), p. 348. See also, Akira Yuyama, "Jūni innenju oboegaki," ["Notes on the Pratītyasamutpādagāthā"], Indogaku bukkkyōgaku kenkyū, vol. XX, no. 1 (Dec. 1971): 447 ff.

63. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, ed., Mūlamadhyamakakārikās (St. Petersburg: Imprimerie de l’Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1913), pp. 503 and 542. On this verse, see also D.S. Ruegg, The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981), p. 17, note 39. 64. See AsP 86, 228, etc. for references to the praṇāpāramitā as the “mother” of Buddhhas and bodhisattvas.


de bzhin gshegs pas bka’ stsal te. dge slong chen pos de skad gsungs. sphyan-ras-gzigs-dbang-phug ‘di ila ste. rten cing ’brel bar ’byung ba ‘di ni de bzhin gshegs pa rnam kyi chos kyi sku yin te. sus rten cing ’brel bar ’byung ba mthong ba des de bzhin gshegs pa mthong ngo.


69. Walter Liebenthal, “Sanskrit Inscriptions from Yunnan I,” Monumenta Serica 12 (1947): 1-40; see especially pp. 31-4 and 36 for the occurrences of the verse.

70. Ibid., p. 2 (emphasis mine); Liebenthal cites a late but very interesting Tantric text from the Chinese canon, The Sūtra on the Measurements of Building an Image, that discusses the use of the “spiritual relic.” Particularly noteworthy is the list of the five kinds of dhārāṇī to be used as dharmakāyaśarīra, including one called the shih-erhyin-yuan choù which of course is our ye dharmā...gāthā. Also, in Shih Chih’s Chinese translation of the Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti (Taishō 1190), the praṇīyasaṃputpādagāthā is transliterated as this very dhāraṇī; see Akira Yuyama, “Jūni innenju oboegaki,” p. 445.


73. Yü-fo kung-te ching (Taishō 698, vol. 16, p. 800a). I Ching recorded this very practice in the account of his travels to India and the Malay Archipelago: “[People in India] make [incense] paste caityas and paste images from rubbings. Some impress them on silk or paper, and venerate them wherever they go. Some amass them into a pile, and by covering them with tiles, they build a buddha-stūpa. Some erect them in empty fields, allowing them to fall into ruin. Among the monks and laity of India, they all take this as their practice. Furthermore, whenever they build images or make caityas, be they of gold, silver, copper, iron, paste, lacquer, bricks, or stones; or when they heap snowy sand, at the times they make them, they place inside two kinds of relics. One is called the relic of the great teacher; the second is called the dharma-verse on causation. This verse goes as follows: All dharmas arise from a cause. The Tathāgata has...
explained this cause. The cessation of the cause of these dharmas; this is what the great Śramaṇa has explained” (Tai Shan 2125, vol. 54, p. 226c).


75. Tāthāgatabhikārāpanasūtra (Gilgit Ms. no. 18) in Adelheid Mette, “Zwei kleine Fragmente aus Gilgit,” Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik, vol. 7 (1981): 136, In. 22–3. I should also note that there exists a late Pāli text (13th/14th century), the Śārasaṅgaha by Siddhattha, that enumerates three kinds of cetiya (Skt. caitya). Among them is the dhamma-cetiya, which is consecrated by either the pratīyasaṁсутā formula or by an image. See J. Minayeff, “Buddhistische Fragmente,” Bulletin de l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de Saint-Pétersbourg (1871): 78 ff.


77. D. R. Sahni, “A Buddhist Image Inscription from Śrāvasti,” ASIA 1908–9, p. 13ff; see Plate VI.

78. Ibid.; Marshall proposes the 9th or 10th centuries, adding that the verse was probably “added at the time when this relic of a long-past age was being enshrined in the stūpa from which it has now been recovered” (op. cit., p. 12).

79. See, for example, E. Lamotte, Histoire du bouddhisme indien, p. 547: “Dès lors la stance fameuse communiqué autrefois par Aśvajit à Śāriputra et qui résume si bien les quatre vérités saintes est élévé au rang de credo bouddhique….”

80. M. Taddei, op. cit., p. 76. See also Johannes De Casparis, “Some Aspects of the Expansion of Nāgārī Script in South and Southeast Asia,” in Graciela de la Lama, ed., Proceedings of the 30th International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia & North Africa, South Asia I (1976), p. 127: “Nāgārī was used in the Tamilnadu for such special purposes as inscribing the so-called Buddhist ‘Credo,’ coin and seal legends—all cases where legibility was not essential” (emphasis mine).


82. I am reminded here of Eliade’s discussion of the gnostic/mystic dichotomy of early Buddhism in his Yoga: Immortality and Freedom (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), pp. 174–5: “In the course of time, all means of approaching the Buddha by way of ‘experience’ will become equivalent; he who learns and understands the canon assimilates the ‘doctrinal body’ of the Buddha; the pilgrim who visits a stūpa containing relics of the Enlightened One gains access to the mystical architectonic body of the same Buddha.”

This equivalence is made explicit, as is well known, in the so called dharmakāya symbolism of the stūpa, whereby each structure of the stūpa is related to a specific dogma of the Buddhist canon. See, among others, Gustav Roth, “Symbolism of the Buddhist Stūpa,” in Anna Libera Dallapiccola and Stephanie
While explanations for this recurring symbolism have been varied and often rather weak, I might tentatively propose that the symbolic correspondence between the stūpa and the dharmakāya reflects another solution to the problem we traced above. That is to say, it may have been part of the ongoing debate within the tradition to define the relationship between the continued presence of the Buddha in, for example, his relics, and his abstract presence in the dharma. To equate the proper repository of the Buddha's corporeal remains with the body of his law is to legitimate a specific definition of not only who or what the real Buddha was, but where and how he continued to be. I hope to examine the symbolism of the stūpa in more detail in the near future.

List of Chinese and Japanese Terms and Titles:

a. 舍利
b. インド仏塔の研究・仏塔崇拝の生成と基盤
c. 佛經身
d. 因縁相応の梵文資料・印度古塔出土の煉瓦銘文の内容比定
e. 佛説造塔功德経
f. 地婆诃羅
g. ゴータマ・ブッダ仏尊の生涯
h. 十二因縁呪覚え書き
i. 十二因縁呪
j. 浴仏功德経