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# CONTENTS

## I. ARTICLES

1. The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics, by *Daniel Boucher* 1
2. Notes on the Devotional Uses and Symbolic Functions of *Sūtra* Texts as Depicted in Early Chinese Buddhist Miracle Tales and Hagiographies, by *Robert F. Campany* 28
3. A Source Analysis of the *Ruijing lu* ("Records of Miraculous Scriptures"), by *Koichi Shinohara* 73
4. Pudgalavāda in Tibet? Assertions of Substantially Existent Selves in the Writings of Tsong-kha-pa and His Followers, by *Joe Bransford Wilson* 155

## II. BOOK REVIEWS

1. *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Ching-ying Hui-yüan's Commentary on the Visualization Sūtra*, by *Kenneth K. Tanaka* (Allan A. Andrews) 181
2. Three Recent Collections: *The Buddhist Heritage*, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski; *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr.; and *Reflections on Tibetan Culture*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard Sherburne (Roger Jackson) 191

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS 195

# The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* 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 dharmā hetuḥprabhavā...* 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.”<sup>1</sup> 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 *pratītyasamutpāda* 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 *dharmā*, his teachings. This dichotomy manifested itself in two directions: the cult of the *stūpa*, which venerated the physical remains of the Buddha;<sup>2</sup> 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*.”<sup>3</sup>

As a corollary to this equation, the Pāli sources also identified the *paṭiccasamuppāda* (Skt. *pratīyasamutpāda*) with the *dhamma*.<sup>4</sup> Since the “discovery” of the *pratīyasamutpāda* 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.<sup>5</sup>

The intimate connection between the Buddha and the *pratīyasamutpāda* 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.<sup>6</sup> The *bodhisattva* Maitreya says to Śāriputra:

He, monks, who sees the *pratīyasamutpāda* sees the *dharma*; he who sees the *dharma* sees the Buddha.<sup>7</sup>

Then, he glosses this equation as follows:

How does one see the *pratīyasamutpāda* there (i.e., in this verse)? The Blessed One has spoken on this matter: “He who sees this *pratīyasamutpāda*, 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*.”<sup>8</sup>

Early Mahāyāna literature repeatedly identified the *dharma* as the true body of the Buddha.<sup>9</sup> By extension, therefore, a discourse on the Buddha’s *dharma* (*dharmaparyāya*) 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.<sup>10</sup> 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 (*bodhimāṇḍa*).<sup>11</sup> We find, for example, at *AsP* 28:

Furthermore, Kauśika, just as those men or ghosts who have gone to the seat of enlightenment (*bodhimāṇḍa*), 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, Kauśika, where a son or daughter of good family will set up, preserve, [etc.] this perfection of wisdom, there, Kauśika, beings cannot be harmed, [etc.] by men or ghosts except as a result of former deeds. Why? Because by this perfection of wisdom, Kauśika, this spot of ground is made a true shrine (*caityabhūta*) for all beings, and is to be honored, worshipped....<sup>12</sup>

In a concrete sense, the *bodhimāṇḍa* 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 *bodhimāṇḍa* is the source or essence (*maṇḍa*) 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."<sup>13</sup> 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, Bhaiṣajyarājā, all beings who would succeed in praising, worshipping, or seeing this *tathāgatacaitya*, they all, Bhaiṣajyarājā, are to be known as ones who come near to the most excellent, perfect enlightenment.<sup>14</sup>

Paralleling this link between *dharma*-text and the *bodhi-maṇḍa* 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.”<sup>15</sup> 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 Śakyamuni 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 [*patīcasamupada* (sic)] has been written by Mahiphatika in honour of all beings.<sup>16</sup>

Similar finds include the Devnimori relic casket inscriptions,<sup>17</sup> the Kasia copper plate,<sup>18</sup> the Gopalpur bricks,<sup>19</sup> two important brick finds from Nālandā,<sup>20</sup> a slab from Ratnagiri,<sup>21</sup> as well as instances of the *pratītyasamutpāda* formula engraved on the base of miniature *stūpas* at Tun-huang.<sup>22</sup>

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 *pratītyasamutpāda* 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.<sup>23</sup>

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 *pratītyasamutpāda* became completely synthesized. After the sixth century, when the reliquary inscriptions of the *pratītyasamutpāda* 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 *pratītyasamutpāda* (*ye dharmā 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<sup>24</sup> and occurs canonically in the famous conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna.<sup>25</sup> These two *brahmacārins*, 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 *dhammapariyāya* (short exposition of the *dhamma*):

*ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesāṃ hetuṃ tathāgato  
āha tesāṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī 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.<sup>26</sup> 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 dharmā*...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,<sup>27</sup> Sārnāth,<sup>28</sup> Bodh-Gayā,<sup>29</sup> Ratnagiri,<sup>30</sup> Lauriya-Nandangarh,<sup>31</sup> Nālandā,<sup>32</sup> Valabhī,<sup>33</sup> Ġaznī,<sup>34</sup> and Mainamati<sup>35</sup> to name just a few. Others, however, are stamped with specific representations. For exam-

ple, Alexander Cunningham unearthed from the ruined *stūpas* at Bodh-Gayā 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.<sup>36</sup> Above the niche in which the Buddha sits is a straight-sided tower surmounted by an *āmalaka*, depicting the famous temple at Bodh-Gayā. Branches of the Bodhi tree emanate from the top; small *stūpas*, found in abundance at Bodh-Gayā, flank the niche. Below is etched the *ye dharmā* . . . verse in medieval characters.<sup>37</sup> These seals, in effect, juxtapose both senses of the *bodhimanda*: they depict the enlightenment site at Bodh-Gayā 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,<sup>38</sup> Rāj-bādīdāngā,<sup>39</sup> Sāñchī,<sup>40</sup> Ratnagiri,<sup>41</sup> Kasia,<sup>42</sup> and in Sind,<sup>43</sup> Burma<sup>44</sup> and Thailand.<sup>45</sup>

Clay seals inscribed with the *pratīyasamutpādagāthā* 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 *dharmasārīra*. 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 *dharmasārīra-stūpas*. Everytime he completed one *koṭi*, he erected a large *stūpa*, collected them into its interior, and performed copious homage to it.<sup>46</sup>

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 Hiuen T̄sang, and were called *dharmā-sārīra*. 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 Sārṇāth was, in the main, constructed of *stūpas* of unbaked clay.<sup>47</sup>

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

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*<sup>55</sup> 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,<sup>56</sup> 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.”<sup>57</sup>

Thus have I heard at one time.<sup>58</sup> 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, Maheśvara 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 exaltedly marvelous 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<sup>59</sup>—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 *dharmā*, down to even one four line verse,<sup>60</sup> this person's merit will be as great as the *brahma* heaven.<sup>61</sup> At the end of his life, he will be born in the *brahmaloka*. 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 *dharma*s arise from a cause.  
I have explained this cause.  
When the cause is exhausted, there is cessation.  
I have produced such a teaching.<sup>62</sup>

"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 *dharmā*-nature of all things that are

produced are empty. This is the reason that I call it the *dharmakāya*. 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 *dharmā*-nature of all things that are produced are empty.” This equation of the verse epitome of the *pratītyasamutpāda* and the Mahāyāna doctrine of *śūnyatā* can be traced back to Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakā-karikās*:

*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaḥ śūnyatām tāṃ pracakṣmahe  
sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipatsaiva madhyamā.*

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

In the eighth century, Haribhadra, the famous commentator on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, understood a similar connection between the Mahāyāna notion of emptiness and the *pratītyasamutpādagāthā*. 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 worship and the like it causes the accumulation of merit, and because of the use of the word “*bhūta*” which signifies a simile, as *pitṛbhūta* 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 mother<sup>64</sup>), 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 *sākṣibhūta* is a “true witness” (*sākṣyeva*).<sup>65</sup>

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 *dharma*s 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.<sup>66</sup>

The use of the *ye dharmā* . . . 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.<sup>67</sup> 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-Gayā, 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). Guiseppe 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-Gayā and Sārnāth:

The Buddha, dressed in monk's robes, is seated in the vajraparyaṅka 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 *bhumisparśa-mudrā...Traces of inscription in Indian characters of the IX-X century. Below...hy avadat tesam 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.*<sup>68</sup>

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 *dhāraṇīs*.”<sup>69</sup> 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,<sup>a</sup> Sanskrit *śarīra*) or as a *spiritual relic*.”<sup>70</sup>

In later Tantric literature, the consecrating power of the *ye dharmā . . . gāthā* is adapted to specific Tantric rituals. In the *Adi-karmaṣradīpa*, 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 *dhāraṇī* 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 *koṭis* of *caityas* will be made. Furthermore, one should consecrate it with the 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.<sup>71</sup>

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 *Adikarmaṣradīpa* 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. . . .”<sup>72</sup> 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 *saṃbhogakāya*, and the *nirmāṇakāya*. 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 *dharmā*-verse relic. I will now recite the verse:

All *dharmas* arise from a cause.  
 The Tāthāgata 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 *dharmā*-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.”<sup>73</sup>

It appears that images and miniature *stūpas*, once consecrated with the *ye dharmā*...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 Prākṛit *sacchāya* or *sacchāha*, meaning perfect image or representation.<sup>74</sup> 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 hrasī ukām vā sadhātukam vā sapratītyasamutpādam vā* (“images of the Buddha should be made either tall or short and with either a relic or with the *pratītyasamutpāda*”).<sup>75</sup>

The archeological evidence for image inscriptions of the *ye dharmā*...verse is likewise abundant. There is, however, one find that deserves special mention. Inside *stūpa* no. 8 at Saheṭh-

Maheṭh, usually identified as the ancient Śrāvastī, a broken pedestal with only the legs of a *bodhisattva* figure was discovered.<sup>76</sup> The pedestal contains a three line inscription datable on paleographical grounds to the early Kuṣāṇa period (ca. first century C.E.).<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> It would appear that someone, having only a piece of an ancient image, understood that even this piece, if inscribed with the *pratīyasamutpādagāthā*, 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.<sup>79</sup> 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 *dharmā* 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.”<sup>80</sup> 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*.<sup>81</sup>

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.<sup>82</sup> 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 dharmā*...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*

AsP—*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (P. L. Vaidya, ed., Darbhanga, 1960)

BEFEO—*Bulletin de l'École Française 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—Pāli Text Society

Skt.—Sanskrit

SN—*Samyutta-Nikāya* (PTS)

SP—*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* (Kern and Nanjio, ed., St. Petersburg, 1912)

Vaj—*Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* (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.

1. Janice Leoshko, ed., *Bodhgaya: the Site of Enlightenment* (Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988), p. 68.

2. For a discussion of this cult, see André Bareau, “La construction et le culte des stūpa d’après les Vinaya-piṭaka,” *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 buttō no kenkyū: buttō sūhai no seisei to kiban*<sup>b</sup> [*Studies in the Buddhist Stūpa-Cult in India*] (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1984).

3. *Yo kho Vakkali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati, yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati*. For other instances of this equation, see *Itivuttaka* (PTS) p. 91; *Dīgha-Nikāya* (PTS) II, p. 154; *Milindapañha* (PTS), p. 71; *Buddhacarita*, E.H. Johnston, trans. (Reprint ed., Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984), pt. III, p. 90: "In this world the self-controlled man who sees my Law may live far away in point of space, yet he sees Me. . . ."

4. *Majjhima-Nikāya* (PTS) I, p. 190–91: *yo paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati, yo dhammaṃ passati so paṭiccasamuppādaṃ passati* . . . ("He who sees the *paṭiccasamuppāda* sees the *dhamma*; he who sees the *dhamma* sees the *paṭiccasamuppāda* . . .").

5. The classical exposition of the *paṭiccasamuppāda* is found in such texts as *Mahāvagga* (*Vinaya-Pitaka I*), 1 ff., *Samyutta Nikāya* II, 1 ff., *Majjhima Nikāya* III, 63, *Lalitavistara* 346–7, *Mahāvastu I*, 1 ff.

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 *Śālistamba* is cited by Yaśomitra, an eighth century Sautrāntika commentator.

7. *yo, bhikṣavaḥ, pratītyasamutpādaṃ paśyati sa dharmam paśyati, yo dharmam paśyati sa buddham paśyati*; *ibid.*, p. 70. Also Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, L. de La Vallée Poussin, ed. (St. Petersburg, 1913), p. 6 and 160; Prajñākaramati's commentary on the *Bodhicāryāvatāra*, P.L. Vaidya, ed. (Darbhanga, 1960), p. 186.

8. L. de La Vallée Poussin, *Bouddhisme: Études et Matériaux*, p. 72: *Tatra katham pratītyasamutpādaṃ paśyati? atroktam bhagavatā: ya imam pratītyasamutpādam satatasamitam [ajīvam] nirjīvam yathāvad aviparītam ajātam abhūtam akṛtam asamskṛtam apratigham anāmbanam śivam abhayam anāhāryam avyayam avyupaśamasvabhāvam paśyati, sa dharmam paśyati; yas tv evam satatasamitam [ajīvam] nirjīvam ityādi pūrvavat, yāvad avyupaśamasvabhāvam dharmam paśyati so 'nuttaradharmasārīram buddham paśyati, āryadharmābhisamayā samyagjñānād upanayenaiva*.

9. There are many such references in Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature. See for example *Vaj* 26a–b; *Samādhirājasūtra* in K. Régamey, *Three Chapters from the Samādhirājasūtra* (Warsaw, 1938) 51 and 58; *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* (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 (*Tāishō* 224; vol. 8, 468c.18), the term *dharmakāya* is rendered as "body of the Buddha's *sūtras*" (*fo ching shen*<sup>c</sup>). 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.

10. This cult has been examined in detail by Gregory Schopen, "The Phrase 'sa pṛthivīpradeśaḥ caityabhūto bhavet' in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal*, vol. 17 (1975): 147–181.

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 Ānanda is to be visited after his death. A preoccupation with Bodh-Gayā continued throughout the history of Indian Buddhism. In the *Mahāvamsa* (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 Vajrasana, 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 aparāṃ Kauśika tad yathāpi nāma ye bodhimaṇḍagatā vā bodhimaṇḍa-parisāmantagatā vā bodhimaṇḍābhyantaratagatā vā bodhivṛkṣamūlagatā vā manuṣyā vā amanuṣyā vā tiryagyoniगतान् अप्युपādāya yāvan na te śakyā manuṣyair vā amanuṣyair vā viheṭhayitum vā vyāpādāyitum vā āveśayitum vā sthāpayitvā pūrvakarmavipākam. tat kasya heloḥ? tatra hi atilānāgatapratyutpannās tathāgatā arhantaḥ... abhisambudhyante ca... evam eva Kauśika yatra kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā imāṃ prajñāpāramitām udgrahīyati dhārayīyati... tatra hi Kauśika sattvā na śakyā manuṣyair vā amanuṣyair vā viheṭhayitum... sthāpayitvā pūrvakarmavipākam. tat kasya heloḥ? anayaiva hi Kauśika prajñāpāramitayā pṛthivīpradeśaḥ sattvānām caityabhūtaḥ kṛto vandaniyo mānanīyaḥ...* 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 [Śūramgama-samādhisūtra]*, *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 *bodhimaṇḍa* 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., *Abhisamayālamkāraloka*, pp. 360.33–361.1):  
*bodher maṇḍaḥ sāro' treti bhūpradeśaḥ pāryāṅkākrānto bodhimaṇḍaḥ.*

"The *bodhimaṇḍa*, 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 (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa)*, rendered into English by Sara Boin (London: PTS, 1976), p. 94,

note 105. Lamotte gives a long series of references to the term *bodhimaṇḍa* in other Buddhist sources.

14. *SP* 231 10–232.2: *taḥ kasya hetoh? ekaghanam eva tasmims tathāgataśarīram upanikṣiptam bhavati. yasmim pṛthivīpradeśe 'yam dharmapāryāyo bhaṣyeta vā deśyeta vā pathyeta vā samgāyeta vā likhyeta vā likhito va pustakagatas tiṣṭhet, tasmims ca stūpe satkāro gurukāro mānanā pūjanārcanā karaṇīyā...ye ca khalu punar bhaiṣajyarāja sattvas taṃ tathāgatacāityaṃ labheran vandanāya pūjanāya darśanāya vā sarve te bhaiṣajya-rājābhyaśannībhūta veditavyā anuttarāyāḥ samyaksambodheḥ.*

15. Sten Konow, "Remarks on a Kharoṣṭhī Inscription From the Kurram Valley," *Indian Studies in Honor of Charles Rockwell Lanman* (Cambridge, MA, 1929), p. 53. See also Konow, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. II, pt. I, pp. 52–55; V. Natesa Aiyar, "An Inscribed Relic Casket from Kurram," *EI* 18 (1925–26): 16–20.

16. Konow, "Remarks," p. 57.

17. This find is discussed by Oskar von Hinüber in "Epigraphical Varieties of Continental Pāli From Devnimori and Ratnagiri," in *Buddhism and Its Relation to Other Religions: Essays in Honour of Dr. Shozen Kumoi on his Seventieth Birthday* (Kyoto, 1985), pp. 185–200; also, A. Ghosh, "The Relic Casket from Devnimori," *Journal of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda* 15, no. 1 (1966): 21–24.

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.

19. E.H. Johnston, "The Gopalpur Bricks," *JRAS* (1938): 546–53. Johnston sets the probable date at ca. 500 C.E., at least two centuries later than Smith and Hoey, who first discussed the bricks. See V.A. Smith and W. Hoey, "Buddhist Sūtras Inscribed on Bricks found at Gopalpur in the Gorakhpur District," *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1896): 99–103; also, Vincent A. Smith, "Deposit of Sūtras in Stūpas," *The Indian Antiquary* 33 (1904): 175.

20. N.P. Chakravarti, "Two Brick Inscriptions From Nālandā," *Epigraphia India* 21 (1931–32): 193–199; A. Ghosh, "An Inscribed Brick from Nālandā," *EI* 24 (1937–38): 20–22. For the relationship between the Gopalpur bricks, the Nālandā bricks, and the literary expositions of the *pratītyasamutpāda*, see Hirano Shinkan, "Innen sōo no bonbun shiryō: indo kotō shutsudo no renga meimon no naiyō hitei,"<sup>d</sup> ["Sanskrit Materials on the *Pratītyasamutpāda*: A Comparison of the Contents of Brick Inscriptions of Archeological Finds of Ancient Indian Stūpas"], *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* [*Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies*], vol. XII, no. 1 (1964): 158–61.

21. Debala Mitra, "The Indian Museum Inscription from Ratnagiri Orissa," *Indian Historical Quarterly* 34 (1958): 163–66. Unfortunately the *in situ* context of this find is not known.

22. Hubert Durt, Krishna Riboud, and Lai Tung-Hung, "A propos de 'Stūpa Miniatures' Votifs du Ve siècle découverts à Tourfan et au Gansu," *Arts Asiatique* 40 (1985): 92–106.

23. The traditional distinction between *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* 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 *āryā* meter when this creed spread to those familiar with the classical language. To assume the Pāli to be anterior to the Sanskrit redactions on the basis of metrical conformity (and only after emendation) ignores the fact that the *āryā* 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-Pakaraṇa* (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 Āryā 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 Āryā, being before extant only in prose."

25. This narrative occurs in several places in Buddhist literature, most notably in *Mahāvagga* (Vinaya I), pp. 39–44; in Sanskrit it occurs in the *Mahāvastu* (Senart ed.) III, pp. 59–65. See also André Bareau, *Recherches sur la biographie du Buddha dans les Sūtrapīṭaka et les Vinayapīṭaka anciens: De la quête de l'éveil à la conversion de Śāriputra et de Maudgalyāyana* (Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963), pp. 343–50. Also Étienne Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse [Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra]* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1949; repr. 1967), Tome II, p. 623 ff., note 2 for the canonical occurrences of this legend in Pāli, Sanskrit, and Chinese sources. That this legend was known in Central India in the early medieval period is evidenced by Hsüan-tsang's account of Magadha in his *Hsi-yü-chi* (*Taishō*, vol. 51, pp. 924c–925a); S. Beal, trans., *The Records of the Western World* (London, 1884; repr. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), Part II, pp. 178–9.

26. Cf. Alfred Foucher, *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, trans. L.A. Thomas and F.W. Thomas (Paris-London, 1917), pp. 11–12. More recently, Gérard Fussman has remarked about similar finds from Gilgit: "Ces empreintes de terre crue et ce stūpa-miniature sont donc, dans le monde du bouddhisme indien, des objets d'une grande banalité. S'ils avaient été achetés chez un antiquaire de Caboul, de Lahore ou de Delhi, rien ne permettrait de se prononcer sur leur provenance et ils mériteraient à peine la publication. Trouvés à Gilgit, ils tirent leur intérêt de leur banalité même" ("Inscriptions de Gilgit," *BEFEO* 65 (1978): 7).

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.

28. Daya Ram Sahni, *Catalogue of the Museum of Archeology at Sarnath* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing, 1914), pp. 307–313.

29. Alexander Cunningham, *Mahābodhi or the Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gayā* (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1892), p. 52.

30. A large number of terracotta tablets and stone slabs with the *ye dharmā*... 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. I, especially pp. 27–32 (pls. XIV, XIX, etc.). Although the *in situ* context of most of the seals is not known, many were found amidst the *stūpa* 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 labelled “A” at this site.

32. Hirananda Śastri, “Nālandā and Its Epigraphical Material,” *Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India*, no. 66 (1942): 76–7, 106–13. See also H. Sastri, “The Clay Seals of Nālandā,” *Epigraphia India* 21 (1931–2): 72 ff.

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.”

34. Maurizio Taddei, “Inscribed Clay Tablets and Miniature Stūpas from Gaznī,” *East and West* n.s. 20 (1970): 70–86.

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 *prāṭīyasamutpādagāthā*, some with a small *stūpa*-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-Gayā 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-Maheth,” *ASIAR* 1910–11, p. 19).

38. J.H. Marshall and S. Konow, “Sārṇāth,” *ASIAR* 1906–7, pp. 80–1.

39. Alexander Cunningham, *Archeological 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 *Birdaban*. 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 dharmā*... verse, in characters that Cunningham dates to the 10th or 11th century.

40. John Marshall, "The Monuments of Sāñchī," *ASIAR* 1913–14, p. 22.

41. From Stūpa 253 were found six plaques with the Buddha on a lotus seat in *bhūmisparśamudrā*, 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).

42. J. Ph. Vogel, "Excavations at Kasia," *ASIAR* 1906–7, p. 60.

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 Sāmanī [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.

45. G. Coedès, "Tablettes votives bouddhique du Siam," *Études Asiatiques publiées à l'occasion du vingt-cinquième anniversaire de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient* (Paris, 1925), pp. 145–67.

46. *Taishō* 2087, vol. 51, p. 920a–b.

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 Rājagṛha, 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.

54. Gérard Fussman, "Inscriptions de Gilgit," *BEFEO* 65 (1978): 5 ff.

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

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

57. *Ti-p'o-ho-lof*; Divākara (613–688) was a monk-translator from Central India. He resided at the monasteries of Mahābodhi and Nālandā while young, and was quite probably at the latter when the famous pilgrim Hsüan-tsang visited. He arrived in China sometime between 676 and 679 and translated at least 19 texts into Chinese under Empress Wu's patronage. The *Sūtra on the Merit of Building a Stūpa* was translated at the Hung-fu monastery in Ch'ang-an in 680. Divākara died February 4, 688 at the Wei-kuo monastery in Lo-yang. See *Sung kao seng chuan*, *Taishō* 2061, vol. 50, p. 719a–b; *K'ai-yüan shih-chiao-lu*, *Taishō* 2154, vol. 55, pp. 563c–564a; Antonino Forte, "Divākara (613-688), Un Monaco Indiano Nella Cina Dei T'ang," *Annali della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere di Ca' Foscari* XIII, 3 (1974): 135–64.

58. For the change in punctuation from the *Taishō* edition, see John Brough, "Thus Have I Heard. . .," *BSOAS* 13 (1949–50): 416–26.

59. Similar accounts of the making of miniature *stūpas* are found in several other canonical texts. Cf. Hisashi Matsumura, "The Stūpa Worship in Ancient Gilgit," *Journal of Central Asia*, vol. VIII, no. 2 (Dec. 1985): 135–7; Yael Bendor, "The Redactions of the *Adbhutadharmapāryāya* from Gilgit," *JIAS* vol. 11, no. 2 (1989): 21–52. Also, the *Ārya Pratītyasamutpāda-nāmamahāyānasūtram* which parallels *Taishō* 699 quite closely, enjoins the practice of making miniature *stūpas* and installing the *ye dharmā*...verse within; *The Tibetan Tripitaka* (Peking ed.),

Edited by D. T. Suzuki, vol. 34 (no. 878), p. 307–3–5 ff:

*span-ras-gzigs-dbang-phyug rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo dad pa can gang la la zhig  
gis mi gans pa'i phyogs su mchod rten ni skyu ru ra'i 'bru tsam. srog shing ni khab tsam.  
gdugs ni ba ku la'i me tog tsam zhig byas la rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba chos kyi dbyings kyi  
tshigs su bcad pa nang du bcug na de tshangs pa'i bsod nams bskyed par 'gyur te.*

Whichever faithful son or daughter of a good family, Avalokiteśvara, 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* = *yaṣṭi*) no bigger than a needle, and with a parasol no bigger than a *vakula* fruit, and places within the *dharma*-relic verse of the *pratīyasamutpāda*, he would produce *brahma* merit.

60. Skt. *catuspādikagāthā*; the four line verse motif has a long history in Buddhist literature. In Mahāyāna literature, see among others *Vaj* 8, 11, 12, etc.; *SP* 224, 344, 395, etc.; *Kaśyapaparivarta* (von Staël-Holstein ed.) 159; *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* (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 Śāka* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1958, repr. 1967), pp. 546–7 and also Lamotte, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse*, pp. 688–89.

61. On the generation of *brahma* merit, see Richard Salomon and Gregory Schopen, "The Indravarman (Avaca) Casket Inscription Reconsidered: Further Evidence for Canonical Passages in Buddhist Inscriptions," *JIABS*, vol. 7, no. 1 (1984): 116 ff.

62. Although the *ye dharmā*... 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 Buddha: shakuson no shōgai* [Gotama Buddha: The Life of Shakyamuni] (Tokyo, 1969), p. 348. See also, Akira Yuyama, "Jūni innenju oboegaki,"<sup>h</sup> ["Notes on the Pratīyasamutpādagāthā"], *Indogaku bukkyōgaku 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 *prajñāpāramitā* as the "mother" of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*.

65. P. L. Vaidya, ed., *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā With Haribhadra's Commentary Called Āloka*, p. 361.13–18: *caityabhūto vandanādīnāṃ puṇyopacayahetuvāt piteva pīṭhbhūta ity upamānvācakabhūtasābdasyopādānād anyacaitīyasamānatvena caityabhūtaḥ sa pṛthivīpradeśa ity eke. yatra hi nāma pudgalanairātmyadyotikayā "ye dharmā hetuprabhavā" ityādī gāthayā adhiṣṭhito bhūbhagaḥ stūpo mataḥ tatra samastavastunaiḥsvābhāvuyaprakāśikāyā mātur udgrahanādīnopetaḥ stūpo nitarām eva, ity atah sāksyeva sāksībhūta iti tair svabhāvatve caityam eva caityabhūta iti Candragomī.*

66. Peking ed., vol. 34 (no. 878), p. 307–3–3 ff:  
*de nas bcom ldan 'das k'yi rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i tshigs su bcad pa bka' stsal pa. ye  
dha rmā he tu pra bha bā he tun te sān ta thā ga to hya dat. te sā nyca yo ni ro dha e bam bā  
dī ma hā shra ma ṇaḥ. chos gang rgyu byung de dag gi. rgyu dang de 'gog gang yin pa'ang.*

*de bzhin gshegs pas bka' stsal te. dge slong chen pos de skad gsungs. spyan-ras-gzigs-dbang-phyug 'di lta ste. rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba 'di ni de bzhin gshegs pa rnam kyī chos kyī sku yin te. sus rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba mthong ba des de bzhin gshegs pa mthong ngo.*

67. This dichotomy however should not be understood as a lay/monk distinction. The monastic role in the cult of the relics remains a frequently misunderstood topic in the scholarly literature on Buddhism. See Gregory Schopen, "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Lay/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 10 (1985): 9–47 and also Schopen, "Monks and the Relic Cult in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*: An Old Misunderstanding in Regard to Monastic Buddhism," in G. Schopen and K. Shinohara eds., *From Banares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion in Honor of Jan Yün-hua* (Toronto, 1991, forthcoming).

68. Guiseppe Tucci, *Stūpa: Art, Architectonics, and Symbolism [Indo-Tibetica I]* trans. by Uma Marina Vesci, (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan, 1988), p. 84.

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 *dhāraṇīs* to be used as *dharmakāyaśarīra*, including one called the *shih-erh yin-yüan chou* which of course is our *ye dharmā...gāthā*. Also, in Shih Chih's Chinese translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti* (*Taishō* 1190), the *pratītyasamutpādagāthā* is transliterated as this very *dhāraṇī*; see Akira Yuyama, "Jūni innenju oboegaki," p. 445.

71. L. de La Vallée Poussin, ed., *Bouddhisme: Études et Matériaux* (London: Luzac & Co., 1898), pp. 192–3: *oṃ namo bhagavate vairocanaṃprabharājāya tathāgatāyārhatē samyaksambuddhāya. tadyathā: oṃ sūksme 'samāsame praśānte ['] samārothe 'nālambe. tarasva yaśovati mahābhaje nirākule nirvāṇe. sarvabuddhādhiṣṭhāna-adhiṣṭhite svāhā. anayā dhāraṇyā mṛtipiṇḍaṃ vālukāpiṇḍaṃ vā. ekaviṃśatīvarān pariṣajpya caityaṃ kuryāt. yāvantaś tasmīn paramāṇavas tāvalya[h] koṭ[y] a[ś] caityāni kṛtāni bhavanti. tadanu: ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hy avadat teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha evamvādī mahāśramaṇaḥ anayā gāthayā pratiṣṭhāya.*

72. Stephan Beyer, *The Buddhist Experience: Sources and Interpretations* (Encino, CA: Dickenson Publishing Co., Inc., 1974), p. 59.

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 Archipeligo: "[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 *dharm*-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 *dharma*s; 'This the great Śramaṇa has explained" (*Taiṣhō* 2125, vol. 54, p. 226c).

74. Tucci, op. cit., p. 53–5.

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

76. J. H. Marshall, "Excavations at Saheṭh-Mahēṭh," *ASIAR* 1910–11, pt. 2, pp. 10–12.

77. D. R. Sahni, "A Buddhist Image Inscription from Śrāvastī," *ASIAR* 1908–9, p. 133ff; 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 élevée au rang de *credo* bouddhique. . . ."

80. M. Tāddei, op. cit., p. 76. See also Johannes De Casparis, "Some Aspects of the Expansion of Nāgarī 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: "Nāgarī 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).

81. Gregory Schopen has shown rather convincingly that a *stūpa* "was not conceived of as 'un reliquaire,' but as a structure housing the living presence of the Buddha—any worship of 'it' would actually be of *him*." See "On the Buddha and His Bones: The Conception of a Relic in the Inscriptions of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa," *JAOS*, vol. 108, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1988): 536. Also "Burial 'Ad Sanctos' and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism: A Study in the Archeology of Religions," *Religion* vol. 17 (1987): 193–225.

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 *dharma-kāya* 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

Zingel-Avé Lallemand, eds. *The Stūpa: Its Religious, Historical and Architectural Significance* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1980), pp. 183–209. 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 *dharmā*. 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・仏塔崇拜の生成と基盤
- c. 佛経身
- 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. 地婆訶羅
- g. ゴータマ・ブツダ釈尊の生涯
- h. 十二因縁呪覚え書き
- i. 十二因縁呪
- j. 浴仏功德経