Buddhist Saints in India

A Study in Buddhist Values & Orientations

Reginald A. Ray

BUDDHIST SAINTS IN INDIA

This page intentionally left blank

BUDDHIST SAINTS IN INDIA

A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations

REGINALD A. RAY

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York *Oxford*

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York
Athens Auckland Bangkok Bogotá Buenos Aires Calcutta
Cape Town Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Florence Hong Kong Istanbul
Karachi Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai
Nairobi Paris São Paulo Singapore Taipei Tokyo Toronto Warsaw

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

First published in 1994 by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

First issued as an Oxford University Press paperback, 1999

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Ray, Reginald A.
Buddhist saints in India : a study in Buddhist values and orientations
Reginald A. Ray.
p. cm. Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-19-507202-2
ISBN 0-19-513483-4 (Pbk.)
1. Buddhist saints. I. Title.
BQ4285.R39 1994 294.3'61—dc20 91-27999

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

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

For Lee

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

Buddhism, it may be said, finds religious authority not only in texts and institutions, but also in enlightened people. Certainly, those understood as realized have occupied an important if not always well defined place within the early and developed tradition. The following pages will argue that the Buddhist saints have in fact a relatively clear role to play within historical Buddhist tradition, and also one that places them much more at the center of the tradition than has been recognized, either by contemporary scholarship or, sometimes, even by Buddhism itself.

This book raises some basic questions: Who are the Buddhist saints? How have they been understood by their devotees and detractors? What have been their characteristic historical roles in India? In response to these questions, this study offers a definition of the Buddhist saint as such and identifies the major types that existed in India. It also acquaints the reader with the legends surrounding some of the more important and representative individual saints. Further, it introduces the field of the Buddhist saints in India, providing a survey of some of the more significant scholarly studies on the subject. Finally, it gives an overview of some of the more important methodological, structural, and historical issues involved in any attempt to understand these figures.

Indian Buddhism exhibits a number of major periods of formation, including those of the genesis of Buddhism itself, and also of later movements such as the Mahāyāna. This study is particularly concerned with those saints who were important—especially but not only—in these formative periods. These were people who, to find freedom, chose to abandon the world and retreat into the wilds, the "forest" (Skt., *araṇya;* P., *arañña*) in the Indian terminology. These "forest saints" are particularly worthy of our attention not only because they represent the first Buddhist saints, but also because classical Buddhism owes so much to them. They stand at the beginning of many of the most important trends within Indian Buddhism. They articulated a specific ideal of complete renunciation of which later Buddhists were well aware and to which they could return at moments of personal and collective crisis. And the normativeness of the ideal they represented was enduring. Even when, in particular times and places, the specific type of the forest saint defined in these pages was modified or substantially transformed, even when the physical wilds themselves were left behind, the terminology and imagery definitive of the early saints of the forest tended to remain in force.

In its historical method, this book is frankly an experiment. Usually when the history of Indian Buddhism is written, settled monasticism provides the central reference point in terms of which that history is cast. This study takes the different

starting point of the forest saint. It asks how the history of Indian Buddhism looks when considered from the viewpoint of this contrasting standard. The success of this approach may be judged by the extent to which it can make sense of certain kinds of evidence surrounding the Buddhist saints for which no fully satisfying explanation has yet been offered, and can yield a more coherent view of certain periods of Indian Buddhist history than those now put forward.

Although the central character in the following study is the forest saint, also entering into the discussion are the classical ideals of the settled monastic and the layperson. In this book, however, monastics and the laity are not viewed in their own rights, but are rather seen in terms of what I shall call "forest values and orientations." Sometimes, for reasons to be discussed, the view provided is not particularly complimentary. I ask the reader to remember that critiques of non-forest ideals are sometimes important parts of the expression of forest Buddhism. At the same time, I would be seriously misunderstood if it is thought that I, as the author, am trying to say that these nonforest types are finally reducible to or should be judged strictly in terms of the views of certain forest texts. The primary intention of this study is to clarify the voice of forest Buddhism in India; in so doing, it abstains from trying to do full justice to other Buddhist types. Maybe, in the end, we can best understand Indian Buddhism (or any religion, for that matter) not by arriving at some supposedly balanced and objective overview, but rather by hearing clearly the different voices that have spoken—without being too put off by contrary perspectives or trying too hard to resolve contradictions. The presumption of this, at least, lies at the basis of this study.

We in the West—perhaps I should say in the modern, increasingly secularized world as a whole—live with what is, when taken in the context of world religions, a remarkably devalued idea of human nature. We seem no longer to believe that human nature is perfectible or that genuine saints are possible. Such a view has, obviously, profound impacts on the way people think about and engage in (or do not engage in) the spiritual life. In my view, prevailing interpretations of Buddhism which, as we shall see, reduce the saints to peripheral actors in the tradition represents another, if perhaps more sophisticated, expression of this same modern devaluation. Buddhism may be seen essentially as an ethical system, an elegant philosophy, a practical psychology, a technique for dealing with mental distress, a cultural tradition, or a force of civilization. Rarely, however, is it seen primarily as a tradition that produces and celebrates genuine saints. Yet, at least in my reading, this is finally what Buddhism essentially is, and as long as this fact is not recognized, the specific genius of Buddhism is missed, a genius with the potential to provide a healthy challenge to our increasingly scientific, materialistic, and consumeristic view of human nature.

Boulder, Colorado R. A. R.
September 1993

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my indebtedness to a number of people who generously assisted me during the course of this study: Frank Reynolds, who read several drafts of the manuscript and provided helpful suggestions and encouragement at various points along the way; John Strong, who saw the manuscript in an early draft several years ago and subsequently acted as an important resource person for me; Jan Nattier, who gave this study a close and critical reading; Charles Prebish, who critiqued sections dealing with *vinaya;* Gregory Schopen for invaluable bibliographic help; Dan Getz, who kindly fielded my Sinological questions; Lama Ugyen Shenpen for help in locating Tibetan material; and John Rockwell and Jules Levinson, each of whom provided helpful suggestions. I want especially to thank Judith Simmer-Brown, my long-standing friend and colleague in the Buddhist Studies Department at Naropa Institute, who read several chapters and engaged in a lively dialogue with me as the ideas of this study took shape. Thanks also to Charles Long for his constant challenge to look "behind the scenes," not only of religion, but of the scholarship that seeks to understand it, and for his specific support of this project; and to the late Mircea Eliade and Joseph M. Kitagawa, for their personal examples and their encouragement. I want to thank my colleagues Bob Lester and David Carrasco of the University of Colorado for their support during the time this study was in progress. My appreciation goes to the Buddhist Studies students of the Naropa Institute and to the students of Religious Studies at the University of Colorado, where many of the ideas of this study were first tested. I also want to thank Virginia Boucher and her staff in the Interlibrary Loan Department at the University of Colorado for an exemplary success rate in procuring the resources needed for my research. Particular thanks go to the National Endowment for the Humanities for providing a fellowship underwriting the initial stages of my research; to Martha Bonzi for underwriting a semester of release time during the writing; to Lex Hixon, member of the Board of Trustees of the Naropa Institute, for generous grants facilitating the completion and publication of this book; and to Naropa Institute and its former presidents Judith Lief and Barbara Dilley for moral support and sabbatical grants, which helped me bring this study to completion. Thanks to L. S. Summer for her assistance; and special appreciation to Beverly Armstrong for her very substantial editorial contributions to this project. I owe a particular debt to the Ven. Chögyam Trungpa (1939–1987), who initially encouraged me to carry through a study of the Buddhist saints, of which this is the first part, and who suggested the initial questions and perspectives that led me into this fascinating territory. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to my wife, Lee, whose insight, warmth, and good sense have provided an important precondition for this study.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

CONVENTIONS

Pāli and Sanskrit terms are romanized following generally accepted practice. Tibetan is rendered according to the Wylie method and Chinese according to the Wade-Giles system. In the interests of stylistic consistency and to avoid creating unnecessary confusion for the nonspecialist reader, the Sanskrit versions of terms are used, generally also including cases where Pāli and Tibetan texts are being discussed. There are a few exceptions, of which the reader will be advised in the notes, in which the preference for Sanskrit is suspended, particularly in sections where Pāli texts alone are treated. In cases where it is important for the reader to know both the Sanskrit and Pāli of a term, both are given at first occurrence. Italicized foreign terms, unless otherwise noted, are Sanskrit.

Sanskrit words now commonly appearing in English are not italicized. The class names of the major types of Buddhist saints discussed in this book are not italicized, as all but one (the pratyekabuddha) now occur in English. Sanskrit terms, whether naturalized or italicized, are given in standard spelling with diacritics. Occasional exceptions are terms and place names that have become familiar in English in a different form (e.g., brahmin as opposed to *brāhmaṇa*).

Sanskrit and Pāli texts are referred to in their standard editions. Tibetan texts are generally referred to according to the Peking edition of the Tibetan *Tripiṭaka*, with exceptions noted. References to Chinese texts are to the Taishô *Tripiṭaka*, exceptions again noted. For the reader's convenience, citations to Buddhist texts are followed by references to European-language translations, where these exist. Original texts are usually cited by volume and page number of the edition (sometimes including line numbers when specific terms are in question), followed by volume and page number of the translation.

This book contains a great number of references, and citations to text editions and translations are particularly frequent. To help the reader keep track of which texts are being referred to, textual citations are generally given in the body of the text rather than in the notes. In order to minimize visual cluttering, I have adopted several conventions. First, I have generally used abbreviations for text titles and also for translators or translations when they are frequently cited. All of these are given in the list of abbreviations. Second, when a text is frequently cited, I have sometimes adopted a reference form for the original that may also be used to locate the passage in translation. This has been possible particularly in the cases of texts entirely or mostly in verse in which verses contain the same numbering in text edition and standard translation (for example, the *Theragāthā*, *Therīgāthā*, *Suttanipāta*, and *Dhammapada*). All such reference forms are explained in the

notes. Finally, when the same source is cited consecutively in a single paragraph, after the first reference, only the page number is given. Unless otherwise specified, when quoting from Buddhist texts, I follow existing translations. Quotations from French and German works represent my own translations unless otherwise noted.

ABBREVIATIONS

Primary Texts

Aa	*Aśokāvadāna*
Ak	*Abhidharmakośa*
Als	*Avalokita Sūtra*
Als-1	*Avalokana Sūtra*
An	*Añguttaranikāya*
An-c	*Añguttaranikāya* commentary
Ap	*Apadāna*
Ara	*Aśokarājāvadāna (A yü wang chuan)*
Ars	*Aśokarāja Sūtra (A yü wang ching)*
As	*Avadānaśataka*
Asp	*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*
Bbh	*Bodhisattvabhūmi*
Bc	*Buddhacarita*
Bca	*Bodhicaryāvatāra*
Cd	*Cullaniddesa*
Cp	*Candrapradīpa Sūtra (Srs* as quoted in *Ss)*
Csp	*Caturaśītisiddhapravṛtti*
Css	*Cūḷasuññata Sutta*
Cv	*Cullavagga*
Da	*Divyāvadāna*
Dbs	*Daśabhūmika Sūtra*
Dgn	*Dhutaguṇanirdeśa (Vimuktimārgadhutaguṇanirdeśa)*
Dhs	*Dharmasaṃgraha*
Dn	*Dīghanikāya*
Dp	*Dhammapada*
Dp-c	*Dhammapada* commentary *(Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā)*
Gbs	*Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts*
Gms	*Gilgit Manuscripts*
Is	*Isigili Sutta*
Iv	*Itivuttaka*
J	*Jātaka*
Jm	*Jātakamālā*
Kbdd	*bka'.babs.bdun.ldan*
Kn	*Khuddakanikāya*
Kp	*Kāśyapaparivarta*

Ks	*Khaggavisāṇa Sutta*
Las	*Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*
Lv	*Lalitavistara*
Mgb	*Mi.la'i.mgur.'bum*
Mmk	*Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*
Mn	*Majjhimanikāya*
Mp	*Milindapañha*
Mpds	*Mahāpadāna Sutta*
Mpps	*Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra (Ta chih tu lun)*
Mps	*Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (without reference to version)
Mps-p	*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (Pāli version of *Mps*)
Mrp	*Manorathapūraṇī* (commentary on the *Aṅguttaranikāya*)
Mss	*Mahāsuññata Sutta*
Mv	*Mahāvastu*
Mvy	*Mahāvyutpatti*
Na	*Nandimitrāvadāna* (in Chin.)
Nk	*Nidānakathā*
Pb	*Pratyekabuddhabhūmi*
Pds	*Pradakṣiṇā Sūtra*
Psp	*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*
Rgs	*Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā*
Rk	*Ratnakūṭa Sūtra* (as quoted in *Ss*)
Rps	*Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra*
Rps-m	*Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra* (minor) (in Tib.)
Rps-s	*Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā Sūtra* (as quoted in *Ss*)
Rr	*Ratnarāśi Sūtra* (as quoted in *Ss*)
Sds	*Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanāda Sūtra*
Sn	*Suttanipāta*
Sn-c	*Suttanipāta* commentary (*Paramattha–jotikā*, II)
Sns	*Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra*
Sp	*Sāratthappakāsinī*
Sps	*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*
Srs	*Samādhirāja Sūtra*
Ss	*Śikṣāsamuccaya*
Sv	*Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*
Svs	smaller *Sukhāvatīvyūha Sūtra*
Syn	*Saṃyuttanikāya*
Ta	*Theragāthā*
Ta-c	*Paramatthadīpanī* (*Theragāthā-aṭṭhakathā*, *Theragāthā* commentary)
Tcj	*Tā.ra.nā.tha'i.rgya.gar.chos.'byung*
Ti	*Therīgāthā*
Ti-c	*Paramatthadīpanī* (*Therīgāthā-vaṇṇanā*, *Therīgāthā* commentary)
Ud	*Udāna*
Up	*Ugraparipṛcchā Sūtra* (as quoted in Ss)
Vcp	*Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*
Vmm	*Vimuttimagga*

Vms	*vinaya* of the Mūlasarvāstivādins (Skt., in *Gms*)
Vns	*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa Sūtra*
V-p	*vinaya* (Pāli)
Vsm	Visuddhimagga
V-t	*vinaya* (Tibetan)

Miscellaneous Abbreviations

B.	Beal 1869
BHSD	*Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary* (Edgerton 1970)
BR.	Bendall and Rouse 1922
Bg.	Burlingame 1921
Bp.	Bapat 1964
C.	Cowell 1895–1913
C.R.	C.A.F. Rhys Davids
Cg.	Chang 1962
Chin.	Chinese
Ch.	Chavannes 1910–35
Cz.	Conze 1973b
D.	Derge edition of the Tibetan *Tripiṭaka*
E.	Ensink 1952
ER	*Encyclopedia of Religion* (Eliade 1987)
ERE	*Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Hastings 1908–26)
Eh.	Ehara, Soma Thera, and Kheminda Thera 1961
Eng.	English
F.	Feer 1891
H.	Horner 1938–66
Hn.	Horner 1954–59
IIR	Indo-Iranian Reprints
Jns.	Jones 1949–56
K.	Kloppenborg 1974
Kn.	Kern 1884
L.	Lamotte 1935
Lm.	Lamotte 1958
LC.	Lévi and Chavannes 1916
N.	Ñyāṇamoli 1976
Nr.	Norman 1985
P.	Pāli
Pk.	Peking edition of the Tibetan *Tripiṭaka*
Pkt.	Prakrit
pr.	prose
Prz.	Przyluski 1923
PTSD	*The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* (Rhys Davids and Stede 1921–25)
R.	Rockhill 1884
Rb.	Robinson 1979

RW.	C.A.F. Rhys Davids and Woodward 1917–30
S.	Speyer 1895
SED	*Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Monier-Williams 1899)
Skt.	Sanskrit
St.	Strong 1983
Sz.	Suzuki 1932
T.	Taishô *Tripiṭaka*
T.R.	T. W. Rhys Davids
TED	*Tibetan-English Dictionary* (Das 1970)
TSD	*Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary* (Chandra 1986)
Tib.	Tibetan
W.	Wiltshire 1990
Wd.	Woodward 1935
WH.	Woodward and Hare 1932–36
Wts.	Watters 1904–5

BUDDHIST SAINTS IN INDIA

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

Modern buddhology has long recognized that Indian Buddhism shows a particular predilection for its saints, who are many and various.[1] In fact, one cannot examine any piece of Buddhist evidence without coming across one or another of these figures, typically associated as they are with the important texts, places, events, lineages, teachings, practices, schools, and movements of Indian Buddhism. The Buddhist saints, at least within the traditional perspective, are an unfailing source of illumination and creativity, and whatever is good may ultimately be traced to them. It is, then, an ironic fact that modern scholarship has paid relatively little attention to the Buddhist saints.

There seem to be two reasons for this neglect: the place of the saints in the Buddhist texts themselves and certain modern scholarly presuppositions concerning the saints. Although in what follows each of these factors will be explored in detail, some initial comment will be useful.

In spite of the fact that Buddhist saints do appear throughout the evidence, in the scenario described by most Indian Buddhist texts—and particularly those best known in the West—the saints simply do not stand out. Rather, they are part of the assumed background and context, in relation to which the history of the dharma (P., *dhamma*) unfolds. Often enough, Buddhist texts focus their attention upon other matters, such as doctrinal exposition, philosophical or psychological analysis, refutation of false theories, clarification of the conventions and procedures of Buddhist monastic life, and so on. When the saints do occupy the foreground, typically they are either seen to have lived in a remote bygone era or understood as significant because they embody a state in the far distant future to which contemporary Buddhists may aspire.

There is another reason why the saints have not been given more attention in modern scholarship, namely, certain attitudes and beliefs that scholarly interpreters take for granted in treating the Indian evidence. Though appearing in the texts, the saints do not impress because scholars of Buddhism have learned to see them as not significant. Or, perhaps more accurately, we have learned to see them as not having specific, important, and recognizable roles within Indian Buddhist history. Even where prominent in the texts, they are not clearly seen, either because we tend to bypass just that evidence where they appear or because, when we do examine such evidence, our questions and interests are elsewhere and we look past them.

This second reason for the saints' invisibility can be illuminated by the psychoanalytic metaphor. When scholars took up the study of Buddhism in the nineteenth century, for specific historical and cultural reasons that I shall touch upon,

they typically became enamored of certain trends within Buddhism. In this process, they "repressed" the figure of the Buddhist saint. Although visible in much of the evidence that was studied, the saints' full presence was not consciously acknowledged and their kind of Buddhism was, to a large extent, excluded from the conscious viewpoint of early buddhologists. This repression, the effects of which are still visible today, resulted—I shall argue—in a one-sided view of Buddhism, one in which arguments were constructed to work around the saints and make sense of phenomena deriving directly from them by reference to other factors. This scholarly repression, then, calls for a redressing of the balance, for a reintegration into buddhological consciousness of the important and powerful but repressed force represented by the Buddhist saints.

The metaphor is worth extending. It may be argued that the Buddhist saints cannot be studied as a distinct phenomenon because in the evidence they are so tied in with virtually every level and trend of Indian Buddhism. But the web of Indian Buddhism in which they are imbedded is far from seamless. In fact, the precise way in which the Buddhist saints are placed within the various kinds of evidence almost always invites reflection. There are often tensions, oppositions, and contradictions without any immediately obvious explanation. As in psychoanalysis, so in the study of history, an exploration of such anomalies can provide considerable insight into formative processes, and this insight, in turn, can tell us much about subsequent history. The result is a more integrated and satisfying understanding of the phenomena under consideration. It is toward such a reintegrative process that the present study aims.

This kind of reintegration will show, on the one hand, that the saints have had a considerable historical importance, have been central actors within Indian Buddhism during its major periods, and have played crucial if as yet largely unappreciated roles in certain epoch-making events and developments of Indian Buddhist history. On the other hand, it will show that they stand much closer to the core nature and intentions of Indian Buddhism than has been previously recognized. To continue the psychoanalytic metaphor, the reintegration proposed here has considerable implications that will require, among other things, a reorientation of the conscious viewpoint of scholars regarding not only the Buddhist saints but also the way in which we conceptualize the very nature and structure of Buddhism in India.

The present work originated as a consequence of study of the Tantric Buddhist saints or siddhas in which I have been engaged for a number of years. Uncertain as to how, or even whether, this type of saint was connected with more conventional Indian Buddhist ideals, I began to examine the other kinds of Buddhist saints in the Indian evidence. At the beginning of this process, it did not occur to me that it would be possible to arrive at a general type of "Buddhist saint" within the Indian evidence, nor did I even frame this issue as being interesting or important. However, as the work proceeded, it gradually became clear that the various types and categories of the Indian Buddhist saints seemed to have some important things in common. Moreover, interestingly enough, I began to see that these continuities had not really been discussed by writers dealing with the saints. More

interesting still, it began to appear that what they *did* say about the saints often contradicted what I was actually finding in the texts. It furthermore appeared that much of what was said about the saints was being said, not to shed light upon the saints themselves, but for other reasons. The saints, it appeared, were being used to construct an overall picture of Indian Buddhism, but one in which, ironically, they were given little essential role to play. It seemed to me that the Indian Buddhist saints needed to be examined in their own right. Finally, I suspected that if they were more fully recognized, they might reveal some important things about Indian Buddhist history and the scholarship that seeks to understand it. These—they can only be called initial impressions—formed the original inspiration behind the present study.

It is one thing to have impressions such as these and another to try to explore them in detail, think them through, and write them up both to clarify one's own understanding and to make them comprehensible to others. Among what are undoubtedly many possible approaches, I selected one with the following principal themes.

1. It was obvious that the various figures functioning as realized beings in the Indian Buddhist evidence are invariably understood to exemplify one or another major type of saint, including: (1) the buddha ("enlightened one"), initiator of Buddhist tradition in any era, the prime exemplar of which is Śākyamuni Buddha; (2) the pratyekabuddha (P., *paccekabuddha*) ("enlightened by oneself"), a solitary saint who lives in remote regions and meditates; (3) the arhant (P., *arahant*) ("worthy [of offerings]"), enlightened disciple of a buddha or later saint within Nikāya Buddhism;[2] (4) the bodhisattva (P., *bodhisatta*) ("enlightenment-being"), who aspires to the realization of a buddha and whose special charisma derives from his aspiration to this supreme enlightenment; and (5) the siddha ("perfected one"), the enlightened ideal of the Vajrayāna. It became clear that each of these to some extent requires separate and specific treatment.[3]

2. Although these five types of saint are in many ways quite different from one another and often represent quite disparate traditions, it is insufficient to treat them as altogether separate. In fact, functioning as one or another variation on the Buddhist theme of enlightenment, they not surprisingly also possess certain things in common. What *is* surprising is that in many cases these continuities are rather more extensive and specific than one might at first suspect. This fact suggests the utility of framing these continuities in a single, overarching type, "the Buddhist saint." As we shall see, once framed, this general type, in its basic structure, reveals itself to be relatively consistent from one geographical region to another, across the lines of traditions, and at widely differing time periods.

3. The siddha needs to be excluded from this overarching type, at least for the time being, for two reasons. First, the siddha is, among the Buddhist saints, a particularly distinct type, considerably more removed from the other types of saint than these latter are from one another. Second, the Tantric saint is bound up with sufficiently difficult historical and hermeneutical problems so as to place this type outside the reach of the present, general study. Thus I leave aside the siddha and in this book deal with the first four types: the buddha, pratyekabuddha, arhant, and bodhisattva.

4. This typological approach was chosen not simply for reasons of clarity and convenience. In addition, to a significant extent, it reflects the character of the saints as evidenced in the Indian Buddhist texts. Generally, specific saints tend to approximate the traditional types: if a particular person is understood to be a Buddhist saint, and moreover a particular type of Buddhist saint, certain kinds of things are expected of him or her. The type and subtypes identified in what follows, then, are not purely scholarly creations, but are—more or less—reflective of the thinking of Indian Buddhists about their saints. Often, these types are implicit and taken for granted in the evidence; sometimes—particularly at moments of confusion and crisis—they become the explicit subjects of debate.[4]

This means that in studying the Buddhist saints, one is to a large extent dealing with relatively stable, stereotypical ideas about where saints come from, who they are, and what they do. In the evidence, moreover, it is these ideas that are of paramount interest to the Buddhist hagiographers, more or less at the expense of much appetite for individual—"historical," we should say—idiosyncrasy. This should not be surprising, for, as Oldenberg observed long ago, "India is, above all, the land of types and one should not seek [in accounts of the saints] individuality."[5] In Indian Buddhism, then, if one knows the commonly held expectations, one has taken a large step toward understanding its saints.[6]

5. The emphasis on types discloses a fundamental structure in the way Indian Buddhism understands its saints: one attains sainthood through the process of divesting oneself of the personal and individual. Lest this emphasis on the collective be misread, however, this does not mean that the journey to sainthood is not understood as a personal—indeed, intimate—one; for, to the Indian mind, it most certainly is. It also does not mean that the saints do not—in a certain way—take their own personal history seriously, for they do. And finally, it does not mean that the great saints are entirely lacking in historical uniqueness. In fact, the whole question of the relation of the impersonal to the personal in Indian, and particularly Buddhist, religious life has yet to be adequately understood in the modern West. It is almost as if we moderns feel that to be a complete individual, one must sacrifice collective patterns of identity, and that by approximating such collective patterns, one sacrifices one's individuality. The Buddhist saints present a different alternative altogether, and some appreciation of this alternative, which I attempt to develop in this study, is essential to a correct reading of who they are.

6. The emphasis on types is not without its difficulties for the scholarly interpreter. Although religious India tends to orient itself by types, there remains the challenge of getting the types straight and of accurately discerning their specific historical roles and relations. For example, when Indian Buddhists think about their saints in terms of a given type, such as an arhant, they are not always thinking of the same pattern. In addition, where the same pattern is in question, interpretations may vary. Finally, even when certain typical variations on subtypes and their interpretations can be identified, one still finds many examples that run counter to type, that can be clarified only through reference to history, and in which individual, textual, institutional, sectarian, and similar considerations come into play. Attention to divergencies and exceptions, then, must form an essential part of any attempt to understand the saints of Indian Buddhism.

This work relies particularly upon two intersecting and complementary traditions of modern scholarship: buddhology, encompassing the work of scholars approaching the study of Buddhism from a variety of angles and in terms of its many cultural traditions; and the history of religions, including both its general attention to religious history and structure and its specific examination of the ideals (myth, symbol, and rite) and the actuals (social, political, and economic contexts) of religious life. The mutual stimulation and fructification of these two fields has generated a sizable and valuable collection of works touching in one way or another upon the Buddhist saints, including text editions, translations, and secondary sources pertinent both to the various Indian Buddhist saintly types and to the Buddha, his realized disciples, and later saints.[7] Although these works touch upon nearly every important aspect of the Buddhist saints, taken as a whole and in the context of the present discussion, they remain incomplete in two respects. First, they usually do not take the Buddhist saints as their primary datum and methodological center. Second, they generally remain isolated, making little connection with one another. The result is that questions concerning the nature of the Buddhist saints and their implications for an understanding of Indian Buddhist history as a whole have not been explored. What has been missing so far is, in short, a sustained attempt to assemble the various pieces of the puzzle of the Buddhist saints into a coherent picture.

The present work again takes up several of the fundamental questions that have played an important role in defining and enlivening Buddhist studies throughout its brief history. For example, is Buddhism more accurately defined as a religious tradition or an ethico-philosophical system? The latter characterization prevails today—perhaps because it is particularly compatible with a modern, secular orientation—and so Buddhism is most often seen as a rational, ethical, and philosophical system. By contrast, the interpretation that defines Buddhism as primarily religious emphasizes its superhuman, supernatural, mythic, and cultic dimensions—all of which are fully accessible only to the eye of faith.

The debate over the nonreligious as opposed to the religious character of Buddhism is as old as the field of Buddhist studies itself.[8] No one, of course, has attempted to argue that historical Buddhism is either without ethico-philosophical or without religious trends. Over the past century or so, the debate has focused rather on what Buddhism may have been in its earliest or at least its most essential manifestations.[9] This debate, particularly in its initial stages, is now a bit hard to follow because proponents on both sides used evidence and arguments now discredited, and because of the occasionally outlandish extremes to which they were prone to carry their points.[10] Nevertheless, although the debate no longer occupies center stage in the study of Buddhism, it does continue and remains important in setting the parameters of the discussion of the character of Buddhism as a tradition.[11] This study, given the subject matter of the Buddhist saints as well as my own interests and training, focuses on the more religious dimensions of Indian Buddhism. Nevertheless, as will be seen, the question of the religious versus the ethico-philosophical nature of Indian Buddhism is more fruitfully discussed when it is not framed as a set of either/or alternatives but rather explored as the complex dialectic of two trends.

This study also raises the related question of the kind of evidence that is most useful in attempting to understand Indian Buddhism. In his magnum opus, *Borobuḍur* (1935), Paul Mus suggests that the type of evidence one chooses to examine significantly affects the conclusions one reaches about Buddhism. In this regard, Mus criticizes the prevailing buddhological emphasis on explicit philosophical evidence and the resultant view of Buddhism as essentially philosophical. Mus points out that philosophy is a specialized domain of Indian Buddhism. It is, in fact, far more incidental to historical Buddhism than has been recognized and does not reflect the actual priorities of the Indian tradition, wherein visual art, hagiography, and ritual, expressed largely in the idiom of symbolism,[12] tend to be more central and definitive.[13] For Mus, it is such concrete expressions, reflecting the exigencies of Buddhist religious life, that are primary. They, in turn, give birth to the relatively ancillary phenomena of the variety of highly refined and sophisticated conceptual abstractions that make up scholastic tradition.[14] According to Mus, if one wants to understand Buddhist philosophy, one may follow modern buddhology and study philosophical texts. But if one wants to understand Buddhism as a whole, one must take a different and much more comprehensive view of the evidence of the tradition.

Mus, in his search for Indian Buddhism, took the Buddhist monument of the stūpa (P., *thūpa*) as his focus and his organizing principle. The present study, in its attempt to understand Indian Buddhism, takes the Buddhist saints as its central cipher. In addition, it follows in the Musian legacy by examining a kind of evidence that, like the stūpa, is not essentially philosophical (although like the stūpa it certainly has profound and far-reaching philosophical implications)—namely, Buddhist hagiography, as found in independent texts, sections of texts, and the background particularly of much historical writing and discussions of discipline (e.g., the *vinaya*). As in the case of the stūpa prior to Mus, hagiography has generally been considered by modern buddhology to be of secondary importance, particularly when compared with more scholastic texts.[15] Yet hagiography is particularly interesting and revealing because here one finds a Buddhism that is alive and in evolution, and also relatively unself-conscious. The more scholastic Buddhist texts typically argue for certain views of doctrine, discipline, or history. Such concerns are not entirely absent from hagiography, but in hagiography one more often finds Buddhists disclosing their deep-seated beliefs and values.[16] In addition, as Migot has pointed out,[17] successive generations of learned compilers and editors have tended to tamper less with hagiography than with other genres of texts,[18] and thus it can often provide particularly effective access to early patterns of Buddhist experience and understanding.[19]

This study raises another, related question, that of the relation of Buddhism to its non-Buddhist, Indian religious environment. In earlier buddhology, there was a lively debate between those who held that the Buddha definitively separated himself from his Hindu religious context[20] and those who held that the Buddha and his teachings are best understood as expressions of that Hindu world.[21] Modern buddhology, perhaps influenced by the preferences of Buddhist tradition itself, has tended to prefer the first of these two alternatives, sometimes even taking it as axiomatic that Indian Buddhism must in some essential and fundamental way

be different from its non-Buddhist context. It is significant that this position is not independent of the view one takes of the basic character of Buddhism and of the evidence most definitive of the tradition. The view of Buddhism as distinct from its environment is closely linked with the assumption that real Buddhism is given in its philosophical expressions (here Buddhism argues strenuously for its separate identity) and that its more purely religious dimensions are epiphenomenal, perhaps even non-Buddhist (here Buddhism participates freely and without complaint in pan-Indian patterns of religiosity). In fact, as we shall see, a preference for philosophical evidence tends to bring to light and emphasize differences among the different Buddhist orientations and, even more starkly, Buddhism's disjunction from the non-Buddhist schools, both orthodox and nonorthodox. By way of contrast, examining the kinds of evidence more closely reflecting the religious life as lived (myths, symbols, and rituals) tends to bring to light continuities not only among the various Buddhist schools but also among the Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious worlds.

Finally, this study considers the question of whether anything can be known about the teaching of the Buddha or the earliest Buddhist community. In the early days of Buddhist studies, there was the hope, sometimes even the presumption, that something definitive could in fact be known about Buddhist origins. In this fascinating chapter of Western intellectual history, scholars, with a remarkable engagement and fervor, developed a variety of often quite different and even dramatically opposed reconstructions of this hypothesized "original Buddhism." The variety of reconstructions itself reflects just how uncertain and unstable is the evidence of earliest Buddhism. In the past half century or so, particularly with the increasing recognition of the complex history of the early communities and texts, it has come to be widely agreed that nothing definitive can be known about the Buddha himself or the Buddhism he founded.

In what follows, I certainly have no intention of disputing this well-founded scepticism, at least with respect to what can be known in the way of historical details of Śākyamuni Buddha's person and life or the specific teachings and practices that he taught. At the same time, however, I find that the current agnosticism concerning Buddhism's early days is unnecessarily extreme. I shall in fact suggest that through a recasting of the question, a way may be opened for a search, not for specific biographical traits or doctrines, but rather for the general character and shape of the early tradition and community. The evidence leads to a reasonable reconstruction, and this in turn permits some informative questions to be asked and some provocative hypotheses to be developed.

The questions mentioned here—whether Indian Buddhism is essentially ethico-philosophical or religious, what kind of evidence should be used to understand it, whether the tradition is best seen as a separation from or continuation of its non-Buddhist environment, and what may have constituted the earliest tradition—are as large and provocative as the field of Buddhist studies itself. In this work, I propose a variety of perspectives on these questions and sometimes suggest some possible answers. At the same time, it must be admitted that it is probably the questions themselves rather than any possible answers to them that, in the final analysis, reveal the most about Indian Buddhism. It may also be that in the two

alternatives—attempting to provide definitive answers to the large questions (as earlier scholars tried to do) and abandoning these questions as unanswerable (the prevailing trend)—students of Buddhism have missed a third and much more interesting and promising alternative. This is to acknowledge the essential importance of the large questions to our understanding of Buddhism and therefore the ongoing need to reflect upon and debate them, but to carry out that reflection and debate with an appreciation that they likely will remain beyond the reach of our individual or collective minds to resolve in any final sense.

Notes

1. This introduction contains a general orientation to this study in the main body of the text and a discussion of bibliographic and other more technical matters in the notes.

2. That is, the sects *(nikāya)* of the "eighteen schools," what is usually but infelicitously termed "pre-Mahāyāna" (there is uncertainty as to when the Mahāyāna originated and what, within these schools, historically precedes the Mahāyāna) or "Hīnayāna Buddhism" (a term of Mahāyānist deprecation, at best referring to a very limited number of phenomena within the historical Nikāya schools).

3. As we shall see, each of these types in turn has its subtypes. For example, buddhas include not only Śākyamuni Buddha but also buddhas of the past and future and, in the Mahāyāna, celestial buddhas presently presiding over different buddha fields *(buddhakṣetra)* throughout space. The pratyekabuddhas, or "solitary buddhas," are found, according to tradition, as one or the other of two major subtypes, living alone or in groups. To the type of the arhant belong saints of two, three, five, or more subtypes. The bodhisattvas likewise include beings of different sorts: those who are human and those who have transcended the human sphere; those who live in cities, those who live in forests, and monastics. And the siddhas also include a variety of types of Tantric saint, including wandering yogins, monks, and laypeople.

4. The intention behind this study is to identify what Joachim Wach defined as "ideal types"(see 1951)—in the present context, the Buddhist saint or one of the subtypes (buddha, pratyekabuddha, etc.). These forms are not inert phenomena but rather formulations of identity that were, presumably, taken on by certain people and, at the same time, experienced and understood as such by ancient Indian society.

One may seek ideal types on a potentially infinite number of levels of generality. For example, this study seeks, on the most general level, the ideal type of the Buddhist saint, more specifically of buddhas, pratyekabuddhas, arhants, and bodhisattvas, and more specifically still, of subcategories of these types of saint. Any given ideal type, such as those dealt with here, are arrived at through a dialectical interaction of three levels of analysis. First, one identifies and analyzes the various images of the saint in question in the texts. Second, one seeks to interpret the significance of what one finds. Third, one attempts to arrive at a valid picture of the saint, focusing on that inner logic and meaning that defines the saint as a type.

a. From an examination of the evidence one compiles an inventory of elements of the saint, a kind of statistical picture detailing the features that are contained by all, most, some, or only a few saints of the type one is seeking. This picture reveals no more than how the texts explicitly represent the type.

b. In the second level of analysis, one attempts to put together the various images of the type into a coherent picture. This level requires arriving at an understanding of the *significance* of the

members of the inventory of images. At this level, one must address the question of the impact of the history and viewpoint of the original hagiographers and their communities, as well as of the successive generations of hagiographers and communities, upon the content of the text. At this level, one needs to pay special attention to questions arising from the appearance of discrepancies and contradictions in one's inventory, both within one text and across the lines of traditions. To what extent are discrepancies within one text or among several texts due to basic differences in the understanding of the type and to what extent are they due to more external factors of the text's history?

c. Finally, one attempts to arrive at a valid picture of the Buddhist saint. The saint is an ideal with a particular inherent logic and meaning, which can be seen both by devotees and detractors as well as by more removed observers such as ourselves. Those in the communities and contexts behind the texts about the saint have some idea—though not necessarily always the same one—of what a saint is and what it means to be one. It is an understanding of this ideal, as it makes sense to ancient Indians, that we seek.

Wach observed that, in seeking the ideal type, one sometimes finds a difference between the statistical appearance of the type in the evidence and the ideal type to which one finally comes in one's analysis. Most often, it will turn out that the essential character and meaning of a given type of saint is revealed by those images of the saint that are most frequent. However, sometimes the statistically infrequent example throws into bold relief some essential element of the structure of the ideal type, thus shedding light on the coherence of the type as a whole.

5. Oldenberg 1934, 156–57, quoted by Migot 1954, 409. Migot adds, "what is striking is [the saints'] lack of personality; each one is stereotypical . . . [and] depersonalized" (1954, 409).

6. The focus on the general means that the treatment of the specific classes of saints or the individual saints will need to be strictly selective. There are, of course, often marked differences among various textual expressions of any type of saint, and in what follows many of these will be noted. However, it will be argued, such differences presuppose and occur within fidelity to the overall type and subtypes of the "Buddhist saint." Moreover, at this stage of our understanding of the saints, concern for the specificity of the saints appropriately defers to a concern for what is generally the case. In spite of what is lost through such an approach, much is to be gained, for it enables us to identify, among the saints, broad and distinctive patterns within Indian Buddhist history, to examine some of their variations, and to begin to develop some hypotheses about their impacts on the history of Indian Buddhism.

7. The following bibliographic summary is no more than selective and representative and also leaves aside the Tantric saints. Specific page references are provided in the following chapters and so are not included here. For additional references, see the following chapters. If one deems Śākyamuni himself to be a Buddhist saint (for some researchers, as we shall see, Buddha Śākyamuni must in some important respects be excluded from the idea of a Buddhist saint), one must initially mention the examination of Buddha Śākyamuni that, taking its lead from the late-nineteenth-century quest for the historical Jesus, is reflected in ever more accurate translations of key texts (e.g., T. W. Rhys Davids 1880; Rockhill 1884; Foucaux 1884–92; Johnston 1936, 1937; Jones 1949–56); and increasingly detailed and sophisticated secondary studies (e.g., Oldenberg 1881; Senart 1882; Thomas 1927; Foucher 1949; Lamotte 1947–48; Bareau 1963, 1970–71, 1975, 1979, etc.). Beyond this, beginning toward the end of the nineteenth century, one finds an initial though small trickle of interest in the other saints. This is exemplified first in the editing of a number of texts containing accounts of Buddhist saints (see the "Texts" section of the bibliography for examples); second, in the translations of several works giving evidence of the Buddhist saints (e.g., Cowell 1895–1913; Watters 1904–5; Beal 1869, 1884; Feer 1891; C.A.F. Rhys Davids 1909, 1913; Chavannes 1910–35; third, in the historical works of buddholo-

gists that refer in their course to the saints (e.g., Burnouf, La Vallée Poussin, Przyluski, etc.); and fourth, in the works of a few scholars who have explicitly devoted attention to specific topics connected with the Buddhist saints (e.g., Feer 1881; Kumagusu 1899; Maung Kin 1903; Duroiselle 1904). Nevertheless, these early studies generally remained isolated notices, largely unappreciated and peripheral to the major direction of buddhology as a whole.

During the past three-quarters of a century or so, the Buddhist saints have continued to be the subject of some attention, in text editions, translations, sections of books, dictionaries and encyclopedias, articles, and, lately, a few monographs focusing on the saints. During this period a considerable range of areas and topics within the field of the Buddhist saints has engaged the attention of scholars, as indicated by the following summary.

a. Introductory surveys of saints and sainthood in Buddhism (e.g., Schmidt 1947; Lamotte 1958, 765–75; Bareau 1972; Spae 1979).

b. General discussions of saints in early Buddhism (e.g., Schayer 1935; Falk 1943; Lamotte 1958).

c. The translation of texts particularly pertinent to the Buddhist saints (e.g., Burlingame 1921; Przyluski 1923; Horner 1938–66; Jones 1949–56; Hofinger 1954; Ensink 1952; Lamotte 1962; Ehara, Soma Thera, and Kheminda Thera 1961; Norman 1969, 1971).

d. Specific saints (e.g., Buddha [as above in this note]; Śāriputra [Migot 1954; Nyanaponika 1966]; Gavāṃpati [Przyluski 1926–28; Lévy 1957; Bareau 1958]; Piṇḍolabhāradvāja [Strong 1979]; Upagupta [Strong 1992]; Devadatta [Mukherjee 1966; Bareau 1988–89]; Nāgārjuna [Walleser 1922; Jan 1970]). Lamotte, in 1944–80 and, to a lesser extent, 1962, mentions a number of Buddhist saints and typically offers a wealth of bibliographical and other information on them. Couture (1988, 33) has provided a useful list of references to Lamotte's discussion of thirty-four of the more important of these saints. Material in Lamotte's two works particularly relevant to the present study is cited in subsequent chapters.

e. Groups of saints (e.g., Lévi and Chavannes 1916; De Visser 1922–23; Bareau 1959].

f. Dogmatic and scholastic conceptions of the different types of "pre-Tantric" saints, including buddhas (e.g., Vogel 1954; Gombrich 1980; Harvey 1983); pratyekabuddhas (e.g., La Vallée Poussin 1908–27; Kloppenborg 1974; Norman 1983; Wiltshire 1990); arhants (e.g., Horner 1936; Bareau 1957; Katz 1980; Bond 1984); and bodhisattvas (e.g., Dayal 1932; Gomez 1977; Basham 1981).

g. Specific codes and traditions reflective of the Buddhist saints (e.g., Bapat 1937a, 1937b, 1964; Filliozat 1963; Khantipalo 1965; Jaini 1970; Keyes 1982; Carrithers 1983; Tambiah 1984).

h. Symbolism of Buddhist saints (e.g., Mus 1935; Bareau 1969).

i. Cults of living saints (e.g., Keyes 1982; Carrithers 1983; Tambiah 1984).

j. Cults of saints "passed beyond" in stūpas, images, etc. (e.g., Combaz 1932–36; Mus 1935; Bénisti 1960; Bareau 1962, 1974, 1975, 1980, etc.; Dallapiccola 1980).

k. The nature of Buddhist hagiography as such (e.g., Bareau 1963 and 1970–71; Tambiah 1984; Migot 1954).

l. Buddhist saints as actors within the sociological world of Buddhism, as identified by anthropologists (e.g., Carrithers 1983; Tambiah 1984; Bunnag 1973).

m. Bibliographical works, including summaries of primary literature on the saints as well as secondary studies (e.g., Lamotte 1944–80; Reynolds 1981, 260–93; Couture 1988).

8. See Guy Welbon's discussion of this issue (1968, 194–295).

9. Some early buddhologists, among them Stcherbatsky (e.g., 1923) and T. W. Rhys Davids (e.g., 1877), held that the Buddha originally taught and that Buddhism most essentially is an ethical and/or philosophical teaching in which the mythic and cultic are secondary. This interpretation sees the Buddha as a human being who cultivated his own person through certain disciplines, won a state of moral and intellectual purity, and taught the sober path he had followed to others. Other early buddhologists, among them La Vallée Poussin (e.g., 1898, 44–47), C.A.F. Rhys Davids (e.g., 1931, 1ff.), Keith (e.g., 1923, 61–68), and Schayer (e.g., 1935), have emphasized the more strictly religious elements in

defining the Buddha's teaching and the essence of Buddhism. Trends in the interpretation of Buddhism as a religion have included notions that, from the earliest times, the master himself was seen as an embodiment of ultimate reality, endowed with a supernatural and mythical character, who possessed magical and miraculous powers, elicited the fervent devotion and cultic response of his disciples, and taught others the same mystical goal that he himself embodied (Welbon 1968, 194–295).

10. For example, those favoring the ethico-philosophical character of Buddhism sometimes affirmed also its nihilism. Stcherbatsky, for example, speaks of the final Buddhist attainment as "a blank" (1923, 50). Those holding for the religious character of Buddhism have sometimes fallen prey to essentialism. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, for example, felt that the Buddha originally taught an *ātman* ("eternal self") doctrine and in this respect did not differ from his Hindu environment (see Murti's discussion [1960, 20ff.]).

11. In more recent times, for example, variants of the ethico-philosophical interpretation have been advanced by scholars such as Lamotte (e.g., 1958, 708 and 712–73) and Bareau (e.g., 1980), while versions of the religious interpretation have been put forward by scholars such as Mus (e.g., 1935) and Snellgrove (e.g., 1973). It is intriguing that the final reading given Buddhism by proponents on either side of the issue has not changed very much in the interim.

12. Mus developed a sophisticated description of the dynamics of religious symbolism, dealing with the genesis of symbols; their development, elaboration, devaluation, fragmentation into parts; assimilation to or combination with other symbols; retention, alteration, or inversion of meaning; and so on (see Victoria Urubshurow's useful summary, 1988). As we shall see, an appreciation of dynamics such as these is essential to a proper understanding of the Buddhist saints.

13. Schopen points out that although nontextual (archaeological) and textual evidence of Buddhism has presented itself from the beginning of Buddhist studies, Western buddhology has exhibited "an overriding textual orientation" (1991, 4), which Schopen finds in buddhology early (e.g., Burnouf) and contemporary (e.g., de Jong). Schopen points out that texts—and, moreover, the kind of texts favored by buddhologists—tend to articulate abstract ideals rather than concrete religious practices. They show "what a small atypical part of the Buddhist community wanted that community to believe or practice" (3). Unfortunately, however, buddhology has tended to take these abstract ideals as if they reflected actual practice. The end result has been that the overriding textual orientation of Western buddhology has led to a picture of Buddhism that has no reliable relation to actual Buddhist practice (see Schopen 1991).

14. Mus argues that Buddhism is more—and more essentially—a praxis than a philosophical enterprise. This suggests that those phenomena standing closest to praxis—symbolism and ritual as they are expressed in art and legend (or hagiography)—are extremely valuable indicators of Buddhism as such. Mus cites Foucher's comment that at a certain point in Indian Buddhist history, the thinkers and the sculptors parted ways, with the sculptors moving ahead of the thinkers. Then Mus remarks, "In reality, it is the collective imagination and cultic practice that anticipate the creation of theoretical forms. And art and legend have but the benefit of reflecting more immediately this natural process" (1935, 1:70).

15. Although Mus's preferred form of evidence is iconography, he frequently mentions the intimate relation of iconography and hagiography and the close proximity of both to the religious life of noninstitutionalized Buddhism in India (e.g., 1935, 1:72).

16. See Hofinger's remarks in his *Le Congres du Lac Anavatapta* (1954, 15–23). Hofinger's characterization of the character and contents of the *Sthavirāvadāna* applies well to Buddhist hagiography as a genre.

17. See Migot's comments (1954, 533). While in the saints we cannot always be confident of encountering historical individuals, at least in our modern Western sense of the term, we do meet with another type of historical individuality, namely, that of traditions, movements, and trends. The Buddhist saints have become noteworthy to Buddhist authors because they exhibit in their lives and characters the personalities of specific Indian Buddhist aspirations, ideas, and communities. As Migot observed four decades ago, "This particular character of [saintly] persons, though inconvenient for the writing of personal biographies, is perhaps an advantage if one wishes . . . to seek behind the 'type' the tendency of the group which he represents and the place of this group in the history of Buddhist doctrines and sects" (1954, 409). As we shall see, the Buddhist saints can become invaluably revealing lenses through which various broad patterns of Indian Buddhist life may be viewed.

18. Migot notes that the hagiography of the Buddha provides an exception to this rule. There are other important exceptions, a number of which will be noted in the discussion of individual saints.

19. It should be noted that the written evidence of Buddhism is notoriously difficult to date with any precision. Manuscripts can, of course, be dated, but this does not tell us when a given text was written down for the first time nor when it may have been first assembled as a discrete (perhaps oral) entity. More important, it does not tell us when the different sections of the text or the material contained therein originated. The texts and portions of texts that concern themselves with saints add special difficulties to the dating process because, as we shall see, although Buddhist texts not infrequently contain hagiographical material, this is often presupposed by the text as its assumed background. This background is generally very hard to place or date. For the immediate goals of this study, fortunately, a close dating of material within texts or of texts themselves is not a primary desideratum, since what is sought here is a pattern, some of its exemplifications, and its implications. At the same time, the distinguishing of types and subtypes of saints sometimes brings to light developmental trends among the saints, and these in turn can suggest significant temporal patterns and sequences.

20. E.g., Oldenberg, T. W. Rhys Davids.

21. E.g., La Vallée Poussin (1927, 259), C.A.F. Rhys Davids, Senart (1882, 255), Schayer.

1

The Buddhist Saints and the Two-Tiered Model of Buddhism

The relative lack of scholarly attention given to the Buddhist saints cannot be explained by an absence of data, for these figures are many and are documented throughout Indian Buddhist history. The primary reason for this neglect, it seems, has to do with a prevailing interpretation given to these figures and, more fundamentally, of Buddhism itself, an interpretation referred to in this study as the "two-tiered model of Buddhism."[1] Any discussion of the Buddhist saints must be preceded by the identification of this model and an assessment of its impact on any attempt to understand the saints.

The Two-Tiered Model

Buddhist Tradition

Modern scholarship typically understands Buddhism itself to articulate and promote a particular norm or ideal, the two-tiered model of Buddhism. This ideal, though derived chiefly from Theravādin evidence, is thought to have general applicability to Indian Buddhism.[2] Although primarily defining the structure of Buddhist community, the two-tiered model is, as we shall see, much more than that and in fact offers an all-inclusive interpretation of Buddhism as such, in its various dimensions. As defined in various important texts, this ideal takes shape as a structure composed up of two normative lifestyles, that of the monk *(bhikṣu)* occupying the upper tier and that of the layperson (Skt. and P., *upāsaka* [m.], *upāsikā* [f.]) occupying the lower.[3] Both of these lifestyles, we are told, were instituted by the Buddha himself and have provided the primary elements of the Buddhist community throughout its Indian history.[4]

The monk follows the highest teachings of the Buddha, having renounced the world and directed his activity toward the gaining of nirvāṇa (P., *nibbāna*).[5] To achieve this aim, he engages in two important pursuits: the cultivation of pure

behavior through adherence to the *vinaya* and the study of texts—in the Theravādin formulation, the development of scriptural expertise (P., *pariyatti*), sometimes known as the "vocation of texts and scholarship" (P., *ganthadhura*).[6] As a result of these two preoccupations of cultivating behavioral purity and studying texts,[7] the monk becomes endowed with innumerable virtues and is a worthy object of veneration and donations.

The first major preoccupation of the monk has traditionally been the cultivation of *śīla* (P., *sīla*) (behavioral purity). Although intentionality plays an important role in Buddhist ethics (Gombrich 1984b, 91; Sadatissa 1970, 7–8 and passim), in the case of the monk, *śīla* is defined primarily as compliance with external, behavioral criteria. As Gombrich remarks, for the Buddhist monks, "*śīla* here refers to *conduct becoming to the role of a monk;* in a word, *decorum*" (emphasis in original; 1984, 94).[8] The exact requirements of this monastic etiquette are given in the *vinaya,* which outlines behavioral norms for both individuals and the community of monks as a whole. The *prātimokṣa* (P., *pāṭimokkha*) (and its elaboration in the *Sūtravibhaṅga* [P., *Suttavibhaṅga*]) articulates a code of 218 or more rules to be followed by each monk (or nun),[9] and the *Karmavācanā* (P., *Kammavācā*) (and its elaboration in the *Skandhaka* [P., *Khandhaka*]) establishes the structures and procedures governing communal life.[10] The *vinaya* stands at the center of monastic life, not only because it provides the rules for individual and collective action, but also because it serves to guarantee the behavioral purity of the monks. The *poṣadha* (P., *uposatha*) ritual performed fortnightly at monasteries, at which the *prātimokṣa* is recited, for example, certifies compliance with the *prātimokṣa* by each member of the community and thus the sanctity of the monastic *saṃgha* as a whole.

The monk's behavioral purity is, in turn, a central component in his relationship with the laity. The immediate goal of lay Buddhists is not nirvāṇa, but rather the accumulation of merit *(puṇya),* by which they aspire to happiness in this life and a good rebirth in the hereafter. Lay Buddhists gain merit through good actions, and central among these is the making of donations to the monastic *saṃgha* (Bunnag 1973, 30). However, the degree of merit gained by donations is dependent upon the level of sanctity of the recipient (Lamotte 1958, 79–80; Conze 1980, 39). The more blameless the behavior of the monk to whom donations are made, the more merit gained by the donor.[11] Thus it is a matter of considerable concern among the laity that the recipients of their donations be paragons of virtue, again understood as complying with the regulations of the *prātimokṣa* and larger *vinaya.* Weber saw this quite clearly in remarking that "the fellowship [monastic *saṃgha*] appears above all to have served the concerns of status decorum, of the monks' deportment lest their charisma be compromised in the eyes of the worldly" (1958, 214). Levy similarly observes in reference to contemporary Buddhism in Southeast Asia, "you have to have seen the jealous and suspicious surveillance which the parishioners keep over their bonzes, in order to understand the personal importance that they attach to the good conduct of the latter" (1968, 100). This "surveillance" undoubtedly put considerable pressure on the monks to excel in their observance of the *prātimokṣa* for, as Bunnag observes, "the man

who earns the disapproval of the laity may well forfeit their continuing material support" (1973, 31).

The second major preoccupation of Buddhist monks, study of the scriptures, has involved the memorization, preservation, and study of those texts (first oral, later written) most important to the various monastic traditions.[12] That such scholarship has been not only a central monastic preoccupation but also an essential and defining feature of the monastic type of Buddhism was again clearly seen by Weber (1958, 206–7). Lamotte has pointed out the extent to which, from the monastic viewpoint, the study and correct understanding of the textual tradition is a sine qua non of authentic Buddhism (1949, 345–46).[13]

Just as the behavioral purity of the monks was of importance for the laity, so was their textual learning. The monks were to memorize, preserve, and study the texts not only to edify themselves and to maintain the integrity of established Buddhism, but also to act as reliable transmitters of the Buddhist teachings to the laity. In fulfillment of this latter purpose, the monks were thus teachers to the laity, instructing them in the authentic dharma and acting as vehicles through which the sacred power of the dharma became available to them. The monk who was learned thus counted for much in the eyes of the laity.[14] So it was that the worthiness of the monk as a recipient of donations was bound up with one or the other, or both, of these two preoccupations of cultivating pure behavior and studying texts.

The preceding discussion raises an important question: to what extent can these two preoccupations be seen to characterize not only Theravādin monasticism, in which it is most clearly present, but also the Indian Buddhist situation as such? Although this question will be explored in more detail below, a few examples may be cited to suggest that the behavioral and scholastic ideals of Theravādin monasticism do indeed have applicability to Indian Buddhist monasticism in general. Let us consider the revealing fact that, when monastic Buddhists wished to criticize other Buddhist monks, it was typically for deficiencies in these two areas. For example, in one version of the Nikāya *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (P., *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), preserved in Chinese, certain *bhikṣus* are castigated for not observing the precepts and not delighting in the texts (Bareau 1970–71, 1:238). Similarly, when Hsüan-tsang wants to criticize a certain monastery in northwest India, he remarks that its members are "very defective in their observance of the rules of their Order" and are "without definite learning" (Watters 1904–5, 1:240; see also 2:73–74). And when the Mahāyāna Buddhist monk Śāntideva is threatened with explusion from his monastery, the reasons given are his behavioral laxity (he eats five bowls of rice a day) and his unwillingness (or inability) to participate in textual study and debate (*Csp* 143–45 [Rb., 146–47]).

There is another preoccupation of the ideal monk that, although appearing in the texts, is less commonly found among the past and present priorities of mainline Theravādin monasticism (and other forms of Nikāya monasticism)—namely, the practice of meditation. The classic texts, in fact, articulate an idealized threefold summary of the Buddhist path for monks: pure behavior *(śīla),* meditation *(samādhi),* and scholarly learning/insight (*prajñā;* P., *paññā*)[15] (Lamotte 1958,

46–52). By its very nature, settled monasticism placed more emphasis on *śīla,* as fulfillment of the *vinaya,* and *prajñā,* defined as knowledge based on learning.[16] At the same time, it placed considerably less emphasis on *samādhi.* Thus, although many classical texts—both Buddha-word[17] and commentaries[18]—recommend meditation as a necessary component of the Buddhist path,[19] in monastic tradition, meditation has often remained a primarily theoretical ideal, followed more in the breach than in the observance (Bunnag 1973, 55–58; Maquet 1980). Progress in meditation necessitates intensive and sustained practice, and this, in turn, requires seclusion and absence of distraction. According to the great spokesman of monastic Buddhism, Buddhaghosa, the institution of the settled monastery, along with its characteristic environment, tends to inhibit the practice of meditation owing to its many inhabitants, its noise, the necessary duties of communal life, obligations to the laity, the arrival of visitors, and other interruptions.[20] Buddhaghosa indicates further that the preoccupations of the settled monastery, and most particularly the study of texts, also tend to militate against the practice of meditation[21] (*Vsm* 95–97 [N., 1:96–98]).[22]

As Buddhist texts reiterate, meditation and realization are indissolubly linked (for example, *Dp* 282 [Radhakrishnan 1950, 148]; Nyanaponika 1962, 117): where meditation ceases to be a priority of the renunciant life, realization tends to fall away, quickly coming to be considered no more than a theoretical possibility. The emphasis on *śīla* and textual study in classical Buddhist monasticism, along with a corresponding deemphasis of meditation, led inevitably to a decline of realization as an immediate and practicable goal of settled monastic life and of the Buddhism in which monasticism predominated. As Conze remarks in relation to the ascendency of nonmeditative concerns in the monastic life of the Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, and the Nikāya schools in general, "the scholars ousted the saints, and erudition took the place of attainment" (1959, 116).[23] As we shall see, the same is reflected in certain Buddhist lamentations, found in texts of various schools, that complain that the Buddha's dharma, once one of meditation and realization, has become a dharma of pure behavior and textual expertise alone. Such a trend is also visible in the Pāli texts where we find evidence that, in Bond's words, the full realization of "arhantship had become a remote norm fairly early," a trend that only became more pronounced as time went on. In the *Visuddhimagga* (late fourth to early fifth centuries C.E.), for example, it has become virtually unrealizable (Bond 1988, 164). In relation to Buddhist monasticism in contemporary Thailand, Bunnag makes an observation that reflects the same view. After noting that according to Buddhist theory, only monks can legitimately aspire to nirvāṇa, she continues:

> However, none of the Thai monks to whom I spoke appeared to consider *nirvāṇa* a relevant goal for which to strive; those who considered that [it was a relevant goal] . . . believed that only after billions of years of tireless effort could they or their contemporaries achieve this state. The majority of monks . . . chose to rationalize their limited spiritual horizons by saying that only the Buddha and a few of his disciples had become enlightened, and that this facility was no longer available. (Bunnag 1973, 19–20)[24]

As mentioned, even if settled monastics did not hold enlightenment as a practicable goal in this life, this did not leave the laity without criteria by which to evaluate the monastics' worthiness as recipients of offerings. Bunnag's observations about present-day Thailand have some validity, as noted, for settled Buddhist monasticism as a type in other times and places: the laity tended to judge the monastics' sanctity primarily in terms, first, of "conformity to the formal stereotype" outlined in the *vinaya* (1973, 34) and, second, of demonstrable mastery of the sacred texts (1973, 53–54). Bunnag further remarks that, in the context of the monastic institutions she studied, "meditation, which was originally intended to represent a more advanced stage in the process of self-purification, is a less highly regarded activity than is the study of the Pāli texts: which is to say that the latter pursuit, being more easily assessed in terms of academic degrees and certificates, is accorded a higher evaluation than [meditation] for success in which the evidence is less tangible" (1973, 54).[25]

Quite different from the lifestyle of the monastics is that of the laity, who represent the second normative lifestyle of Theravāda and of Indian Buddhism in general, as defined in the two-tiered model. According to classical tradition, as summarized by Lamotte (1958, 69–92),[26] those following the lay ideal are principally to observe the five precepts and, in particular, to cultivate devotion and generosity, virtues that may be practiced in two different contexts. On the one hand, the laity are to revere and support materially the monastic *saṃgha;* on the other, they are permitted to venerate stūpas, those monuments enshrining the remains of a buddha or other holy person.[27] In no less important a text than the Nikāya *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra,* the early account of the events surrounding the passing of the Buddha, the cult of the stūpa—so we are told—is depicted as the particular concern of the laity. In the standard English translation from the Pāli and in interpretations based on it, the Buddha advises his monks not to involve themselves in stūpa worship, leaving that pursuit rather to the laity.[28] The monks should, by contrast, concentrate on their own characteristic (and superior) concerns, defined elsewhere in the text (as we shall see in Chapter 11) as following the *vinaya* and maintaining the textual tradition.

Essentially the same depiction of monk and layperson, as defined by this two-tiered religious structure, is found elsewhere in the normative commentarial tradition of the Theravāda. In the *Milindapañha,* for example, King Milinda asks the monk Nāgasena about the respective roles of monk and layperson (162–64 [T.R. 1890–94, 1:229–33]; 242–44 [2:56–59]). Nāgasena presents very much the same picture as the one just given. The *bhikṣu,* the fully ordained monk who adheres to the *prātimokṣa* and follows the textual pursuits of settled monasticism, pursues the highest ideal of Buddhist life, set forth by the Buddha himself (162–64 [1:231–33]; 243 [2:58]). Thus treading the path to arhantship, he is worthy of salutation, respect, and reverence by the laity (162–63 [1:230–31]). The laity, for their part, follow a lesser but still worthy way of life, revering the monk in symbolic and material ways and venerating stūpas. Through the merit earned by these actions, they may hope to ensure good fortune in the present life and a happy rebirth (see, for example, 228–32 [2:31–38]; 240–42 [2:51–56]; and 161 [1:229]). Although

advocating the worship of stūpas by the layperson, the *Milindapañha,* in apparent agreement with the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra,* holds that this is a practice in which the ideal monk should not engage (177–79 [1:246–48]).

The Buddhism of the monk and that of the layperson are thus very different in lifestyle, activities, and goal; nevertheless, there is clearly an intimate connection between the two. The *Itivuttaka* quotes the Buddha as defining their reciprocal relationship:

> [The laypeople] render you great service, O *bhikṣu,* the brāhmins and householders who give you clothing, alms, seats, beds and remedies. And you also render them great service when you teach them the Good Law and the pure life *(brahmacarya).* Thus, through your mutual assistance, it is possible to practise the religious life. . . . By relying one upon the other, householders and those who live the homeless life will cause the good dharma to prosper. (110–11 [Lm., 73])

According to the two-tiered model as expressed in this Buddhist evidence, then, the monastics practice a Buddhism of emulation, whereas the laypeople practice a Buddhism of devotion. That is, the monastics follow a way of life in which they take the Buddha as model, rather than as an object of veneration. The laypeople, by contrast, are to take the Buddha, and his emulators, the monastic *saṃgha,* as objects of their devotion, a devotion shown in a reverential attitude, acts of respect, and material donations.

Recent Scholarship

Contemporary scholarship generally accepts the main outlines of the two-tiered model of Buddhism as articulated in the Theravādin and other evidence and finds it a useful device for understanding the structure and history of Indian Buddhism.[29] Étienne Lamotte, for example, tells us that "one must admit the existence of two distinct and often opposed Buddhisms: that of the religious and that of the layfolk" (Lm., 59). In Lamotte's characterization, on the one hand are the monks, who live in monasteries, adhere to the *vinaya,* maintain the textual tradition, and strive for nirvāṇa. On the other are the laity, who worship and serve the monks, follow basic moral principles, engage in a devotional and cultic Buddhism, and through these activities strive for a better rebirth (for example, 58, 59, 65). The religious life of the laity, in contrast to that of the monks, also includes worship of ancestral deities and participation in local non-Buddhist religious life. Lamotte summarizes: "Both offspring of Śākya, the religious and the lay person represent divergent tendencies which, without conflicting with one another directly, assert themselves with increasing clarity: on the one hand, the ideal of renunciation and of personal sanctity and, on the other, the active virtues and altruistic preoccupations" (59). Particularly important in Lamotte's interpretation are the differing evaluations given to these two different Buddhisms. The Buddhism of the laity is not the one principally advocated by the master, for the Buddha reserved his highest esteem strictly for those who entered the monastic order. The Buddhism of the laity Śākyamuni deems to be inferior and accords it only a qualified approbation (71–72). In fact, it must be admitted that the Bud-

dhism of the layperson is "a sort of compromise between the Buddha Dharma and the superstitions of paganism." This compromise was not without its deleterious effects: "This was the principal cause of the reabsorption of Buddhism into surrounding Hinduism" (75–76).[30]

Among many other contemporary scholars favoring this two-tiered model of Buddhism[31] is S. Dutt, who emphasizes a theme that will be important later in this study, namely, the stūpa as the special and characteristic concern of the laity. Originally, Dutt tells us, there were two different and divergent forms of Buddhism, a "popular Buddhism" and a "monkish Buddhism." Monkish Buddhism emerges directly from the hand of the founder, was practiced by the learned, scholarly elite, and followed the *abhidharma* (P., *abhidhamma*) (Dutt 1957, 144). Popular Buddhism, on the other hand, cannot be deduced from the doctrines preached by the Buddha (178), but develops out of "folk-myth and superstition" (166). Illiterate and expressed in symbol and ritual, its basis is the stūpa, a manifestation of the "crude, bizarre, comical, realistic,—embracing all that folk mind could conceive in its odd intermixture of folk-lore, superstition, fancy as well as piety" (176).[32]

As articulated by modern scholars, Buddhism from its earliest days thus emerges with a relatively clear and consistent two-tiered structure. On the one hand is the Buddhism of the founder, the Buddhism of the monks, marked by renunciation of the world and entry into the monastic *saṃgha,* decorous behavior as defined by compliance with the *vinaya,* the pursuit of the vocation of texts and scholarship, and the goal of nirvāṇa. On the other hand is the Buddhism of the laity, characterized by virtuous behavior and generosity toward monastics as well as by participation in the cults of the stūpa and of local deities. The laity practiced a compromised Buddhism and, in so doing, acted as a kind of buffer between the authentic Buddhism of the monks and the non-Buddhist environment of larger India. In this role, for whatever assistance they may provide the monks, the laypeople are always a potential threat to the maintenance of the purity of the dharma.

Scholars have embraced the two-tiered model of Buddhism not only because it is found in normative textual tradition. Equally important, this model also provides a coherent and thorough explanation of the basic structures of Indian Buddhism and is particularly useful in placing a number of phenomena that do not seem to conform to the notion of a pure, elite, monastic Buddhism. Thus, the monument of the stūpa, so pervasive across the face of India, may be explained as a product of popular Buddhism. The same is true of the liturgical kind of Buddhism associated from an early time with the stūpa but found elsewhere, such as in the cult of the Buddha image. In addition, the presence of magical and miraculous elements in the Buddhism of all periods receives a similar "popular" explanation (Conze 1959, 175–80). Finally, the existence in early Buddhism of a "cult of saints" is understood in the same way as a manifestation of popular Buddhism.

In explanation of this latter, we may again cite Lamotte, who, in the final chapter of his *Histoire,* entitled "La religion bouddhique," summarizes the transformation that he sees to have occurred in the Buddha's teaching, largely as the result of lay pressure, by which Buddhism was transformed from "a philosophi-

cal-mystical message as it originally was . . . into a veritable religion" (Lm., 712–13). As part of this chapter, Lamotte includes a section on the "Buddhist saints," remarking that although Buddhist saints are acknowledged and venerated in Indian Buddhism, the Buddha had clearly expatiated on the ineffability of the realized ones and thus effectively undercut any attempts to develop a cult of saints in Buddhism. Lamotte explains this discrepancy: "between the theory and the practice, there is a gap," and "nothing could prevent the Buddhists from also having their saints" (765). Lamotte expands on this point:

> If monks, dedicated to a life of study and meditation, are able to resign themselves to seeing in their founder *no more* [emphasis added] than a sage entered into nirvāṇa, lay followers . . . require a living god, a "god superior to the gods" *(devātideva)* who continues his beneficent activity among them, who is able to predict the future, perform wonders, and whose cult *(pūjā)* will be something more than mere recollection *(anusmṛti)*. (714)[33]

The two-tiered model is also attractive to scholars for its ability to explain historical transformation. If Buddhism undergoes change, it may be ascribed to "popular (that is, strictly speaking, non-Buddhist) elements" entering by way of the laity. A great many changes in Buddhism can be explained in this way, and Lamotte shows just how universal a principle of historical explanation the two-tiered model can be when he remarks that "the conflict, not to say rivalry [between the Buddhism of the monk and that of the laity] conditions the entire history of Indian Buddhism" (Lm., 59). We have already noted one example of change explained by the two-tiered model, namely, the "disappearance" of Buddhism from India around the twelfth century C.E.[34] Another frequently cited example is the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism itself. Lamotte, for instance, says that "the formation of the Mahāyāna in the heart of the [monastic] community constituted the triumph of the humanity of the laity over the rigorism of the *bhikṣu*" (59), and "the arrival of the Mahāyāna constituted the triumph of lay aspirations" (89).[35] Similarly, the rise of Pure Land Buddhism in East Asia is likewise often tied to the emergence into dominance of trends in Buddhism from the popular sphere, as is the entire phenomenon of the cult of Maitreya (785). Finally, the origin of Vajrayāna Buddhism is likewise ascribed to lay influences.[36]

The preceding should suggest that the two-tiered model of Buddhism purports to provide an all-embracing and sufficient explanation of Buddhist life in whatever manifestation, where there are only two options available to the would-be Buddhist: to become a monk living in the settled monastery and following the *prātimokṣa* or to become a layperson and to follow the lesser path. No other option is admitted. Further, the two-tiered model has a virtually unlimited field of operation, something shown in a curious dynamic in the way the model works. Whereas the monastic ideal is given a relatively clear and careful definition based on certain normative texts, the lay ideal tends to be defined as whatever does not fit into the ideal of the monk. In this way, the two-tiered model can function in a manner that is both all-inclusive and also difficult to challenge: whatever does not correspond to the normative monastic ideal is automatically relegated to the category of popular Buddhism.[37]

Some Ideological Features of the Two-Tiered Model

The two-tiered model is thus proposed as a hermeneutic for interpreting Indian Buddhism as a whole, including the Buddhist saints. The obvious question arises of the extent to which the model is really adequate to perform its intended function. Of course, in light of the cited Buddhist texts and the interpretations of many modern scholars, the legitimacy of this hermeneutic seems so obvious as to need no justification. However, this model presents a picture that is, in some crucial respects, distorted. Because it is through the two-tiered model that Buddhists and modern interpreters are accustomed to viewing the saints, any understanding of them must involve an exploration both of the model and of the Buddhist saints. The remaining pages of this chapter consider the first issue, while the following chapters address the second.

The Development of Settled Monasticism and the Two-Tiered Model

Max Weber, some of whose insights into early Buddhism have yet to be fully appreciated, suggests a model of the development of early Buddhism that may act as a starting point for the present discussion. According to Weber, the charismatic figure of the Buddha, as fully realized saint, stood at the center of the earliest Buddhist tradition, surrounded by a circle of close disciples as well as a larger group of devoted lay followers. The Buddha thus functioned, in Weber's terms, as a "charismatic personality."[38] Through his meditation and subsequent awakening, the Buddha had come into knowledge of reality itself and, by virtue of that, possessed ultimate wisdom and compassion. The unprecedented nature of the Buddha's discovery meant that it was not naturally accessible to others, and he was therefore "set apart from ordinary men, and treated as endowed with supernatural . . . powers or qualities" (Weber 1968b, 48). However, others might gain access to the ultimate mystery in and through their relationship with the Buddha, to the extent that they recognized his charisma and submitted themselves to him as devotees (49). Weber remarks that "psychologically this 'recognition' is a matter of complete personal devotion" (49). Among the three types of human authority delineated by Weber—those resting on rational, traditional, and charismatic grounds—the authority of the Buddha clearly rested on charisma. In this sense, it was based on "devotion to [his] specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character" (46).[39]

The disciples of the Buddha were characterized by a number of features identified by Weber as typical of members of groups surrounding charismatic figures. For one thing, the recruitment of followers initially occurred chiefly through response to the Buddha's charisma, rather than through his (or his followers') fulfillment of more external criteria such as wealth, social class, title, technical ability, or learning. This goes along with the fact that, in Weber's words, "charisma can only be 'awakened' and 'tested'; it cannot be learned or taught" (Weber 1968b, 58). The subsequent relationship of followers to the Buddha was primarily personal, emotional, and intimate, rather than based on traditional or rationalized

structures and procedures (50). In the operation of the earliest community, decisions were arrived at through the Buddha's own response to situations rather than by reference to preexisting codes and patterns. In this kind of situation, Weber tells us, "formally concrete judgments are newly created from case to case and are originally regarded as divine judgments" (51). These judgments are not carried out by administrative organs. "In their place are agents who have been provided with charismatic authority by their chief or who possess charisma of their own" (51).

The community of renunciants surrounding the Buddha lived by the relatively unpredictable means of voluntary gifts obtained by alms-seeking, rather than by regularized means of economic support (Weber 1968b, 51).[40] In this practice, earliest Buddhism fits with other charismatic movements, which are, at least from the viewpoint of more rational considerations, an "antieconomic force" (53) and "foreign to economic considerations" (51). For Weber, the disavowal of predictable, regularized economic maintenance as a priority is an essential part of the Buddha's charisma. His power is not of saṃsāra, and the web of alliances, agreements, and concessions necessary to economic stability are not his concern. In all these ways, the charismatic authority of the Buddha, as of similar leaders, is specifically "outside the realm of every-day routine and the profane sphere" (52). "In this respect, it is sharply opposed both to rational, and particularly bureaucratic authority, and to traditional authority. . . . Both rational and traditional authority are specifically forms of every-day routine control of actions; while the charismatic type is the direct antithesis of this" (51). According to Weber, for some time after the Buddha's passing, this form of organization continued, with the Buddha's disciples functioning as charismatic masters for their disciples, just as the Buddha had for them.

However, soon a marked change took place within the Buddhist community, and Buddhist renunciants began to develop modes of organization, operation, and teaching that were unprecedented in Buddhism up to that point. According to Weber, this change involved a shift in type of authority, from one based on charisma to one based on tradition, whereby the community came to be managed primarily through reference to a given set of traditional structures, rules, and procedures. This change represented, Weber tells us, a fundamental transformation: charisma, the antithesis of routine, was "routinized." Charisma, "outside the realm of every-day routine," was converted into tradition, a form of "every-day routine control of action" (Weber 1968b, 51). Charisma, based on the present and its perceived spiritual exigencies, gave way to tradition, which takes as its primary normative reference point the past.

What were the motivations for this kind of shift among the early Buddhists? With Buddhism as a primary example, Weber points to a number of factors that are typically involved in such transformations away from charismatic authority in religions (1968b, 54ff.). For one thing, the followers have an interest in the continuation of their movement, and they seek to make it something rational, stable, and reliable. They also tend to develop definitive forms and codified procedures to preserve what they have received. Thus "they have an interest in continuing [their movement] in such a way that both from an ideal and a material point of

view, their own status is put on a stable every-day basis" (54). In so doing, "the great majority of disciples and followers will in the long run 'make their living' out of their 'calling' in a material sense" (58–59). Thus it is that "routinization of charisma also takes the form of the appropriation of powers of control and of economic advantages by the followers or disciples, and of regulation of the recruitment of these groups" (58). This shift from charismatic authority to traditional authority, in early Buddhism as in other similar religious movements, also involves several other factors. The personal charisma of the master as the basis of recruitment is gone, and now "the followers or disciples . . . set up norms for recruitment, in particular involving training or tests of eligibility" (58). In addition, the antieconomic character of the charismatic movement is altered so that it is "adapted to some form of fiscal organization to provide for the needs of the group and hence to the economic conditions necessary for raising taxes and contributions" (60). In addition, the distinction between laity and clergy (in the case of Buddhism, the monastic) becomes important: "When a charismatic movement develops in the direction of praebendal provision, the 'laity' become differentiated from the 'clergy'; that is, the participating members of the charismatic administrative staff which has now become routinized." "This process," Weber points out, "is very conspicuous in Buddhism" (60).[41]

Particularly important in the shift from charismatic to routinized authority is the development of an administrative structure. This structure, in monastic Buddhism, possesses some of the characteristics of Weber's "bureaucracy." It implies a fixed jurisdictional area, namely, the community of monks[42] living in the monastery, which is "ordered by rules, laws or administrative regulations" (Weber 1968c, 66–67). It also implies an official hierarchy based on a "firmly ordered system of super- and subordination" (67) and a staff, possessing technical training, to manage the institution. Written documents (or, in the early Buddhist case, memorized texts) play a central role, in turn implying a system of scribes (or specialists in memorization) and scholars to transmit and interpret them. Finally, such an administration "follows general rules which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned. Knowledge of these rules represents a special technical learning which the officials possess" (69). Although, as we shall see, Weber's analysis needs correction on several important points, his account of early Buddhist history is important in suggesting something of the fundamental and far-reaching nature of the transformation that led from the earliest, wandering form of the Buddhist community to classical Buddhist monasticism.[43]

Further insight into the shift in early Buddhism from an originally wandering to a primarily settled, monastic form of community has been provided by scholars studying the early *vinaya*. Erich Frauwallner, for example, has attempted to identify the earliest textual expression of monastic Buddhism, the *Old Skandhaka*, which he has reconstructed from surviving *vinaya*s of the various traditions and from other related early sources (1956). Basing his work partly on that of Louis Finot, Frauwallner believes that he has been able to reconstruct an original work, standing at the very beginnings of Buddhist literature and providing the earliest evidence of Buddhist monasticism.[44] According to Frauwallner, the *Old Skandhaka* was a *vinaya* work, created by earliest monastic tradition before it under-

went division into different schools. The later monastic schools preserved different portions of the *Old Skandhaka* in their *vinaya*s and other texts, and it is from these remains, Frauwallner says, that the parent document can be reconstructed. According to Frauwallner, "the core of the work [the original *Old Skandhaka*] [was] the exposition of the Buddhist monastic rules." This urtext was, however, considerably more inclusive than the classical *vinaya*s of the Nikāya schools. Around an essential core of monastic rules, it contained a life of the Buddha, including the earliest version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* and a history of the early communities. In this material, which Frauwallner dates to the fourth century B.C.E.,[45] one finds a relatively clear and consistent expression of settled monasticism, as it was just then in the process of consolidation. The "text" and the "author" hypothesized by Frauwallner represent a grand justification of monastic Buddhism, in which an overview of Buddhist history is presented, with the character and legitimacy of the monastic institution providing the central raison d'être of the work. Thus the *Old Skandhaka* is at once an expression of classical monasticism in its formative stages and a major force in the process of consolidation.

In Frauwallner's *Old Skandhaka,* we can see in the settled monasticism of the fourth century B.C.E. a very different kind of Buddhism from that of the original wandering community. For one thing, Buddhism is clearly departing from the original peripatetic ideal, and the *Old Skandhaka* views the settled monastery as the norm. The monastery is, moreover, a complex institution, with provision for various bureaucratic functions, including administrative positions responsible for the distribution of clothes, food, and medicine; for the assignment of sleeping places to newcomers; and for the allotment of the works and duties necessary to ongoing monastic life.[46] The *Old Skandhaka* is not only articulating but also justifying its brand of Buddhism. In the fourth century B.C.E. the developing institution of settled monasticism represented an innovation that needed to legitimize itself vis à vis the older and more traditional Buddhist (and non-Buddhist) renunciant style of homeless wandering. This must have been no easy task, and the survival and success of those early monks would have been inseparably bound up with their ability to articulate effectively the normativity of their tradition. In this process, the *Old Skandhaka* had a crucial role to play by presenting an interpretation of Buddhist history in which its own kind of Buddhism is seen not only as authentic but as the one originally intended by the founder and the measure against which other forms are to be judged.

In the *Old Skandhaka,* we thus find settled monasticism in the very midst of a conversation with the older, wandering form, which it wants partly to ignore, partly to refute, and partly to subordinate to its own kind of Buddhism. Against the ideal of wandering mendicancy, the *Old Skandhaka* manages to insist on the normativity of its own settled monastic form in two ways. First, it accepts in principle the major forms of the earlier wandering ideal but then adds so many exceptions that it emasculates the ideal. Second, through its various perspectives and regulations, it goes one step further and makes the wandering life no longer possible, at least for those following the (now) normative life of settled monasticism.[47] These perspectives and regulations are illustrated by the new role played by the ancient ideal of the so-called four *niśrayas* (P., *nissaya*)—to take only food

given as alms, to wear only rags, to live only under trees, and to employ as medicine only the urine of oxen—which defined a normative style of life for wandering Buddhist renunciants in earlier times (Frauwallner 1956, 74). In the *Old Skandhaka,* the danger is admitted that one may seek entry into the monastic life out of a desire for a comfortable and secure existence. In the Pāli version of the incident found in the *Mahāvagga* (*V*-p 1:57–58 [H., 4:74–75]), a certain brahmin sees a succession of sumptuous meals arranged for the disciples of the Buddha and, impressed by the fare, joins the order. However, when the succession of meals concludes and all must wander afresh for alms, the brahmin becomes disenchanted and resentful and threatens to leave the order. This is reported to the Buddha, and, when he confronts the monk, the monk admits he joined the order for the sake of his belly. In order to hinder such behavior in the future, in Frauwallner's words, "the Buddha prescribes that at the ordination the four . . . [*niśrayas*] should be communicated to the applicant. . . . This communication should be made after the ordination" (1956, 74). This regulation only makes sense if we suppose that the way of life described by the four *niśrayas* does not have normative force for the monks of the *Old Skandhaka.*[48] To be sure, renunciant life outside of the monastery is not excluded by the *Old Skandhaka.* For example, monks living in the forest are mentioned, but now they appear as an exception (58). In addition, they are under the authority of the *vinaya,* and rules are given for the monastic regulation of their behavior (124–25).

The *Old Skandhaka* moves away from the ancient wandering life in other ways as well. Those who belong to a specific monastic group or *saṃgha* are strictly differentiated from those who do not,[49] and these latter are forbidden to take part in official acts of the *saṃgha* or in the communally central event of the *poṣadha* service (Frauwallner 1956, 38). In addition, the *poṣadha* is not only a privilege of all monks but a duty, and no monk shall avoid this gathering (79). Thus, "the Buddha . . . prescribes that a community procedure should settle the limits of the common dwelling zone, *inside which all monks must come to the same confession ceremony*"[50] (80; emphasis added). Furthermore, a monk is forbidden to go to a monastery that has no monks except in sufficient numbers to perform the *poṣadha* (39). In these and other ways, then, the *Old Skandhaka* promotes an ideal that excludes those who would follow the ancient Buddhist ideal of unrestricted wandering.

There is another way in which the *Old Skandhaka* appears to depart from the earlier wandering ideal—namely, in its devaluation of meditation. In many early texts, meditation in the forest is presented as a central value and concomitant of the wandering life. The *Old Skandhaka* does not encourage the life of meditation and instead puts forward as priorities settled monastic values, including the behavioral purity of monk and monastic community (Frauwallner 1956, 80) and, by implication, the proper maintenance of textual tradition (see later in this chapter and Chapter 11). A possible instance of the *Old Skandhaka*'s devaluation of meditation is provided in the *Mahāvagga* in its explanation of the inception of the *pravāraṇā* (P., *pavāraṇā*), or ceremony at the end of the rains retreat. In the passage in question, we are told that a certain group of monks decided to pass their rains retreat in complete silence. This, of course, is harmonious with a med-

itative preoccupation during the three months; as we shall see, the practice of "holy silence" sometimes accompanies other practices carried out by Buddhists engaging in intensive meditation. In the *Mahāvagga,* however, the reason given for this silence is that the renunciants in question wished to avoid conflicts with one another. The Buddha, disapproving of this kind of behavior, instituted the *pravāraṇā,* wherein monks asked pardon of each other in public. Thus the Buddha provided a way to maintain harmony that, in effect, criticizes and does away with the practice of silence during the retreat (Olivelle 1974, 39). Such a development suggests a communal context in which the practice of silence was no longer felt to be important and was, in fact, seen as in some way counterproductive to the community's larger aims.

The *Old Skandhaka* departs from the earliest Buddhist ideal in another way, crucial in the present context: it is no longer the charismatic leader who stands at the center of the tradition, but the routinized monastic institution itself. Thus the younger monk must have an older monk as teacher, but their relationship is strictly subordinated to and regulated by the monastic *saṃgha.* A monk may not take a disciple until he has been ordained for ten years, obviously militating in various ways against the spontaneous relationship of disciple and charismatic teacher (Frauwallner 1956, 72). Of particular interest, only fully ordained monks of long standing may be teachers, that is, those who have already established themselves as reliable representatives of monastic tradition. In addition, under various conditions the disciple may be assigned another teacher, thus denying the unique and lifelong bond of disciple and master so clearly exemplified in the Buddha's relation with his own disciples. Thus we read, "subordination under a master shall last only five years" (73). The occasion for this rule is revealing. The story is told that one day the Buddha makes a journey but is accompanied only by a few junior monks because the other monks *"do not wish to leave their masters"* (72; emphasis added). Such devotion to one's personal master is seen as blameworthy by the Buddha as depicted in the *Old Skandhaka.*[51]

In the *Old Skandhaka,* settled monasticism wants to deny the charismatic master as the ultimate reference point for the disciple and for the community of renunciants. But what might be its reason for doing so? Here Weber's insights seem pertinent: the charismatic master, with uncertain loyalty to past ways of doing things, who embodies the unpredictability of the realized saint, represents a potential threat to the ordered organization and operation of the monastic institution.[52] As Weber remarks, the "community of monks clearly did not wish to permit either spiritual succession or, in general, the aristocracy of charisma to gain ascendency in their midst" (1958, 224). Thus classical monasticism replaced hierarchy based on spiritual charisma with a hierarchy based on seniority and bureaucratic function (224).

In the *Old Skandhaka,* it is no longer the individual master but rather the community of monks that has the power to confer full ordination. The texts depict the Buddha's own disciples as coming to him and receiving *bhikṣu* ordination from him as an individual teacher and their spiritual master. Subsequently, the Buddha is shown giving the authority to ordain to his own disciples, such that they can confer ordination on others (Frauwallner 1956, 73). However, according

to the *Old Skandhaka*, a person can no longer take the *bhikṣu* ordination from an individual monk, for now there must be at least ten fully ordained monks present for an ordination to be valid. This, in effect, means that an individual monk, however senior and however realized, is debarred from giving ordination to others. In essence, it thus becomes only the collective community of monks that has the power to confer ordination and so control admission into the order (73). The shift of authority away from the freely wandering reununciant is complete. Such a one no longer has the ability to induct a disciple into the full renunciant life, at least in so far as this is conceived in the *vinaya*.

We have seen that, according to the two-tiered model, as propounded in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, the laity's kind of Buddhism is regarded as different from and inferior to that of the monks. However, in the *Old Skandhaka*, this low estimation casts an interesting shadow in a certain deference, perhaps by way of compensation, paid by monks to laity. As we shall see, in the early and later texts dealing with forest renunciation, one is jealous of protecting one's independence and of maintaining some distance from the laity. In the *Old Skandhaka*, by contrast, there is a tendency for monks to be careful to adapt themselves in so far as possible to the demands and expectations of the laity. Thus the reason that the Buddha first orders his disciples to keep the rains retreat is that the laity wish it (Frauwallner 1956, 82). In the Theravādin *vinaya*, in fact, we find the Buddha instituting the *prātimokṣa* recitation because the layman, King Bimbisāra, has asked him to do so (*V*-p 1:101–2 [H., 4:130–31]). Further, in the *Old Skandhaka*, the monks are told that they should keep the rains retreat in one place. However, a monk may abandon the retreat to accept an invitation of a layperson to receive gifts, although he may not be gone more than seven days. The commitment that a monk makes to a layperson to remain in the retreat in one place cannot be lightly contravened, and if a monk does leave, it is considered an offense and is only not so under certain conditions (Frauwallner 1956, 83). We saw previously how the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (in Frauwallner's view, originally part of the *Old Skandhaka*) appears to devalue stūpa worship and sets the laity on a lower spiritual level than the monk. We have just seen how the more strictly *vinaya* section of the *Old Skandhaka* accomplishes the same kind of devaluation in relation to the ideal of wandering mendicancy. Now it may be observed that these devaluations taken together are nothing other than the two-tiered model of Buddhism, which the *Old Skandhaka* is developing in order to accomplish its central purpose of establishing the authenticity and normativity of its own, settled monastic kind of Buddhism. Thus in its earliest Buddhist rendition,[53] the two-tiered model of Buddhism is ideological in character and part of the attempt of one kind of Buddhism to assert its own special normativity at the expense of others.[54]

It is interesting that the question of the unique normativity of settled monasticism versus peripatetic forms is not solved for all parties concerned at the hypothesized time of the composition of the *Old Skandhaka*. In the *Milindapañha*, written around the beginning of the common era, the issue is evidently not settled, and we see the proponents of the settled monastery still engaged in strenuously asserting the normativity of their own way of life. In chapter 5 of the text, King Milinda puts forward various "dilemmas" that puzzle him. The very first di-

lemma is the apparent contradiction between the wandering ideal and the ideal of settled monastic life. Citing a venerable passage from the *Suttanipāta,* the king remarks, "Venerable Nāgasena, the Blessed One said: 'In friendship of the world anxiety is born, / In household life distraction's dust springs up, / The state set free from home and friendship's ties, / That, and that only, is the recluse's aim' " (211 [T.R. 1890–94, 2:1]). The king then cites a passage from the *vinaya* that appears to advance a different ideal: "But on the other hand he said: 'Let therefore the wise man, / Regarding his own weal, / Have pleasant dwelling-places built, / And lodge there learned men' " (211 [2:2]). Then the king poses the obvious question: "Now, venerable Nāgasena, if the former of these two passages was really spoken by the *tathāgata,* then the second must be wrong. But if the *tathāgata* really said: 'Have pleasant dwelling-places built,' then the former statement must be wrong" (211 [2:2]).

Nāgasena, here speaking as the proponent of settled monastic life, replies that both statements were made by the Buddha and are, therefore, true. The first statement is true in the sense that it represents the appropriate *psychological attitude* of renunciants: they should remain inwardly free from attachment to any thing. The second statement is true because it indicates the actual lifestyle and physical habitation that is appropriate to monks:

> The gift of a dwelling-place *(vihāra)* has been praised and approved, esteemed and highly spoken of [for monks], by all the *buddhas.* And those [the laity] who have made such a gift shall be delivered from rebirth, old age, and death. . . . And again, if there be a common dwelling-place *(vihāra)* the sisters of the Order will have a clearly ascertained place of rendezvous, and those who wish to visit (the brethren of the Order) will find it an easy matter to do so. Whereas if there were no homes for the members of the Order it would be difficult to visit them. (*Mp* 212 [T.R., 1890–94, 2:3])

By his reply, Nāgasena—without actually contradicting canonical tradition—succeeds in affirming that in effect two kinds of Buddhism are legitimate: the superior and preferable one of the settled monastery and its *vinaya*-abiding inhabitants, and the inferior way of the laity. The old ideal of the wandering renunciant, as a legitimate ideal that can actually be followed, is not acknowledged but has—at least in this rendering—disappeared from the scene. Explicit reference to it in the *Suttanipāta* passage is now reinterpreted so that it no longer refers to a normative lifestyle but rather to a mental attitude. Thus if, as we have seen, the *Milindapañha,* like the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra,* has placed the stūpa in a subordinate position to its own brand of Buddhism, here we see that it has rendered the Buddhism of the wandering mendicant more or less invisible.

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra,* the *Old Skandhaka,* and the *Milindapañha,* then, we seem to find stūpa worship and the wandering life removed from positions of superior normativity, being supplanted by settled monasticism, which is now seen as the most authentic form of Buddhism. At the same time, the laity are placed in a distinctly subordinated status,[55] a status given also to the stūpa and perhaps, when not entirely ignored, to the unaffiliated wandering Buddhist mendicant as well. These texts, then, put forward a two-tiered model of Buddhism as

part of their general project of promoting the normativity of their own preferred Buddhist lifestyle. In so doing, they betray the fact that the two-tiered model of Buddhism is not a disinterested reflection of the situation of early Buddhism so much as an ideological construct.[56]

The Vocation of Texts and Scholarship and the Two-Tiered Model

Settled monasticism is typically linked, as noted, with two characteristic preoccupations, the cultivation of behavioral purity, as defined by the *vinaya*, and the development of expertise in the sacred scriptures through the vocation of texts and scholarship. A closer examination of this latter preoccupation is pertinent in the present context for the additional light it sheds on the two-tiered model of Buddhism. The vocation of texts and scholarship initially takes shape in the *Old Skandhaka*, where, Frauwallner tells us, we can see the first systematic expression of this central feature of classical monasticism. Frauwallner shows how the material reflected in the text presupposes an already existing (oral) textual tradition of *vinaya* rules, legends about the Buddha, and *sūtra* (P., *sutta*) summaries of the Buddhist teachings. In addition, the *Old Skandhaka* also presupposes certain attitudes toward "text" in Buddhism. For example, one finds in the *Old Skandhaka* the idea of a definitive collection of existing oral tradition. This is seen implicitly in the very idea of the composition of the text itself, which reflects an intention "to collect in a definitive form the Buddhist monastic rules" (Frauwallner 1956, 65), and also explicitly in the legend of the first council, contained in the *Old Skandhaka*, which asserts the existence of a definitive collection of the scriptures, purportedly recited shortly after the Buddha's passing. These notions of a definitive body of texts in turn presuppose a group of people who have such texts in memory, a system of training whereby these documents are transmitted to others, and the commitment of substantial amounts of time to memorizing and reciting. These factors in turn imply, more or less, an institution, with priorities of the preservation of a substantial textual tradition. This fits in with what Frauwallner tells us about the intentions reflected in the *Old Skandhaka*. Behind the text we clearly have an agent (or agents, according to Bareau 1970–71 and 1979)[57] extremely learned in the textual sense. This agent was "an outstanding specialist of the *vinaya*" (Frauwallner 1956, 65) and, moreover, was knowledgeable in a wide variety of extant Buddhist literature of different types. This monastic agent inhabited a world where "a learned monk was supposed by everybody to know sacred texts handed down in a fixed tradition and was required to recite them in the proper way." This, in turn, presupposes "a well regulated system of transmission, in which the sacred texts were taught and learnt" (149).

Many of the specific ideas, forms, and methods of textual preservation and transmission evidently did not originate with Buddhism but—if Finot, Frauwallner, Gombrich (1990a, 5ff.), and others are correct—were borrowed from Brahmanical tradition. Certainly the form and contents of the *Old Skandhaka* suggest the plausability of such an origin. Brahmanical tradition possesses the idea of a definitive body of texts (the *Vedas*); so does the *Old Skandhaka*. Brahmanical tradition sees its definitive body of texts as legitimizing its unique spiritual au-

thority; this is implied in the presentation of the *Old Skandhaka* as the authoritative teaching of the Buddha on the renunciant life. The *Vedas* imply a learned priestly elite who are custodians of the sacred texts; so does the *Old Skandhaka.* More specifically, as part of their assertion of their authority, the *Vedas* possess a list of teachers.

Frauwallner believes that the list of teachers of the *vinaya* in the *Old Skandhaka* "was created on the pattern of and as a counterpart to the Vedic lists of teachers, in order to bestow on the[ir] own tradition an authority similar to the Vedic one" (1956, 62). Frauwallner believes that this explanation also clarifies the reason for the legendary account of the first council, an account that scholars generally agree cannot be the story of a historical event pure and simple. In attempting to append a list of teachers to their texts, the early monastic Buddhists faced a problem not faced by their Brahmanical priestly counterparts. The authority on which the texts rested was the Buddha himself. "But it was impossible to attribute all his work to the Buddha and to attach to him the teachers' list, because the Buddha had delivered only individual sermons and given individual precepts; and it was impossible to annex a list of teachers to every single one of them" (64). The problem was solved by the account of the first council, placed before the list of teachers (64). Thus the "author" of the *Old Skandhaka* followed the Vedic model in a general way, by this ingenious maneuver, and succeeded in establishing a single, definitive text, and, more specifically, in putting his material "in a form which would make his work the equal of the great Vedic texts" (65). This modeling of Buddhism on Brahmanical tradition will be discussed further in Chapter 12.

The vocation of texts and scholarship, with its fruition in the writing down of Buddhist texts,[58] must, as it rose to prominence, have changed Buddhist tradition in some dramatic and irreversible ways. Once the letter of the Buddhist teachings has been identified, and once those teachings have been committed to definitive form, first orally and then in writing, once this textual material is understood as canonical, it becomes identified as the repository of the authentic Buddhist teachings. Thus there arises the tendency to locate the "authentic teachings" not, as originally, in the understanding of the realized saint, but rather in external and objectified form, in the authoritative texts. Just such a view is articulated in the *Manorathapūraṇī:*

> As long as the *suttanta* exist, as long as the *vinaya* flourishes, so long will the light shine, as at sunrise. . . . Whether or not there is realization *(paṭivedha)* or practice *(paṭipatti),* scholarship *(pariyatti)* is sufficient for the maintenance of the religion. The erudite man, provided that he is learned in the *Tepiṭaka,* fulfills both. . . . That is why, as long as scholarship remains, the religion remains. . . . Whether there may be a hundred or a thousand *[bhikkhus]* adorned with accurate vision, if scholarship is in default, no realization of the noble path is possible. (*Mrp* 1:93 [Lm., 403])

The mode of access to the teaching also undergoes a change. Whereas previously technical expertise had no particular impact on one's ability to receive the highest teachings, now, in order to gain full access to the teachings and especially

to be authoritative in them, one must be able to memorize/recite or, later, to read. More than this, one must be able to understand the often literary language of the Buddhist texts as well as to understand their technical vocabulary and arguments. Further, once a certain body of texts is identified as most authoritative, then inevitably one's ability to read and understand the texts, and to be a specialist of them, is bound up with quantity as well as quality: the more texts one knows, the better (see, for example, Watters 1904–5, 1:162).

This entire process implies, of course, a substantial scholarly training. The magnitude of the training also implies that one will have to spend much of one's time in study and recitation, leaving less time for other pursuits, such as meditation. In fact, given the magnitude of the task confronting textual scholars, it is questionable whether they will have any time for meditation at all. Just this point is reflected in an interesting story recounted by Buddhaghosa. It seems that a certain Elder Revata, a textual specialist and reciter of the *Majjhimanikāya,* went to another elder of the same name, a forest renunciant who lived and meditated in the Malaya (the hill country), in order to receive instruction in meditation. The meditation master asked the scholar,

> "How are you in the scriptures, friend?" "I am studying the Majjhima [Nikāya], venerable sir." "The Majjhima is a hard responsibility, friend. When a man is still learning the First Fifty by heart, he is faced with the Middle Fifty; and when he is still learning that by heart, he is faced with the Last Fifty. How can you take up a meditation subject?" "Venerable sir, when I have taken a meditation subject from you, I shall not look at the scriptures again." He took the meditation subject, and doing no recitation for nineteen years, he reached Arhantship in the twentieth year. (*Vsm* 3:51 [N., 96–97])

In addition, this emphasis on texts and scholarship would seem to be an activity biased toward the higher castes, brahmins in particular, with their predisposition toward scriptural pursuits.[59] This bias, of course, sets up a countertrend to Buddhism's theoretical claim that the monastery is open equally to all, irrespective of caste affiliation, and represents an environment where distinctions of caste are not operative.

The preceding suggests that an emphasis on the text in renunciant life, particularly when this becomes a predominant concern, in turn implies a particular socioreligious context, namely, that of the monastery. A more or less stable canon, especially of some size (that is, not one or a few texts, but a sizable collection of texts), calls for an institutional focus. When the texts are oral, such a focus means a place where textual reciters can congregate and where they can recite their texts and can train younger monks. When the texts are written, a settled institution provides a place where the documents can be stored and be made readily available. The evolving monastery could perform both functions. Solitary meditators or wandering ascetics, living in often unsheltered locations and wandering from place to place, on the other hand, are not in a position to make textual study as integral to their Buddhism as can renunciants dwelling in settled monasteries.[60]

Once Buddhism becomes a tradition of a relatively fixed canon that is written down, the monastery's role becomes even more crucial. Owing to the relatively

short lifespan of texts in India, a written tradition requires a large number of people whose main activity is the copying of worn-out texts, in addition to specialists who are expert in one or more texts or classes of texts. All these various specialists must be organized, housed, and fed, and this in turn implies a monastic administration of some complexity. The existence of textual specialists and scribes in turn implies considerable economic resources, including both monasteries large and wealthy enough to support such communities of scholars and also wealth to obtain the necessary materials needed for the scholarly work, such as properly gathered and prepared materials to write on, ink, and writing instruments. Such economic needs imply the necessity of establishing close and stable ties with laypeople of wealth and political power. Thus the settled monastery and the preoccupation with texts and particularly collections of texts tend to be interdependent phenomena.

The writing down of texts and monastic institutions are natural allies in another way. As Weber saw, writing recommends itself to those concerned with the consolidation and maintenence of orthodoxy and institutionalized religious authority (1968b, 48ff.). To put pen to paper may seem merely to put oral tradition into writing, but it also concretizes a particular mode of accessibility to, and transmission of, the Buddhist teachings. This, in turn, has important political implications. Oral tradition in Buddhism, when it is not fixed in authoritative texts and a set canon, retains a certain fluidity. But when teachings are fixed in authoritative form, particularly in writing, orthodoxy and standardization can more easily become dominant concerns.

The movement of the text and canon to center stage and the rise to dominance of the monastic institution within which the vocation of texts and scholarship could flourish tended to represent conservative forces within Buddhism. Where the text reigns supreme, the past exists in the present in a concrete and definitive form and may act to check present deviation from past norms. This tended to be true of Buddhist monasticism, in which, as Beyer points out, from the viewpoint of the Buddhist monastery with its texts, its canon, and its specialized scholars, "the creative work had been done; all that was left was to work out the details" (1975a, 239).[61] Thus it was that, typically, the monastic scholars "had been trained not to explore new problems but rather to lay out the parameters of the old" (239).

In this way, the coming to dominance of the canonical text, and particularly the written canonical text, implied in a number of ways a dramatic shift in the understanding of what constituted authentic Buddhism. Now the authentic view was no longer defined primarily by the realization of the master, or by the oral interchange of master and disciple and the integrity of their connection, but by content of the texts. It was no longer simply personal vocation and application to the teacher that opened the gates of dharma, but rather, to some large extent, technical expertise and the ability to satisfy a variety of criteria not necessarily reflective of inner spiritual capacity, inspiration, or development. The definition of the "accomplished one," or the master, also shifted with the emphasis on the text. Previously, the master was simply the one who was realized. Now this person is the *vinaya*-following monastic, who through the settled monastic vocation