**Stūpas, Monasteries and Relics in the Landscape: Typological, Spatial, and Temporal Patterns in the Sanchi Area**[1] (In *South Asia: From the Maurya Empire to the Gupta Empire,* edited by Akira Miyaji and Yasuko Fukuyama, Asian Buddhist Art Anthology (『アジア仏教美術論集』), 12 vols, Series editors: R. Hida, Masaaki Itakura, and Akira Miyaji. Chuo Koron Bijutsu Shuppan 中央公論美術出版 Tokyo, Japan).

*Julia Shaw*, *Institute of Archaeology*, *University College London*

## Introduction

The Sanchi area of Madhya Pradesh, central India, occupies a key place in the archaeology of Buddhism. Sanchi itself is one of India's best preserved, and most studied Buddhist sites (notably Marshall, 1940), with a continuous constructional sequence from the third century BCE to the twelfth century CE. Four other well-preserved Buddhist sites, Sonari, Satdhara, Morel khurd and Andher (Fig. 1), all situated within about 10 km of Sanchi, were first documented in Alexander Cunningham's (1854) well-known monograph, *The*

*Bhilsa Topes*.   These sites were taken up for renewed investigation by the present author during the Sanchi Survey Project (henceforth SSP) which also resulted in the documentation of an additional 30 Buddhist sites as well as other archaeological sites to be described later (Shaw, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007; Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2001, 2003, 2005; Shaw *et al*., 2007). While the earliest monuments at Sanchi were connected with the patronage of the Mauryan emperor Aśoka during the third century BCE, the most prolific construction took place during the following two centuries.   Donative inscriptions show that this work was funded not by state patronage, as before, but by extensive programmes of collective patronage supported by powerful families and guilds.   The reliquary inscriptions from Sanchi Stūpa 2 and the four other 'Bhilsa Tope' sites provide a useful starting point for assessing how these sites and the surrounding landscape were perceived in ancient times (Willis, 2000).   These inscriptions indicate that all of these sites were linked to a group of Hemavata teachers led by an individual named Gotiputa.   The Hemavatas appear to have arrived in Vidisha in the second century BCE; they took over the older sites of Sanchi and Satdhara and established new centres at Sonari, Morel khurd and Andher.   The reliquaries show that these sites were linked and were established (or renovated in the case of Sanchi and Satdhara) in a single campaign.

However, despite a rich body of art-historical and epigraphical scholarship on these sites, many questions remain unanswered regarding the history of Buddhism in the area.   For example, why were these hilltop sites chosen by the incoming *saṅgha*, how did they relate to each other, and to other Buddhist and non-Buddhist ritual centres, as well as habitational settlements, in the immediate vicinity?   Until recently, these questions had not been addressed because of a paucity of information regarding the wider archaeological context of the principal Buddhist sites in the area.   Ritual and social landscapes have until recently been neglected by scholars of Indian religions (both archaeologists and non archaeologists alike) who have tended to concern themselves with the architectural merits of single (and especially

religious) sites and monuments viewed in isolation from their wider archaeological landscape.[2]  This being the case, it is hardly surprising that Sanchi's wider archaeological landscape has received scant attention; as for the more remote 'Bhilsa Tope' sites, these had until recently been more or less neglected since Cunninghams' study.[3]  The principal contention here is that the ritual and social significance of these sites can be more clearly understood if they are envisaged as interrelated parts of a wider social, ritual and economic landscape.

This study calls for the kind of approach which takes into account recent theoretical shifts in archaeology, which amongst other things have led to the recognition of entire landscapes as foci of archaeological enquiry.   The importance of situating ritual sites within their broader socio-political setting has become a major concern within European archaeology, and the following statement made with reference to the monuments of Wessex, is equally applicable to the study of Sanchi's sacred landscape:  'Landscape archaeology, as it is practised, involves the study of systematic relationships between sites. ... A time-space perspective, on the other hand, is concerned with the routine movement of people through landscapes, constituted by the locales in which they came into contact' (Bradley *et al*., 1991: 7-8).   This recognition has also been part of a broader campaign in archaeology and anthropology to break down the traditional polarity between the sacred and the profane (Asad, 1979; Evans, 1985).[4]   Such a distinction has often been perpetuated in archaeological circles

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[2]  Notable exceptions to this trend include Hans Bakker's pioneering work on the religious and political history of Ayodhya (1986) and Ramtek (1997), which applies a 'synthetic method of investigation' to philological, art-historical and archaeological sources within their geographical setting.   See also Meera Dass and Michael Willis' work at Udayagiri (Dass & Willis, 2002; Willis, 2004).   Lars Fogelin's (2004, 2006) recent survey around the Buddhist site of Thotlakonda, Andhra Pradesh, shares some of the aims of the Sanchi Survey Project, as do the projects of Akira Shimada (2009) at Amaravati, and Jason Hawkes (2009) at Bharhut.
[3]  More recently, Satdhara has been the focus of much restoration activity (Agrawal, 1997). Further discussion of these discoveries is given in Shaw (2007).
[4]  Since the distinction between ritual and secular monuments also depends largely on the survivability of different archaeological categories, or whether the decision to monumentalise was directed towards the ritual or 'secular' domain., Andrew Sherratt (1996: 149) has suggested that 'all regional projects are simultaneously exercises in settlement archaeology and investigations of ritual landscapes'.

because of a restricted focus on well-known, archaeologically visible sites, resulting in the false impression of static ritual practices which do not extend into other areas of life.[5]   A further development of considerable importance for the study of stūpa-sites has been a reaction to static forms of visual presentation which can suppress the experiential (and sometimes non-visual) ways in which people interacted with their environment (e.g., Thomas, 1991: 30; Tilley, 1994). Barrett (1989, 1990, 1994) and Bradley's (1991) 'archaeology of action', for example, stresses the interactive relationship between people and buildings, in contrast to earlier structuralist preoccupations with the inherent and essential meanings of the built environment.   These studies have sought to examine the ways in which the physical layout of ritual sites may have helped to maintain behavioural and ideological regularity, especially through the control and restriction of vision and bodily movement.   This is not to suggest an unproblematic relationship between architecture and ideology (such as that presented in normative spatial models) and the issue of multivocality and resistance is something which has been addressed in archaeological theory in general (Barrett, 1989; Miller & Tilley, 1984).   All these innovative approaches can be fruitfully deployed at the stūpa sites of central India.   It has been recognised, however, that the phenomenological approach is flawed in several respects, in particular by a tendency towards ahistoricity, which may undermine the meaning of specific structures.   It also tends to produce generic disembodied actors rather than convincing historical agents, and discounts the importance of the type of deity propitiated at a particular spot.   What is called for is an 'historical phenomenology' (e.g. Thomas, 1991). In many archaeological settings this remains little more than optimistic speculation, but in central India it is more possible to present a convincing spatial dynamic of the stūpa -sites, thanks to the relatively complete state of the monuments and the rich body of textual, inscriptional and art-historical evidence which can be drawn

[5] For attempts to redress this problem, see, for example, Barrett (1990).

from them.[6]

As to the stūpa itself, this is a subject which has been the focus of so much scholarly attention that it has practically dominated the literature on South Asian architecture. Its architectural, artistic and symbolic aspects have all been extensively discussed.[7] In addition, a variety of inscriptions, particularly those associated with reliquaries, have been used to shed light on the wider socio-historical context of the stūpa (Singh, 1996; Willis, 2000). Despite this diversity of approaches, most work on the stūpa fails to take phenomenological concerns into account.[8] An example which illustrates this point is the debate over whether or not the stūpa, in keeping with many traditions of sacred architecture in India, embodies cosmological symbolism (Trainor, 1997: 20-24; Bandaranayake, 1974: 48-9; Ruelius, 1980: 267-76). By restricting the enquiry to static architectural and textual categories alone, rather than viewing the stūpa within its dynamic setting, this discussion ignores a substantial part of the evidence. As Ruelius (1980: 272) points out, even though we may be unable to find direct cosmological associations in Sri Lankan stūpas, we can only hope to understand the symbolic meanings of archaeological structures by viewing them within a wider ritual context, i.e. the way they are 'made, used and experienced by man'. In one way this problem has been redressed (perhaps coincidentally) by Schopen (1997) and Trainor (1997: 55), who have explored the nature of the relics deposited in stūpas and the rituals that surrounded them. Their work has helped in dispel the idea (to some extent a product of Protestant-influenced historical analysis) that the veneration of relics was the exclusive concern of the lay followers of Buddhism. Further, Trainor (1996) has discussed the way in which a monument can, through the 'force of

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[6] It is an interesting irony that 'phenomenological archaeology' was invented by the 'phenomenologically challenged', i.e., those with rather few phenomena to study (Andrew Sherratt, *pers. comm.*, 2004)
[7] For a useful summary, see Brown (1986).
[8] Bentor (1996) gives a detailed account of rituals but actual stūpas have been left behind, there being no illustrations or drawing of a single stūpa in this monograph.

ritualization', mould the way in which people move around and 'read' its various parts.[9]

Both Schopen and Trainor, having come from text-based traditions of Buddhist scholarship, have prided themselves on pioneering a break-away from the subject's traditional reliance on texts. In Trainor's (1997: 61) words, archaeology 'offers a perspective on what people actually did, as opposed to what they were supposed to do'.[10] This awakening, however laudable, is problematic (and ironic) in that it perpetuates the classic opposition of text as text and archaeological record as 'fossil'.[11] Generally absent is an awareness of recent theoretical movements within archaeology which acknowledge, among other things, that the archaeological record itself can be seen as a text (Patrik, 1985; Tilley, 1991).[12] Furthermore, the lack of coordination between active archaeological research and text-based analysis means that many received models of Buddhist history have gone unchallenged. Without discounting the importance and usefulness of the work that has been done on stūpas, I would submit that there is a need to look at these monuments from a phenomenological angle, applying what can be gleaned from texts and inscriptions with what can be found on the ground at specific places. The enquiry I envisage goes beyond scriptural texts and archaeological remains per se and attempts to make a 'somatic' assessment of the ways in which people in the past responded to and interacted with their surroundings.[13]

**The Sanchi Survey Project**

The SSP was initiated in 1998 to fill in some of these gaps in the knowledge of Sanchi's archaeological landscape. Several seasons of intensive and extensive survey resulted in the documentation of 30 'new' Buddhist sites, 145 habitational settlements, 17

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[9] Although some of Trainor's concerns share elements with Barrett's (1990, 1994) 'archaeology of action', he makes no reference to these wider theoretical movements in non-South Asian archaeology.
[10] Referring to Schopen (1987: 193-4, or 1997: 114ff).
[11] For a similar critique, see Coningham (1998).
[12] In South Asia, see Duncan (1990), aspects of which study Trainor (1997: 116-7) does nevertheless refer to.
[13] See Meskell, 1996.

ancient dams, and over 1000 temple and sculpture fragments from Brahmanical, Jain and Buddhist traditions.   Taken together, this material has provided an empirical basis for testing hypotheses regarding the relationship between the various religious traditions in the area, and between the spread of new religious and wider processes such as urbanisation and changes in agriculture and dietary practices during the late centuries BCE (Shaw, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2007; Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2001, 2003, 2005; Shaw *et al.*, 2007).

This essay is concerned with a single component of the dataset, namely the Buddhist hilltop stūpa complexes.   Following a summary of the principal components of these sites, I will concentrate on the spatial orientation of stūpas, both at an intra-site and inter-site, or in other words a landscape level. I will argue that maximising the visual presence of stūpas was a major influencing factor in the decision as to where they should be placed, not only as a proselytising mechanism, but also as a means of protecting the Buddhist relic.   The discussion centres largely on the 'Bhilsa Tope' sites although some of the newly documented sites are referred to when relevant.[14]

**INSERT Fig. 1 HERE**

**Buddhist hilltop sites: architectural typologies**

*Stūpas*

The basic framework for assessing newly documented Buddhist remains during the SSP was provided by architectural typologies at Sanchi (Marshall, 1940) and the four other 'Bhilsa Topes' (Cunningham, 1854).   Sanchi's stūpas can be divided into four main morphological and chronological groups: (1) the Mauryan type (Phase I) as represented by the brick core of Stūpa 1, and; closely paralleled by Stūpa1 at Satdhara (Agrawal, 1997; Shaw,

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[14] For a comprehensive catalogue of these sites, see Shaw (2007).

2007); (2) the post-Mauryan type (Phase II) as represented by Stūpas 2 and 3, and similar examples at Sonari, Satdhara, Morel khurd and Andher. These stūpas, often enclosed by a carved balustrade, consist of a core of heavy stone blocks interspersed with chippings, and faced with a single course of dressed stone blocks (Marshall, 1940: 41); (3) somewhat smaller stūpas of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, such as those clustered around Sanchi Stūpa 1, all set on a square or circular platform, without the addition of railings (Marshall, 1940: 46); (4) even smaller stūpas, with diameters of 1 m or less, such as the recently revealed cluster on the lower southern slopes of Sanchi hill (Willis, 2000). Traditionally classifed as 'votive' in function, they are now regarded by some scholars as 'burial *ad sanctos*' stūpas, built to contain the mortuary remains of ordinary monks and the laity, and positioned at a removed distance from more important stūpas in deference to the hierarchical structure of the relic cult. Similar stūpas occur throughout the study area, either within larger monastic compounds, as at Sanchi, or comprising large burial grounds, as on the small hillock to the north of the Dargawan dam immediately to the west of Sanchi (see Fig. 2; Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2005: 8-12; Shaw, 2007).[15]

**INSERT Fig. 2 HERE**

*Monasteries*

Four main types of monastery were recorded during the SSP, only two of which are represented at Sanchi itself: (1) the courtyard monastery which is traditionally thought not to have appeared before the Gupta period, and (2) the 'platformed monastery' which survives in the form of Building 8, with better preserved examples at Morel khurd (Fig. 3), Satdhara (Fig. 4) Sonari and Andher.

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[15] Similar stūpas have more recently been noted in large numbers around the Buddhist site of Thotlakonda in Andhra Pradesh (Fogelin, 2004, 2006).

Apart from the Andher example, which is more ruined than the others, all of the platforms have stairways set into the body of the structure. Similar structures occur at five of the newly documented sites, Mawasa, Salera, Murlikheri, Chandna Tohoria, and Bighan (Shaw, 2007).[16] The function of the platforms at the 'Bhilsa Tope' sites caused both Marshall (1940: 68) and Cunningham (1854: 311-2, 328) some confusion. Both suggested that they were temple plinths, based largely on the ruins of a temple on the platform at Morel khurd. These temple remains, however, date from around the seventh century CE, i.e. eight hundred years after the platforms were first built.[17] The addition of a temple, absent at the other sites, cannot be taken as a useful guide to the original function of these platforms. I argue that they formed the bases for monastery buildings.[18] All these structures are covered with accumulations of crumbling red brick, indicating that the upper walls were once brick-built with, most probably, timber superstructures. Narrative reliefs at Sanchi and other early sites leave no doubt that prominent buildings in ancient India were often raised on poles or large platforms with the upper parts made of wood and other perishable materials.[19] Later temples continued to be built on large platforms and this probably inspired the medieval additions to Morel khurd. After about the eighth century CE, however, the extensive use of wood for sacred structures was mainly restricted to Nepal and other parts of the Himalayas. This perpetuation of old ideas in remote areas suggests that the towering monasteries of the Himalayas may also find their ultimate origin in the platformed structures of India, a subject that merits further exploration.

**INSERT Fig. 3 HERE**

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[16] For an earlier notice of the Buddhist remains at Bighan see Lake (1910).

[17] A 10th-century CE Buddha image from the temple is now stored in the Sanchi Archaeological Museum (Shaw, 2007).

[18] Agrawal (1997) also interprets the platforms at Satdhara as monastery bases.

[19] Marshall (1940, 65) refers to instructions in the *Vinaya* that buildings should be built on high platforms (*caya*) to protect them from floods.

**INSERT Fig. 4 HERE**

Many of the rock-cut monasteries in the Deccan are also placed on high rock-cut plinths. Cave 4 at Pitalkhora, for example, is reached by a covered flight of steps cut into the high plinth, and guarded by two *dvārapālas* and a *nāga* (Fig. 5). The surmounting monastery, datable on the basis of associated inscriptions to the mid' second century BCE (Mitra, 1971: 173; *Indian Archaeology – A Review, 1957-8*: 65-6), consists of a series of cells set around a courtyard; it is not unlikely that the platforms at Sanchi and neighbouring sites were surmounted by structures following a similar plan.

**INSET Fig. 5 HERE**

This hitherto unrecognised form of monastery provides a challenge to received views regarding the history and chronology of monastery architecture at Sanchi. This is based entirely on the courtyard monastery which is usually seen as having originated in the Northwest during the Kushana period, and not having appeared at Sanchi until much later, as represented by the late, or post-Gupta, examples in the southern part of the site (Marshall, 1940: 63-4). This framework has been used to support theories regarding the late domestication of the *saṅgha* in central India (Schopen, 1994: 547), drawing largely on the assumption that the courtyard monastery, with its emphasis on planning and 'order', was the key archaeological manifestation of textual allusions to the transition between peripatetic and sedentary monasticism. As argued elsewhere (Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2001: 73), the most obvious problem with this line of reasoning is its underlying normative model of spatial order. However, the fact that the courtyard model was already fully developed at Pitalkhora and other rock-cut monasteries of the Deccan as early as the second century BCE, means that the possibility of earlier prototypical examples of this kind of monastery in central India cannot be ruled out. Possible evidence to this effect is provided by a third category of monastery

found at several newly documented sites in the study area, but not represented at Sanchi itself. At Ferozpur, Kotra, Mawasa, and Devrajpur, these consisted of rectangular structures arranged around a series of interconnected courtyards (Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2005: 11-14, figs. 11-12; Shaw, 2007).  Their rather haphazard layout may indicate an early experimental phase of the courtyard-model in the Sanchi area.  A fourth monastery type, represented at seven 'new' sites documented during the SSP (Shaw, 2007), consists of simple single, or double-roomed rectangular structures, which may have provided the prototype for the aforementioned courtyard monasteries.  In some cases the walls consist of a rubble core, faced on both sides with dressed masonry slabs; others are formed from large free-standing boulders, the intervening spaces between which were presumably originally filled with mud or mortar.  Examples of the former type were recently excavated by the ASI at Satdhara (Agrawal, 1997: fig. 7), their simple form and distance from the principal stūpas and platformed monasteries leading to the suggestion that they were occupied by junior monks or pilgrims.  Their proximity to Phase II stūpas implies a second century-BCE-date.

There is also a fifth category of monastic dwelling: 'monastic rock-shelters' as found at Sanchi and several other Buddhist sites in the study area (Fig. 2). These consist of prehistoric rock-shelters showing signs of adaptation for monastic use in the form of platforms built up in front of their entrances, Buddhist paintings / inscriptions on their walls, or nearby stūpas.[20]  Such shelters occur as solitary forest dwellings at Nagauri, and Ahmadpur (to the north of Vidisha); while at Sanchi, Morel khurd (Fig. 7), and Bighan, they perch on the outer edges of Buddhist architectural complexes. Given that apparently unadapted rock-shelters occur at fourteen Buddhist sites, it is not unlikely that some of these were also used by monks. The question of whether these adapted shelters, also found at

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[20]  See Agrawal (1997) for illustration of the Buddhist rock-shelter painting at Satdhara.

better-known rock-shelter complexes in central India such as Bhimbetka and Pangurariya, represent a 'pre-monumental' phase of monasticism in central India, is discussed elsewhere (Shaw, 2007).

### *The 'topography' of Buddhist sites*

Apart from a limited number of urban Buddhist remains (e.g., at Vidisha), the majority of monastic sites in the Sanchi area occur on hilltops, locations which appear to have been actively sought out by the *saṅgha* (Shaw, 2007). These hilltop locations create a clear-cut, topographical delineation between monastic sites and other aspects of the archaeological landscape, such as settlements, irrigation works, and non-Buddhist cult spots. At the same time, however, the distance between these sites is rarely more than 1-2 km (Shaw, 2007). The spatial relationship between monasteries and settlements conforms to the *Patimokka* rules in the Vinaya which stipulate that monasteries should be situated close, but not too close, to towns (*Vinaya* Pi_t aka^m, III, 155). As argued by Gombrich (1988: 95, 156) in relation to modern Sri Lankan patterns, both in spatial and social terms the position of the monastery is dialectical and 'ambivalent', because although it is 'outside' society, it is also dependent upon society for financial support. Quite clearly, the *saṅgha* in the Sanchi area would not have been able to survive in their secluded hilltop locations without some level of integration within the local social and economic infrastructure. Although the *saṅgha*'s livelihood may have rested heavily on inter-regional monastic allegiances as discussed in this essay, it is important to view monasteries side by side with local settlements, agricultural resources, and evidence for patronage networks.

These matters are taken up in detail elsewhere (Shaw, 2007), but in the meantime it is interesting to explore other practical, ritual, symbolic and social reasons why these hilltop locations were so consistently sought out by the *saṅgha*. The most obvious advantage of

such locations is that they provide refuge from monsoon flooding. This is why so many settlements are situated on raised ground. However, very few villages, either modern or ancient, occupy hilltop locations in the Sanchi area, but rather remain on the lower slopes (Fig. 1). This is probably because hilltops are comparatively difficult to reach, but also due to their low agricultural value, deficient water supplies, and low capacity for water-storage; they are also susceptible to siege. On the other hand, the forests which they support are a valuable natural resource in the way of wild plants and animals. While these are used by agriculturalists, as well as hunter-gatherers, hilly areas have, since ancient times, been closely associated with non-producing, hunter-gatherer groups. This is attested by the large number of rock-shelters and microlithic scatters found throughout the Vindhyan range. Studies in other parts of Madhya Pradesh have shown that similar types of sites are often favoured by other peripatetic, or 'property-renouncing' groups, such as ascetics and sages (Jacobson, 1975: 81). Ancient, albeit problematically dated, texts, such as Kautilya's *Arthaśāstra* (2,2,5), also refer to the designation of non-agricultural land for the purposes of scholarly and ascetical activities. The level of correspondence between the kind of sites chosen by prehistoric hunter-gatherers and later ascetic groups is attested in the Sanchi area by the frequency with which painted rock-shelters and / or microlithic tools occur at monastic sites. It is possible therefore that as a 'non-producing' group, the incoming saṃgha may have had little other choice when it came to finding a place for itself in the landscape but to occupy areas which had little or no other economic value. A similar set of limitations may explain the tendency for Buddhist sites, particularly in the Deccan, to overlie older, 'protohistoric' burial grounds (Schopen, 1996). Being unsuitable for agricultural purposes, such locations obviously suited the 'non producing' status of Buddhist monks, but their link with mortuary practices would have given them extremely polluting associations according to the orthodox Brahmanical worldview. In both economic and spiritual terms therefore, the Buddhists were relegated to the periphery zones of the social landscape.

Hilltops also hold particular symbolic and mythological associations, described in ancient texts as the abode of *yakṣa*s and other place-bound spirits (Misra, 1981: 50; eg., *Digha Nikāya*, 41). These shrines often provided the focus for the kind of hilltop festival (*gir-agga-samajjan*) held annually at Rajagaha (Hardy, 1903: 61-66), and listed in Aśoka's edict, nos. 1 and 9, as one of the events prohibited to monks and nuns (*Vinaya Piṭakaṃ* II, 107, 150; III, 71; IV, 85, 267, 360; *Jātaka* no. 538). The suggestion that the configuration of the ritual landscape followed certain topographical conventions supports other archaeological and ethnographic accounts relating to the predominance of pre-Buddhist ritual practices at major monastic sites (Kosambi, 1962). The influence of these cults has also been traced in elements of Buddhist architecture.[21] Whether the *saṅgha* actively sought out places already regarded as sacred spots, is difficult to determine, especially since *yakṣa* or *nāga* worship rarely took on durable forms during the time in question; as discussed later, stone images of these deities do not appear in central India until long after the arrival of Buddhism, and may say more about the Buddhist worldview than 'local' religious practices. However, by simply occupying spaces in the landscape that possibly had older cultic associations, the *saṅgha* was making a statement about its position in the local religious hierarchy (Shaw, 2007).[22]

***Hilltop* stūpas*: 'seeing' the Buddha***

Hilltops would have helped to further these proselytising aims by ensuring that the stūpa was seen throughout the surrounding landscape. At Sanchi, the main stūpa can be seen for miles around, and at Andher, the principal stūpa perches dramatically on the edge of a cliff, creating a striking silhoutte on the horizon (Fig. 6). Those living in neighbouring villages

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[21] The fact that early *yakṣa* shrines were referred to as *caitya* offers a gloss on the possible antecedents of the stūpa (Law, 1931; Misra, 1981: 91-3; Irwin, 1987; Van Kooij, 1995). There are also suggestions that the carved *toraṇa* panels at Sanchi are based on the *charaṇa chitras*, the pictorial scrolls whose public display was, according to texts such as the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, or *Arthaśāstra*, an integral component of the banned hilltop festivals (Ray, 1945: 69).
[22] That this theme continued in later years is suggested by the theory that the Mahāyāna deity, Avalokiteśvara, was commonly placed on hilltop locations as a 'relic or revival of the old worship of the hill gods' (Getty, 1914: 55). Images of Avalokiteśvara appear at Sanchi in significant numbers from the 5th century CE.

would have been constantly aware of the monks' presence above. The other Buddhist sites all show a similar concern with maximising the stūpas' visual presence.

**INSERT Fig. 6 HERE**

The element of intervisibility between stūpa sites is also notable. From Sanchi, it is possible to see the stūpas at Morel khurd; further in the distance are the stūpas at Andher; and to the southwest is a line of hills, immediately behind which are the stūpas at Sonari and Satdhara.[23] The main stūpa at Sanchi is visible from as far away as Bighan in the north, and appears to have provided the main orientation for the smaller stūpas and burials on the two hills at Dargawan to the west of Sanchi (Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2005: 8-12, figs. 9-10; Shaw, 2007).

This level of intervisibility may have been an important way of maintaining linkages between key ritual sites. This arrangement was far from a passive network. Texts and inscriptions describe stūpas not simply as repositories of the Buddhist relic, but containers of a 'living presence' which projected the power of the Buddha, the *dharma*, and respected monks, into and across the surrounding space. The highly visible setting of these stūpas highlights the importance of 'seeing' (*dassana*) at Buddhist sites. Both Trainor (1997, 174-77) and Schopen (1997, 117, n. 9) have noted the analogy between 'seeing' and worshipping, a feature which receives sanction in the Buddhist canon. More specifically, the dynamics of the relic cult suggest that simply 'seeing' stūpas is equivalent to beholding and worshipping the Buddha or saint whose relics the stūpa contains. The objects of this 'seeing' are not merely sacred places, but 'relics of use' (*pāribhogika dhātu*); the places where the Buddha was born, gained enlightenment, taught and died were transformed into 'relics'

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[23] Similar observations were made by Cunningham (1854: 342), who periodically commented on what could be seen from principal spots in the landscape.

because they had been 'used' by the Buddha. The parallel concept of *darśana*, found in varying degrees in other Indian faiths, ensures that through the auspicious sight of the venerated object, a devotee gains spiritual merit (Eck, 1981). This adds a powerful new dimension to our understanding of the proselytising quality of stūpa architecture, whose trajectory of influence could transcend its material boundaries by the very fact of its visual dominance. For the Buddhist monks, this mechanism was a means of quite literally 'presencing' the *dharma* in foreign ground. Furthermore, the visual prominence of Stūpa 1 at Sanchi, which as discussed later most probably contained the Buddha's relic, allowed the Buddha to be 'seen' by monks residing at distant monasteries. By the same logic, the efficacy of the *dharma* was being cast over the local population, whether or not they knew or wished it!

A poignant indication of the 'life-force' of the relics and stūpas is provided by an inscription on the west gateway at Sanchi. This warns that 'he who dismantles ... the stone work from this [stūpa], or causes it to be transferred to another house of the teacher, he shall go to the [same terrible] state as those who commit the five sins that have immediate retribution' (Marshall, 1940: I, 342, inscription no. 404; Schopen, 1997: 129).[24] The five sins alluded to in this record are those defined in the Vinaya texts; the fact that four of the five sins involve either murdering or injuring a living being illustrates the degree of 'humanness' which was attached to the stūpa. The fact that the stūpa was seen as a living being, can therefore be taken as one of the most obvious explanations for the need to protect it from dangerous forces, both ritual and political.

The positioning of the monuments not only allowed the stūpas to be admired but may

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[24] A similarly worded inscription on the eastern gateway (Marshall, 1940: inscription no. 396) actually spells out the five sins: *matughato*, *pitughato*, *arahamtaghato*, *lohituppado*, *samghabhedo* (murder of one's mother; murder of one's father; murder of an arhat; causing bloodshed; causing a schism in the *saṅgha*).

also be explained as part of the need to protect the relics by regulating access to the stūpas and maintaining close surveillance of them.   On account of its ritual status as a human being, the stūpa was not only open to the gaze of the devout, but also to more malevolent types of 'seeing'.   The staggered gates positioned around the most important stūpas may have been aimed at diverting the gaze of the 'evil eye', traditionally thought to travel only in straight lines.   The ritual and political efficacy of the relic cult, also called for protection against theft (Trainor, 1997: 117-35).

**Fortified Buddhist sites: surveillance and defence**

Stūpas were also open to the threat of 'mundane' human action. This helps to explain why Andher, to take the most dramatic example, occupies such a strategic position in the landscape (Fig. 6).   Cunningham (1854: 342) pointed out that from Andher it was possible to see Lohangi rock (in Vidisha) as well as the stūpas at Morel khurd and Sanchi.[25]   This intervisibility not only enforced the continuous presence of the *śāsana* (the collective Buddhist teachings) across the landscape but also provided strategic advantages befitting the fortress-like location. With sheer cliffs on one side and the long gradual slope on the other, it would have been difficult for anyone to approach the Andher stūpas without being noticed.

The platformed monasteries discussed earlier also have a distinctly military appearance.   The platform at Morel khurd has towers at each of its four corners, which together with its considerable height, would have been an effective deterrent against attack. In addition to providing all-encompassing views of the stūpas, for both ritual and defensive purposes (discussed later), they would have doubled as 'look-outs' over the surrounding area. Other elements of fortification such as substantial boundary walls, often provided with towers

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[25]  For the possible Buddhist associations of the naturally fortified hill of Lohangi rock, and its second-century BCE pillar remains, see Shaw (2007).

and bastions, are found at ten of the Buddhist sites in the area, including Sanchi and Andher. It is difficult to date these walls with certainty, although the one on the eastern edge of Sanchi hill was probably built during the tenth or eleventh century CE. Building 43, one of Sanchi's latest structures, dates to around the same time. With its four corner towers it has a distinctly military appearance, closely mirrored by a fortified stūpa enclosure recently documented at Bighan to the north of Vidisha (Shaw, 2007).[26] The reason for building these later defences may well be related to the forces behind the eventual decline of Buddhism in the area: there is little evidence for ongoing occupation after the post-Gupta period at interior sites, and after the eleventh or twelfth century CE at Sanchi (Shaw, 2007).[27]

However the evidence discussed above suggests that these sites were subject to hostile threats during earlier periods also. The post-Mauryan king Pushyamitra seems to have been inimical to heterodoxy, especially Buddhism. Traditions which associate the horse sacrifice with the Shungas and identify them as Brahamanas, lend support to their position as representatives of the vigorously orthodox (*smārta*). This has led to suggestions that Sanchi Stūpa 1 was intentionally damaged in the post-Mauryan era (Marshall, 1940: 23-4; Verardi, 1996: 230-31). While there is no direct proof that Sanchi was attacked by the Śuṅgas, the circumstances are sufficiently compelling to see the injury to a stūpa as an assault on the *śāsana* and, quite literally, the 'body' of Buddhism.[28] However, it was not simply a question of heterodox versus orthodox views. As illustrated by the reliefs on the Sanchi gates, relics were sources of contention from the earliest days of Buddhism. This is because they lent themselves to use as instruments of political legitimacy, the spread of the *dharma*

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[26] Both of these structures follow a similar plan as the 11th-century-CE Antiachak Vikramaśīla (*Indian Archaeology – A Review, 1972-73*: 5, Fig. 1).

[27] Verardi (1996: 224) has noted that the monastery at Uddandapura (in eastern India) may have been attacked by Muslims because of its resemblance to a fortress (cf., Sinha *et al*, 1983f-87: 2, 37). Further, the fortification of Antiachak Vikramaśīla, *c*. 11th century CE, probably arose not from the threat of Muslim invasion, but rather from internal conflicts between tantric and non-tantric elements of the *saṅgha* (*ibid*.).

[28] See Shaw (2004a, 2007) for a critical discussion of the political landscape during the post-Mauryan period and the problematic identity of the śuṅgas.

being easily appropriated by kings who sought to draw on analogies between themselves and the Buddha as *dharmarāja* and *cakravartin*. Although the use of relics as instruments of polity received its fullest elaboration in Sri Lanka, Strong (1983) has put forward convincing arguments that this mode of kingship was first developed by Aśoka in the third century BCE (see also Duncan, 1990).

Further suggestions that Buddhist sites were susceptible to attack or pillage, draw on theories regarding the wider social and economic function of monasteries. First, in addition to meditational retreats, many monasteries were centres of learning and scholarship (Ray, 1994: 122), and would have contained valuable libraries in need of protection. Secondly, the larger sites attracted numerous pilgrims, whose donations would have resulted in the accumulation of considerable wealth. The large quantity of precious items found in Monastery 51 at Sanchi (Hamid, 1940: 85-6), was possibly accumulated in this way.[29] Finally, many of the Deccan rock-cut monasteries occupied commanding positions on major trade-routes, suggesting that the *saṅgha* played an active role in facilitating inter-regional trade (e.g., Heitzman, 1984). This view is corroborated by epigraphical and textual evidence which shows that the *saṅgha* supported the trading interests of travelling merchants, by providing a safe haven for traders' caravans; offering secure lodging facilities; storing cash, and lending out interest on permanent endowments (Schopen, 1994). It also appears to have promoted the commercial value of traded goods, such as silk or the 'seven precious things', by incorporating them into the Buddhist framework as objects of ritual gift-giving (Liu, 1988: 101). All of these factors would have increased the need for the kind of defence mechanisms seen in the Sanchi area.

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[29] Hamid's (1940) argument that this material proved the structure to be Queen Devi's monastery is a reflection of the 'theological' model of Buddhist scholarship which views commercial pursuits as the sign of a degenerate *saṅgha*.

**Intra-site spatial organisation and the protection of relics**

While the hill-top retreats provided a safe refuge for both the relics and the Buddhist monks who cared for them, specific provisions within the monastic complexes themselves would have been needed to ensure that the stūpa was protected and properly venerated. This situation had to be maintained so that the relic continued to assert its powerful influence on the world around.

Over a century and a half ago, Cunningham (1854: 315) noticed that the angle between Stūpas 1 and 2 at Sonari was remarkably similar to that at Sanchi. He even suggested that 'there must have been some peculiar significance in this particular angle' but failed to pursue this line of investigation any further. One explanation for this arrangement draws on the dynamics of the stūpa and relic cult at Sanchi and Satdhara. As yet, no relics have been retrieved from the main stūpas at these sites, but there are strong suggestions that they originally contained, and perhaps still do, the relics of the Buddha himself. The *Vinaya* rules stipulated that a monk's stūpa should be positioned according to his rank in life and, more especially, that the stūpas of Sariputa and Mahamogalana should be appropriately situated beside that of the Buddha (*Mahāparinibbāna sūtta* 95.2.7; Roth, 1980: 184-5; Willis, 2000). The stūpas containing the relics of Sariputa and Mahamogalana at Sanchi and Satdhara appear to conform to these regulations. Also in accord with the *Vinaya* is the fact that Sanchi Stūpa 2 is set outside the main compound wall, seemingly because it contained the relics of the Hemavatas who post-dated the Buddha by several hundred years. It is important to stress, however, that since the main stūpa at Sanchi was constructed during the Aśokan period (by which time the *Vinaya* had been partially codified) the Hemavatas were conforming to an earlier power structure. By contrast, the entire complex at Sonari appears to have been built by the Hemavatas in the second century BCE. Because the site was 'new', the Hemavatas were able to manipulate the rules and position their own monument directly beside the main

stūpa at the site.   This would seem to be a blatant statement of Hemavata eminence, corroborated by the fact that the most important stūpas at the 'Bhilsa Tope' sites are set within enclosures.   While the identity of the relic deposits at the newly documented stūpa sites is unknown, the presence of an enclosure is a strong indicator of their relative ritual importance. The correspondence between stūpa size and ritual status is also illustrated at sites such as Morel khurd, where smaller stūpas, most probably containing burials of ordinary monks and laity (Schopen, 1996), are positioned at a lower level, presumably in deference to the ritual eminence of the Hemavatas' stūpas on the upper plateau (Fig. 7).

The positioning of the monuments can also be explained as part of the need to protect the relics by regulating access to the stūpas and maintaining close surveillance of them. In all instances, the position of the stūpas seems to bear a relation to the large platformed monasteries found at all the 'Bhilsa Tope' sites, and four of the newly documented Buddhist sites (Fig. 2). The Morel khurd platform reaches almost 10 metres and would have been surmounted by an additional structure of two or three storeys.   When seen from Andher or Sanchi, the Morel khurd platform is even now one of the most conspicuous architectural features; in the second century BCE it would have been twice the present height and would have dominated the entire complex.   All the 'Bhilsa Tope' platforms have internal staircases cut into their main body.[30] This meant that one would enter the main monastic building through a narrow covered passage.   This device, enhanced at Satdhara by a bent entrance, would have been a useful device for monitoring movement in and out of the building (Fig. 4). At Sanchi, Marshall (1940: 65) noted that two stairways were set into the northern wall of Temple 40 which are similar in style and date to the stairway of the 'temple' (i.e., platform) at

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[30] Andher is the exception here, but the platform is completely ruined and the stair might be revealed if excavations were made. Similar stairways were found at Mawasa (Shaw, 2007).

Sonari. The tradition was not abandoned in later architecture and can be found, for example, at the Jaina temple at Ranakpur.[31]

Even without their superstructures, the platforms at the Buddhist sites provide an all-encompassing panorama of the stūpas. Going back to our discussion of 'seeing', this means that the monks (or at least the senior monks who no doubt occupied these buildings) could have gazed constantly on all the stūpas and thus had the ability to contemplate the auspicious sight and presence of the Buddha and the Arhats.[32] This helps explain why Stūpas 1 and 2 at Morel khurd are not in a straight line but slightly staggered so that both monuments could be been seen from the largest monastery (Fig. 7).[33] This not only allowed the stūpas to be admired but also provided an efficient means of surveillance. That this concern with surveillance extended into the surrounding area is suggested by the platform ('B') on the cliff at Satdhara which not only offers a view of the main stūpa but doubles as a 'look-out' for the river-valley below (Fig. 8). Two monastery platforms outside the area originally mapped by Cunningham, were noted during the SSP and included in Fig. 8. One is on the western side of the River Bes; the other is situated at some distance to the south of the main complex; both of these monasteries afford clear views of the principal stūpas.

**INSERT Fig. 7 HERE**

**INSERT Fig. 8 HERE**

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[31] The guardian figures (*dvārapāla*) that frequently flank the doors of later temples also reinforce the idea that entrances needed to be protected and regulated. They appear in Brahmanical contexts in c. fifth century CE, but the early antecedents at Buddhist sites include the *dvārapāla* figures at Pitalkhora (Fig. 9.5), and the *yakṣa* figures on the first-century CE gateways of Sanchi Stūpa 1.

[32] Schopen (1997: 258ff) has noted that early monastic buildings tended to be oriented with their entrances facing the central stūpa, albeit situated at some distance from it. Later on, the stūpas were placed in the midst of the monastery compound, so that they could always be viewed from the monks' cells (as in the case of the 7th-century CE monastery below Temple 45 at Sanchi). Despite this recognition, the spatial dynamics at these early sites are not fully understood, partly because the platforms discussed here had not hitherto been recognised as monasteries. This recognition, together with the discovery of other early monastery types on the Sanchi areas challenges the received view that 'there are no monastery remains clearly datable before the Gupta period' (Trainor, 1996: 32).

[33] Mapping work carried out at Morel khurd in 2004-5 (Shaw, 2007) reveals the second 'platformed' monastery described by Cunningham to follow a courtyard plan and to belong to a somewhat later period.

Similar arrangements are found at Sonari. The orientation of Stūpas 1, 3 and 5 suggests that they were staggered so that all of them could be seen from the monastery platform (Fig. 10); the lines of vision from the platform are shown by the arrows in (Fig. 9). The staircases leading to the upper terraces of the stūpas also appear to have been deliberately positioned so as to be visible from the monastery, suggesting that they were a feature which needed special protection (Fig. 9). Several factors endorse the suggestion that the staircase was the part of the stūpa most in need of protection. The stairs took devotees as close as it was possible to get to the relic chamber, and on the terrace they could circumambulate the sacred traces of the Buddha or later teachers (Falk, 1977: 288). On a cosmic level the stairs offered the possibility of ascending to a higher spiritual plane.[34] That the *saṅgha* was concerned with monitoring access to the stūpa is corroborated by Trainor's (1997: 154) discussion of the ritual rules which stipulate that the stūpa should only be approached after removing ones shoes and assuming a proper attitude of respect. Furthermore, relics could 'disappear' or make their own arrangements to move if not accorded proper worship (Willis, 2000: 15).

**INSERT Fig 9 HERE**

**INSERT Fig. 10 HERE**

Sanchi would appear to be an exception to these patterns, but here too the monasteries seem to have been placed to survey and regulate access to the main stūpa. Building 8, only recently excavated and shown to have an internal staircase like the platforms at the other sites,

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[34] Adrian Snodgrass (1995: 282-5) discusses the connection between the symbolism of ascent and the stairways of south-east Asian terrace stūpas. He pays particular attention to their serpent-balustrades, which may allude both to the myth of the churning of the ocean, and to the serpent as the 'rainbow bridge' which links heaven and earth. In this context, the serpent (*nāga*) should also be seen as the guardian, protecting the most vulnerable part of the stūpa; for descriptions of Canonical sanctions for spiritual rewards of circumambulation, see Falk, 1977: 290.

guards the top end of the main foot path that led to the summit.[35] It also provides limited views of the main stūpa. Marshall (1940: pl. 71 & accompanying notes) noticed that the stairways of Stūpa 2 are on the east 'instead of the more usual south side of the monument. This no doubt was merely a matter of convenience, as the old approach road on this side of the hill passed by the eastern entrance of the stūpa, but it seems to show that in the latter part of the second century BCE, special importance was not attached to the principal entrance being located on the south'. An examination of the other sites shows that there is no consistency in the directional positioning of the stairs. At Sonari, the stairway of Stūpa 2 faces east, whiles the stairs of Stūpas 1, 3, and 5 are on the west. It is therefore tempting to suggest that one of the reasons for the particular positioning of the stairway of Stūpa 2 at Sanchi, was to enable it to be more easily visible from Building 8.

Immediately south of the Sanchi Stūpa 1 is Building 18, an apsidal hall which was constructed in the Mauryan period and subsequently rebuilt on several occasions. Allchin (1995: 241-2) has commented on how this arrangement is found at other early Buddhist sites in north India. Excavations during the 1990s at Satdhara have revealed the foundations of a similar structure immediately to the north of the main stūpa there (Agrawal, 1997; Shaw, 2007); similar apsidal structures, although with simple boulder walls, were documented at Mawasa during the SSP (Shaw, 2007). These apsidal buildings seem to have been intended for assemblies and collective worship. Although my research in this area is ongoing and conclusions necessarily provisional, I suggest that the apsidal hall may be understood as a physical manifestation of the *Dharma* as expressed in the concept of the 'Triple Gem'. Willis (2000: 12-15) has discussed how the triad of Buddha, Dharma and the *saṅgha* helps to explain how the stūpa represented the Buddha in the monastic setting. Extending this

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[35] Willis (2000: 66) discusses the footpaths leading to the summit.

suggestion, the *saṅgha* can be equated with the monastic structures of which the platforms are the most conspicuous ancient residue. The Dharma or teaching finds its architectural manifestation in the *caitya* hall. This is suggested by the *Prātimokka*, a collection of precepts contained in the *Vinaya* which was (and is) recited by monks on Uposattha days for the purpose of confession. While recitation could have taken place anywhere, it seems plausible that there was a specific setting given the highly regulated and corporate nature of Buddhist monastic life.

**The *Nāga* cult**

While the protection and worship of relics rested primarily with the *saṅgha*, serpent deities (*nāgarāja*), traditionally associated with agriculture and fertility, also played an important role. There are many textual accounts of the Buddha challenging and defeating the power of dangerous *nāgas*, notably the story of the subordination of a fierce serpent inhabiting the fire-temple of the Kaśyapas; this episode is shown in one of the gate-reliefs at Sanchi (Marshall, 1940: pl. 52), as is the well-known story of Buddha's protection from a storm by *Nāga* Muchalinda during his quest for enlightenment.[36] *Nāgas* are presented as dangerous and in need of external control because of their venomous bite; but also because or their ability to bring about environmental havoc through either withholding the monsoon rains or causing excessive deluges. Demoted from their position as deities in their own right, they often became guardians of Buddhist relics, a direct adaptation of their role as protectors of subterranean and sub-aquatic treasure: Buddhist texts frequently recount how relics were guarded by nāgas until they were made available for human worship.[37] Accordingly, *nāgas* often feature as guardians of entrances to stūpas or monasteries. At Sanchi, several of the Stūpa 2 railings bear serpent motifs, while at Pitalkhora in the Deccan, two rearing cobras are

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[36] Close parallels to the story of the subordination of a fierce serpent inhabiting the fire-temple of the Kaśyapas in the Brahmanical tradition include the story of Garuda's defeat of the snakes guarding the elixir (*Mahābhārata*, I:5: 29) and Kriṣṇa's destruction of the *nāga* Kaliya (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*).
[37] For example, *Dātha-vaṃsa*, 4: 28-37.

placed at the entrance of the main monastery, their mouths acting as pipes for draining out the water from the complex above (Fig. 5). This link with water is also in keeping with the *nāgas'* perceived control over the natural elements, a power which is later appropriated by the Buddhist tradition through its own active participation in rainmaking cults. In addition to the traditional 'conversion' narrative, *nāgas* evidently played an important role in the *saṅgha*'s 'localisation' in new areas (Cohen, 1998; Bloss, 1973).

Returning to Sanchi, one of the earliest free-standing anthropomorphic nāga sculptures stands at Nagauri, a low hill immediately south of Sanchi (Fig. 1; Shaw, 2004a: fig. 2). The *nāga* here, originally part of a couple, faces directly towards the main stūpa and in keeping with its traditional role as protector of relics, can be envisaged as guarding not only the stūpas but the whole valley between the two hills. The *nāga's* traditional association with water is also maintained because in its current position it would have stood at the edge of an ancient reservoir held up by a large dam between Sanchi and Nagauri. Similar dams, datable to *c*. third / second century BCE are found throughout the study area often in similarly close proximity to Buddhist sites, as in the case of the Sanchi-Nagauri example, and are central to hypotheses regarding the wider economic and social background of Buddhist propagation in the area.[38] Other *nāga* sculptures, datable between *c*. first century BCE and sixth century CE are also found throughout the study area (Shaw, 2004a), usually on, or close to the aforementioned dams.

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[38] The main argument is that they were built to provide irrigation, principally for rice, as a response to the increased population levels suggested by the distribution of settlements and Buddhist sites, and that they formed part of the larger cultural package that accompanied the spread of Buddhism and urbanisation from their cradle in the Gangetic valley. Similarities with inter-site patterns in Sri Lanka, where monastic landlordism is attested from *c*. 2nd century BCE onwards, support the suggestion that the Sanchi dams were underlain by a similar system of exchange between Buddhist monks and local agricultural communities (Shaw & Sutcliffe, 2001, 2003, 2005; Shaw *et al.*, 2007).

My principal argument developed in full elsewhere (Shaw, 2004a, 2007) is that these *nāgas* were not 'external' to Buddhist practice, but rather their propitiation supported the *saṅgha*'s concern with agrarian production and water-harvesting as instruments of lay patronage. This, together with the fact that the earliest free-standing *nāga* sculptures in the area post-date the establishment of Buddhism by around two hundred years, challenges the traditional story of a Pan-Indian Buddhist appropriation of a universal, pre-existing, 'local' tradition. While there is every possibility that these deities were worshipped in non-durable forms during earlier periods, it is necessary to question the validity of the polarised 'Buddhist' versus 'non Buddhist' framework within which the *nāga* debate is usually situated.[39] Serpent worship no doubt existed throughout ancient India, as it does today, but in many divergent, regional forms. The appearance of iconographic and stylistic conventions for representing *nāgas* is quite a different phenomenon that may reflect the *saṅgha*'s attempt to apply a single label, possibly deriving from a specific regional context, to a host of disparate cultic identities (Shaw, 2007).[40]

**The wider archaeological landscape**

While the internal spatial organisation of the hilltop Buddhist sites and their wider inter-site relationships are important for our understanding of local monastic history, equally important is the question of how these sites related to other forms of economic and social structures, as manifested in the configuration of habitational settlements or land-use systems. This larger dataset and its contribution to debates regarding the development of local patronage networks, is discussed elsewhere.[41] Further, although we can distinguish between the types of deities being propitiated at particular sites, it is inaccurate to speak of a 'Buddhist

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[39] In eastern India there is ample evidence for organised, state-patronised *nāga* worship in the form of apsidal temples datable to between the 1st century BCE and 2nd century CE. Apsidal Temple no. 2 at Sonkh, Mathura (Härtel, 1993: 425) and the Maniyar Math at Rajgir (*Annual Review, Archaeological Survey of India, 1938*: 52-4) both help to contest the idea of *nāgas* as the folk 'other' of Buddhism, into which it is passively assimilated.
[40] See Dalton (2004) for a similar process in 10th century CE Tibet.
[41] See n.37 (above) for references.

period' or indeed of an exclusively 'Buddhist landscape'.   Not only must we recognise the potential for resistance to the devices of control discussed in this essay, we must also remember the schisms that appeared frequently in the Buddhist *saṅgha* (even from the Aśokan period) and the fact that the Buddhist sites were interspersed with both Brahmanical and non-Brahmanical cult-spots.   At Vidisha, for example, there was a temple of Vasudeva which dates to the third or second century BCE (Khare, 1967; Härtel, 1987). That this temple, associated with the *Pāñcarātra* system of the Bhagavata tradition was of pan-Indian importance is shown by the inscribed pillar which was set up beside the shrine by Heliodorus, an envoy of the Indo-Greek king Antialkidas of Taxila.   While the associated deities are depicted in aniconic form, their movement into the rural hinterland takes place through their alignment with the serpent cult.   Many of the aforementioned *nāga* sculptures are actually representations of Vāsudeva's brother, Saṃkarṣaṇa (Shaw, 2004a).   A large group of *yakṣa* figures and other early Brahmancial sculptures from Vidisha (many in the Archaeological Museum, Gwalior) underline the city's importance to faiths other than Buddhism. This level of heterogeneity might have increased the need for security-measures at the stūpa sites, but we should not conclude that the relationship was always one of conflict. Much in Buddhism emerged out of a complex pre-existing religious framework which (at least from the chalcolithic period) had combined many strands of religious thought and imagery.   Above all, much in the religious life of north India is based on a reverence for the inherent sacredness of place.   This is most clearly exemplified by the springs and tanks found throughout the countryside.   One such spring is located in the valley below the stūpas at Sonari.   There one can see the ubiquous aniconic goddess shrine consisting of a triangular stone, set on a platform and painted red.   This could be quite modern, but its antecedents may be extremely ancient (Kenoyer *et al.*, 1983).

**Conclusion**

It is perhaps necessary to state the obvious, namely that the texts do not have (and do not even begin to have) a one-to-one relationship with the monuments that survive. There is much in them that can no longer be traced in archaeological terms and there is equally much on the ground that cannot be textually corroborated. More particularly there is no *Vinaya* material, as far as I am aware, that contains specific instructions as to how the stūpa should be protected and controlled in spatial terms. The extent of the problem is highlighted by the Pāli *Vinaya* which contains no reference to stūpa-related ritual, a fact that has excited much scholarly attention (Schopen, 1997: ch. 5; Hallisey, 1990; Hinüber, 1990; Gombrich, 1990). The details of this particular question need not detain us here; the key point for the present purpose is that, although we may not find textual correlations or explanations, this is not sufficient reason to reject my principle thesis, namely that many aspects of the relic cult were played out in spatial terms. The dynamics of these remarkable sites and buildings in central India, so long obscured because of static models of text and monument, can be regained (albeit only in part) by considering how people in the past looked at, moved round and responded to the 'presences' in their wider sacred landscape.

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