SETTING THE THREE JEWELS:
THE COMPLEX CULTURE OF BUDDHISM AT THE AJAṆṬĀ CAVES

by

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For my parents, David and Bernice Cohen, whose love, encouragement, and support have always been without reservation
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This dissertation was born of an epiphany. Walking along a path at Ajanta, somewhere near Cave 9, I had a realization -- whether in the body or out I do not know -- of how rich the site could be for a scholar of Buddhism. It requires no such epiphany to recognize that one does not become a scholar of Buddhism without the assistance of one's teachers, friends and family.

I am deeply indebted to the members of my committee, whose role in my graduate career commenced long before the dissertation. My most profound debt is to Luis O. Gomez. Driving the chariot of my graduate career, Luis revealed the Dharma of Buddhist studies. But whereas Krishna's teachings were broadly universal, his physical form infinite, Luis is best revered for the precision of his insights and the human warmth of his delivery. Walter Spink, my next-door-neighbor at Ajanta for several months while I was doing research, became my friend as well as teacher. Whether arguing the reasons that a vihara's wall is askew or dancing to a cassette of eighteenth century waltzes, Walter is the model of a man whose work has redefined an entire field. I am also grateful to Donald Lopez, who taught me Tibetan after a string of inadequate teachers had made me question whether it could ever be taught. More importantly, Don's emphasis on matters theoretical has pushed me to explore avenues of thought that provided an underpinning for the dissertation and will guide my intellectual life for the foreseeable future. Rounding out my committee is Madhav Deshpande, who provides me with an ideal of what a Sanskritist can be.

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There is a common trope in Buddhist literature, wherein two religious practices are compared, and one is said to not have one hundredth, one thousandth, or even one ten thousandth of the merit of the other. It is in the spirit of this trope that I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Nancy Caciola. Nancy has been my companion, friend, and lover for my entire adult life. And whether it was helping me find the correctly nuanced word, distinguishing "principle" from "principal," or discussing the value of different scholars' takes on ritual, Nancy's contributions to this dissertation have been of singular merit.
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