

## CHAPTER II

### BETWEEN THE MOTION AND THE ACT FALL THE SOURCES

Thus far in this extended preface to the Buddhism of Ajaṅṭā I have worked out a detailed, though problematic, overview of the extraordinary historical circumstances that affected Ajaṅṭā's patrons during its Vākāṭaka heyday. The next prolegomena requiring attention are of an evidential and methodological nature. What kinds of data does Ajaṅṭā provide? What kind of answers can be elicited from this data? What additional evidence may be brought to bear upon Ajaṅṭā from outside the site? How should those sources be read? This chapter will address these concerns in several stages. The first section treats the relationship between archaeological and textual sources for the recovery of Buddhism's history in India. This discussion is highly theoretic, drawing upon Piercean semiology, anthropology, and hermeneutics in its effort to elaborate the nature of the available evidence. Following that, I will present two examples of how not to go about the enterprise of bringing together art-historical and textual evidence in the study of Ajaṅṭā's Buddhism. Finally, the third section will delineate a 'canon' of literary sources that may be brought to bear upon the interpretation of Ajaṅṭā's native evidence.

#### **Schopen, Archaeology, and Textual Possibilities**

Since the publication of *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*, which practically initiated the scholarly study of Indian Buddhism, Burnouf's dictum that, "the genuine sources through which it may be possible to know Indian Buddhism, the original

and purest sources, are the Sanskrit texts from Nepal, and . . . the Pāli books from Ceylon,"<sup>1</sup> has determined the field's methodological and evidential biases. The curriculum of work associated with the names of the field's luminaries -- T. W. Rhys Davids' leadership in the Pāli Text Society, L. de la Vallée Poussin's study of the *Abhidharmakośa*, É. Lamotte and the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*, just to name a few -- is the renowned legacy of Burnouf's prediction. Indeed, the only review of Buddhist Studies as an independent field of scholarship, de Jong's *Brief History*, portrays Buddhist Studies as a predominantly philological endeavor, characterized in particular by its focus upon Buddhist texts. Taken in this light, the fact that de Jong did not find it "feasible to enumerate the important epigraphical and archaeological discoveries which relate to Buddhism"<sup>2</sup> is as much an indication of the field's methodological heritage as of the personal competencies de Jong brought to the authorship of his history.

More recently, a number of scholars have begun to challenge this established pattern of scholarship. Most prominent among them is Gregory Schopen, whose work has included calls for reformation of the field, to transform it from the practice of a "History of Religions" into an "Archaeology of Religions." This alternate field of study is introduced thus:

It is hardly revolutionary to suggest that, had the academic study of religions started quite literally on the ground, it would have been confronted with very different problems. It would have had to ask very different questions and it would have produced very different solutions. It would, in short, have become not the 'History of Religions' -- which was and is essentially text bound -- but the 'Archaeology of Religions'. It would have used texts, of course, but only those that could be shown to have been actually known or read at a given place at a given time, or to have governed or shaped the kinds of religious behavior that had left traces on the ground. In fact texts would have been judged significant only if they

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<sup>1</sup> Eugène Burnouf. *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme Indien*. (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1876): 12.

<sup>2</sup> J. W. de Jong. *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America*. (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1987): 37.

could be shown to be related to what religious people actually did. This archaeology of religions would have been primarily occupied with three kinds of things then: religious constructions and architectures, inscriptions, and art historical remains. In a more general sense, it would have been preoccupied *not* with what small, literate, almost exclusively male and certainly atypical professionalized sub-groups wrote, but rather, with what religious people of all segments of a given religious community actually did and how they lived.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly one can see the influence this Archaeology of Religions has had upon my own project: Ajaṅṭā has little to offer besides a wealth of inscriptions, architectures, and art-historical remains, and I fully intend to focus upon written texts that can be shown to have been known the local Buddhist community. Nor has Schopen's work been instrumental for my formulations alone. His is arguably among the most influential voices in Buddhist studies today. Yet, I have not come across a single considered critique of his scholarly corpus. For this reason, as an introduction to my use of the archaeological and textual sources within this project, I will appraise Schopen's scholarly program to explain how my own project diverges therefrom. While doing so, I may also clarify what it means for Ajaṅṭā's remains to be signs of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha in the complex culture of ancient India.

In a recent statement of his programme, Schopen suggests that Buddhist studies' traditional focus upon textual materials is symptomatic of a more profound etiology within the Western study of religions. That is, he finds a historical basis for this privileging of texts in the efforts of sixteenth-century Reformation ideologues such as Zwingli, Karlstadt, Calvin: Protestants who sought to fix the spirit of "True Religion" in the religious Word, as opposed to material objects and ritual behaviors which they considered the superstitious idolatry of Catholics. Schopen writes, "The methodological position taken by modern Buddhist scholars, archaeologists, and historians of religion looks . . . uncannily like the

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<sup>3</sup> Gregory Schopen. "Burial '*Ad Sanctos*' and the Physical Presence of the Buddha in Early Indian Buddhism," *Religion*. 17 (1987): 193-4.

position taken by a variety of early Protestant 'reformers' who were attempting to define and establish the locus of 'true religion.'<sup>4</sup> In these terms, the division between a text-based History of Religions and Schopen's proposed Archaeology is founded less upon the choice of sources than within "a debate about where religion as an object of investigation is to be located."<sup>5</sup> Texts and archaeological evidence are, instead, emblematic of the two sides of this debate. One who holds to the view of true religion as a system of Eternal Truths is bound to find religion's most philosophically just articulation in textual materials, which are discursive in nature; the view of religion as "what religious people of all segments of a given religious community actually did and how they lived," transfers the focus from known to knower, emphasizing religious artifacts and behaviors as articulations of religious knowledge. In Schopen's view, the former position is both methodologically unsound and historically invalid, for "the ascription of primacy to textual sources in Buddhist studies not only effectively neutralizes the independence of archaeological sources and epigraphical sources as witnesses, it also effectively excludes what practicing Buddhists did and believed from the history of their own religion."<sup>6</sup> By finding religion in the latter locus, as revealed in the source materials for an Archaeology of Religions, Schopen counters the Reformation.

Surely, as a corrective for the field, Schopen's claim that textual sources alone cannot be treated as embodiments of the religion's True Spirit and therefore as the location of "real" or "correct" Indian Buddhism is to be embraced. However, the danger of any strongly stated position is that it can be too strongly stated. Schopen says that the debate is ultimately over "location" not sources, but his rhetoric is inconsistent. Whereas Schopen

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<sup>4</sup> Gregory Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism," *History of Religions*. 31 (1991): 19.

<sup>5</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 23.

<sup>6</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 14.

does include on some level "all segments of a given community" within his *Archaeology of Religions*, he is also quick to devalue the participation of the "atypical professionalized sub-group," even though contemporary witnesses like Fa-Hien, Hsüan-Tsang and I-Tsing demonstrate that this group possessed influence and wealth well in excess of its numbers. Just as surely as we know that some members of the Indian Buddhist community commissioned Buddha figures, there is no denying that some produced, read and debated philosophical treatises as part of their *actual practice*. It would appear that Schopen is in fact less concerned with locating Indian Buddhism in actual practice on-the-ground than in bringing to light *popular*, or *affective*, or *folk*, or *syncretic* dimensions of the religion that were not represented in the writings of the Indian scholastic elite and that therefore have been largely neglected by Western scholars.

As a Sanskritist will recognize, Schopen's work may be revolutionary for the field, but it is no *āśrayaparāvṛtti*, no "revolution of the basis." The Protestant presupposition Schopen discusses was actually two-fold: the concern to locate a true religion first presupposes a "true religion" to locate. Rather than remove the bane of "true religion" altogether, however, Schopen instead locates it in the subject of his *Archaeology*: the actual deeds of actual people. Accordingly, he intimately links the matter of location to that of sources: "the choice of sources for the scholar interested in knowing what Indian Buddhism had been *would seem obvious*."<sup>7</sup> In Schopen's reading of the field's history, the *obvious* choice was not made because the blinders of Protestant presuppositions caused scholars to overlook the value of archaeological source materials as "historical witnesses"<sup>8</sup> and "adequate reflections of historical reality."<sup>9</sup> Schopen's directive for the field, based

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<sup>7</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 3; emphasis mine.

<sup>8</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 3.

<sup>9</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 5.

upon these observations, is strongly stated:

There is . . . for the vast majority of [archaeological] sites, no evidence that the canonical sources we know were known or used by the communities that lived there. These sources have, in this sense, no *direct* documentary value at all. If the study of Indian Buddhism is ever to be anything other than the study of what appears to be an idealizing and intentionally archaizing literature, if it is ever to deal directly with how this religion was actually practiced in actual local monasteries, these facts will have to be fully confronted, however uncomfortable that might be.<sup>10</sup>

This polemic is appealing, especially as my own study falls on the side of the precious few that concern themselves with Indian Buddhism on the local level. Nevertheless, I cannot accept it in this form for two reasons, the first is site-specific, the second involves a conflict between Schopen and myself concerning the nature of archaeological sources.

First, as an elite monastic site, Ajañṭā stands apart from "the vast majority of [archaeological] sites" in that there *is* evidence for literary sources having been known there; these will be enumerated at the end of this chapter. Ajañṭā's local Buddhism cannot be studied without appeal to scholastic texts, popular literary texts, Hindu texts, and Buddhist canonical texts alike. Indeed, some of the statements gleaned from Ajañṭā's inscriptions attached to lay donations reveal a doctrinally sophisticated community:

*vyastadoṣaprahāṇād . . . padam aśokaṃ nirjvaraṃ śāntam āryyaṃ*<sup>11</sup>  
the peaceful and noble state free from sorrow and disease, [attained] by eradicating the many faults

*anūcivāṃ so 'pi hi yasya hr̥dgatāṃ vidanṛvadhyāśa[ya]śuddhisampadam*<sup>12</sup>  
[the donor] too was repeating in his heart [the teaching called], The Perfect Equality of Affect Towards the Wise Man and Criminal [Alike]

*sarvvajñatā ca prañidhānasiddhi[b]*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory Schopen. "An Old Inscription from Amarāvati and the Cult of the Local Monastic Dead in Indian Buddhist Monasteries," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. 14 (1992): 317.

<sup>11</sup> App. A, No. 67, line 27.

<sup>12</sup> App. A, No. 77, line 18.

<sup>13</sup> App. A, No. 77, line 19.

omniscience -- the fulfillment of [a bodhisattva's] vows

*anābhogavibuddhabuddhir buddhābbidhāno*<sup>14</sup>  
he, called Buddha, whose Intelligence bloomed effortlessly

A more significant problem in Schopen's work, however, stems from the fact that it treats archaeological materials as if they adequately and transparently reflect the social significance of actual practices on the ground. Elite literary productions are devalued in his work as 1) in most cases without a specifiable provenance in space or time, 2) redacted, 3) heavily edited and 4) ideological and/or nomological.<sup>15</sup> Archaeological sources, by contrast, are 1) "reasonably well located in time and space," 2) "largely 'unedited'" and 3) they "record or reflect at least part of what Buddhists -- both lay-people and monks -- *actually* practiced and believed."<sup>16</sup>

From the essay "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," I have twice cited Schopen as pairing actual practice and actual belief as the two species of information which archaeological materials yield and which textual sources cannot. In an elaboration of this same idea, Schopen writes that the "considerable human efforts that very likely produced what we see in the archaeological record of Buddhist sacred sites . . . [are] indicators of value."<sup>17</sup> Let us focus upon this latter phrasing, for however innocent Schopen's use of "indicator" in this passage, by characterizing archaeological evidence with such terminology, Schopen opens himself up to a Piercean semiological analysis.

For Piercean semiology, a sign is a source of information or knowledge. There are three parts to the Piercean sign: the *sign* itself, the *object*, and the *interpretant*. In the

<sup>14</sup> App. A, No. 98, line 1.

<sup>15</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 1-2; emphasis mine.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory Schopen. "*Stūpa* and *Tīrtha*: Tibetan Mortuary Practices and an Unrecognized Form of Burial Ad Sanctos at Buddhist Sites in India." In *The Buddhist Forum, Volume III*. Ed. by Tadeusz Skorupski and Ulrich Pagel. (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1994): 292-93.

words of E. Valentine Daniel: "Objects may exist in the universe as individual empiricities or existent facts, but they do not become real until and unless they are represented by a sign, which representation is interpreted as such by an interpretant."<sup>18</sup> I introduce the Piercean sign at this moment because Schopen's claim that signs (physical remains) and objects (values) are directly linked by contiguity or concurrence can be directly translated into Piercean terms under the rubric of the *index*. As Daniel puts it, "indexical signs are what we call facts."<sup>19</sup> By positing that individuals' values can be recovered directly through a recovery of material artifacts Schopen is suggesting that an indexical relationship obtains between archaeological evidence and values.

However, Schopen's explication of this indexical relationship between signs and the object they signify does not account for the third term of the Piercean sign, the interpretant. That is, although a sign, *as index*, does not rely upon the work of an interpretant, *as a sign* it does. There are facts, but no bare facts. As a Piercean sign, even an index is complex and irreducible. Because of its *triune* structure, the sign is always its own first element and therefore recursive, leaving open the possibility of a glissade between the sign and its own representations as 'sign.' Further, the sign is always already other than itself, for to be significant it requires the work of an interpretant, which unites sign and object. To paraphrase Geertz, the signified object too is suspended in webs of significance. In short, a Piercean sign can never have a static meaning such as Schopen's arguments imply. Schopen would have archaeological evidence be adequate to the values it represents. But according to Piercean semiology, one draws ever further from the *object* as one draws closer to the sign in its totality, its complex locus of meaning. Archaeological materials exist, they prove there were values, but archaeological remains cannot *in their*

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<sup>18</sup> E. Valentine Daniel. *Fluid Signs: Being a Person the Tamil Way*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 19.

<sup>19</sup> Daniel. *Fluid Signs*, 31-2.

*material aspect alone* index/indicate what those values were.<sup>20</sup>

What I am getting at here is the problem of *ideology*. The use of this "keyword" is of course itself ideologically charged. Here I am invoking the sense given the term by Georges Dumézil as redacted by J. Z. Smith: a people "as observed need not correspond to their own systematic statements about themselves."<sup>21</sup> This was the starting point for Schopen's own criticism that Buddhist texts often promote doctrines and ideals which diverge markedly from the beliefs, concerns, and interests that actually motivated Buddhists; in this way, scholarship based upon texts alone would be irreducibly

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<sup>20</sup> Schopen recognizes that archaeological remains retain only a "part" of Indian Buddhism's beliefs and practices ("Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 2). And I agree that archaeological evidence is invaluable, even preferable, when it is used as a *positive* indicator of a particular practice or belief. Yet, *negative arguments from archaeology, arguments which draw conclusions from the lack of specific evidence, should be avoided, or made with only the greatest circumspection*. I state this point so strongly for several reasons. First, there is the problem of excavation: Major archaeological sites, such as Sārnāth, Sāñcī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa, were incompletely excavated and documented during the earlier parts of this century and the last (little work has been done on historical archaeology since Independence). Indeed, the site of Amarāvātī is as famous for the destruction done to it by the local Zamindar, who used the slabs for building materials and tunneled into the stūpa seeking treasure, as for the glorious remains themselves. See Dilip K. Chakrabarti's *A History of Indian Archaeology: From the Beginning to 1947* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1988) for the sad history of Indian archaeological studies and excavation. Second, only certain types of practice would have left physical artifacts to be studied a millennium or more after the fact. A case in point is the "ordinary-people's" *tsha-tsha* discussed in Schopen's article, "Stūpa and Tīrtha." These *tsha-tsha* would have been clay tablets encasing the remains of devout Buddhists. However, because the *tsha-tsha* are supposed to have been deposited near a stūpa without themselves being protected from the elements in any way, they now no longer exist. Instead, this Indian practice is reconstructed through literary accounts and modern Tibetan burial rituals. Similarly, at Ajañṭā, there is no evidence whatsoever for any form of burial practice, although the site was used on and off by monks from at least the 1st century B.C.E until the late 5th century C.E. This may suggest that at Ajañṭā the dead were disposed of in an archaeologically untraceable manner, a manner that may have to be reconstructed through the use of texts, a manner as simple as cremation and then dispersal in the nearby river. Schopen's programmatic statement for his "Archaeology" allows texts "that could be shown to have . . . governed or shaped the kinds of religious behavior that left traces on the ground." The simple fact is, there may have been many religious behaviors that have not, did not, or could not leave such traces but may still be represented in texts. Archaeological evidence alone is insufficient for a third reason. That is, the ideals and systems of beliefs represented in the Buddhist textual traditions may not all be proper to archaeological representation. When aspects of religious life such as philosophical tenets, cult affiliation, vinaya affiliation, and the like are examined, one's approach to each must rely upon an hermeneutic sensitive to and respectful of the discursive or material contexts from which its categories derive.

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith. *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987): 40.

ideological. In his stronger programmatic statements, Schopen does not attempt to resolve this conflict, to align the two sets of sources within a higher-order unity. Instead, he treats the archaeological evidence as signs indexical of both practice and the values associated with that practice: "adequate reflections of historical reality" rather than "contrived ideal paradigms."<sup>22</sup> But, the possibility of ideology is the possibility that material remains are not adequate reflections of individuals' religious beliefs, that individuals might partake of religious practices for unknown and unknowable reasons, and that the paradigms preserved in the artifactual by-products of ritual action might be no less "contrived" than those expressed in literary sources.

Schopen's programme for an 'Archaeology of Religions' valorizes actual belief and actual practice as the two species of information of greatest interest to the 'archaeologist' for whom material artifacts are the surest source. I have reviewed two problems with this position. First, such evidence is semiological in nature, and therefore open to a never-ending cycle of interpretation; second, it is potentially ideological, and therefore caught in a tension between ideality and reality. These analyses are brought together in the work of anthropologist Roy Rappaport, through a distinction he draws between 'belief' and 'acceptance.' For Rappaport, belief and acceptance are two modes of personal involvement in matters religious, but, as Rappaport stipulates, "Belief [is] . . . some sort of inward state knowable subjectively, if at all. Acceptance, in contrast, is not a private state but a *public act*, visible to both the witnesses and the performer himself."<sup>23</sup> This is to say, by participating in a public religious act "the performer accepts, and indicates to himself and others that he accepts, whatever is encoded in the canon of the liturgical order in which he

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<sup>22</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 5.

<sup>23</sup> Roy A. Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 1979): 194.

is participating."<sup>24</sup> The analytical utility of Rappaport's distinction lies in the following corollary: no matter what one's personal motivation for involving oneself in a public religious act -- whether it is because one privately believes in the efficacy, canons, or ideals encoded therein, or because one is simply playing to community expectations -- the artifacts left by such participation can be treated as indices of a total religious fact.

The distinction between acceptance and belief means that no necessary connection exists between one's public religious actions and one's true motivations for performing those actions -- which could be the fulfillment of social expectation or sumptuary display or the desire for prestige and attendant power or the expression of a deeply felt religious conviction. Nevertheless, ritual performance does provide certain information. The very fact of participation is an index that at least publicly one is accepting the value and efficacy of the rite and the *canonical* information encoded in its liturgy. In Schopen's words, this is an "indicator of value."<sup>25</sup> Yet, canonical information, "concerned with enduring aspects of nature, society, or cosmos,"<sup>26</sup> is not similarly indexed by the bare fact of performance. Instead Rappaport observes, "canonical information itself rests ultimately upon symbols,"<sup>27</sup> using 'symbol' in a consciously Peircean sense: "a symbol is merely 'associated by law' or convention with that which it signifies."<sup>28</sup> Daniel clarifies further, "In a symbol the conventional sign, object, and representamen are brought together within the sign relation by virtue of an agreement and *not by virtue of any quality intrinsic to either object or*

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<sup>24</sup> Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, 193; fully italicized in the original.

<sup>25</sup> Schopen. "Stūpa and Tīrtha," 293.

<sup>26</sup> Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, 182.

<sup>27</sup> Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, 182.

<sup>28</sup> Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, 180.

*representamen*."<sup>29</sup> This canonical message is the "value" that, according to Schopen, the creation of archaeological materials indexes. But being symbolic, there can be no possibility that these materials are transparent revelations of the meaning, significance or content of those values. Whereas an actor may or may not choose to perform a ritual -- or choose between various ritual forms -- once accepted, the chosen liturgy and canonical messages alike contain little or no personal information: the canonical message is "encoded in apparently invariant aspects of [the] liturgical order"<sup>30</sup> and the "sequence of formal acts and utterances [are] not encoded by the performers" themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Indian Buddhist archaeological remains are the result of conventionalized public actions set in an indefinite web of interpretation, which continues to be spun up to the present day. In short, no matter what one's source of data, scholarship cannot span the ideological gap. Only ritual performance bridges the ideological gap, making socially real the socially ideal canons encoded in a liturgy.

In these terms, we can see Schopen's problem is that he equates "actual belief" with the canon realized in ritual. He assumes that archaeological evidence provides transparent evidence for actual practice and belief alike. It is no wonder then that archaeological material is Schopen's *obvious choice*. If artifacts do offer an entre to Indian Buddhist *belief*, it is methodologically unsound to valorize the other, less historically secure, source of belief: texts. We see, however, that archaeological material does not encode belief but is the indexical sign of a public canon encoded in polysemic symbols.

This analysis can go another step further. J. Z. Smith claims that ritual is the means through which humans negotiate the ideological split between ideality and actuality at the

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<sup>29</sup> Daniel. *Fluid Signs*, 32; emphasis added.

<sup>30</sup> Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, 182.

<sup>31</sup> Rappaport. *Ecology, Meaning, and Religion*, 175.

existential level:

Ritual is a means of performing the way things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are. . . . Ritual gains force where incongruency is perceived and thought about.<sup>32</sup>

In other words, ritual can never be treated solely on the level of the socially real, for it requires an ideology, a sense of the-way-things-ought-to-be, from which life in its complexity might and will differ. There can be no doubt that, as Schopen put it, "Indian Buddhism is very much more than the sum of its *śāstras*,"<sup>33</sup> its *sūtras* too. But without a knowledge of "what a small atypical part of the Buddhist community wanted that community to believe or practice"<sup>34</sup> as contained in textual material "intended--at the very least--to inculcate an ideal,"<sup>35</sup> the evidence for what they did practice and value will stand ever only half known. The archaeological sign is the sign of an ancient acceptance, whose meaning can only be fathomed in an explication of the canons accepted. The very phrase "accepted canon" bespeaks actuality and norm alike, actual practice *and* textual ideal. Schopen's suggestions as to the irrelevance of traditional scholarship on Buddhism -- "it has never been established that [certain ideals established in texts] had any impact on actual behavior"<sup>36</sup> or "the texts we are to study to arrive at a knowledge of 'Buddhism' may not even have been known to the vast majority of practicing Buddhists--both monk and lay"<sup>37</sup> -- may be premature. The fact of ritual performance requires the fact of an ideology, a norm.

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<sup>32</sup> Smith. *To Take Place*, 109-10.

<sup>33</sup> Gregory Schopen. "The Buddha as an Owner of Property and Permanent Resident in Medieval Indian Monasteries," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. 18 (1990): 205.

<sup>34</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 3.

<sup>35</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 3.

<sup>36</sup> Schopen. "An Old Inscription from Amarāvati," 317.

<sup>37</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 5.

Smith presented 'ideology' as a marker of difference between norm and actuality; ritual, as the existential means for bridging that gap. To move forward with this analysis, Smith's understanding of 'ideology' may be supplemented by that of Terry Eagleton, who defines ideology as "the link or nexus between discourses and power."<sup>38</sup> Where one finds nomological speech, there one finds the potential for social power. Where one finds ritual, there one finds the integration of nomological discourse with society itself. In short, by linking Smith's and Eagleton's conceptions of 'ideology,' I am proposing that the real social power of *Buddhism* as a participant in Indian society lay within Buddhism's normative discourses. Any attempt to recover Buddhism 'on the ground' through material artifacts must simultaneously consider this religion's more 'ethereal' dimensions, contained in its discursive materials.

Moreover, this matter cannot be reduced through the sociological differentiation of Buddhism into a religion of the educated elites and one of the folk. Militating against such an institutional split, Schopen himself has shown that members of the educated elite participated in or even innovated so-called popular practices.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, the converse position will hold true as well: the discourses of elite religion cannot have been altogether unknown to the folk. As I noted above, one finds various points of doctrine referred to in Ghaṭotkaca's and Caves 16's and 17's verse inscriptions. This latter point may best be clarified by appeal to scholarship on society and religion in Medieval Europe, a body of work that has greatly influenced Schopen. Writing on the "implications of literacy," Brian Stock observes that in the Medieval period, "oral discourse effectively began to function

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<sup>38</sup> Terry Eagleton. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983): 210.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Gregory Schopen. "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism: The Layman/Monk Distinction and the Doctrines of the Transference of Merit," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*. 10 (1984): 9-47; Gregory Schopen. "On Monks, Nuns and 'Vulgar' Practices: The Introduction of the Image Cult into Indian Buddhism," *Artibus Asiae*. 49 (1988-89): 153-68.

within a universe of communications governed by texts. On many occasions actual texts were not present, but people often thought or behaved as if they were. Texts thereby emerged as a reference system both for everyday activities and for giving shape to many larger vehicles of explanation.<sup>40</sup> Christian Europe was formed through a dynamic interaction between and synthesis of scholarly and popular cultures alike. The texts and experiences of the literati are not to be devalued in the effort to recover the experiences of ordinary people.<sup>41</sup>

Adapting this latter point to fit the above discourse on ideology and ritual, one may view scholarly and popular cultures as developing simultaneously within what Foucault has called "a régime of truth,"<sup>42</sup> wherein knowledge is not innocent but an exercise of power. At its most insidious, this power/knowledge "seeps into the very grain of individuals, reaches right into their bodies, permutes their gestures, their posture, what they say, how they learn to live and work with other people."<sup>43</sup> And given that at the most basic level ritual is gestural, ritual can be viewed, at the most basic level, as an expression of the participant's subjugation within a particular régime of truth. Thus I search at Ajañṭā for the ways that Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha seeped into the very grain of the site, reaching right into its caves, and permuted its icons, their gestures, what they "say." Iconographies, didactic decorative schemes, the use or avoidance of common epigraphic formulae, the adoption of significant epithets, public participation in one or another sub-

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<sup>40</sup> Brian Stock. *The Implications of Literacy*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983): 3.

<sup>41</sup> See John van Engen ("The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem," *The American Historical Review*. 91 [1986]: 519-552) for a review of medieval historiography containing a strong statement of the need to understand 'scholarly' and 'popular' cultures as interdependent and mutually influential.

<sup>42</sup> Michel Foucault. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972 - 1977*. Ed. by Colin Gordon. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 131.

<sup>43</sup> Cited in Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (eds). *Feminism and Foucault*. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988): 6.

sect are all forms of information, all signs of knowledge. The Ajaṅṭā Caves are themselves signs of their community's knowledge of and, therefore, attempt to exert power over their environment *on every level*.

Here is the point at which my project diverges from that of Schopen. We concur that archaeological evidence, or the evidence allowed within his programmatic statement of an Archaeology of Religions, is the best entre into recovering Buddhism's history. We diverge in that Schopen understands these source materials as being the repository of "demonstratable facts,"<sup>44</sup> possessing "real significance,"<sup>45</sup> leading to "what we definitely know."<sup>46</sup> One finds the word "actual" as a constant refrain throughout his corpus, used less as an adjective than a deixis of positive value. With the repeated assertions I made vis-à-vis the constructed, tentative nature of my history for Ajaṅṭā in the preceding chapter, and presently with this discussion of the semiological and irreducibly ideological nature of Ajaṅṭā's artifacts, it should be clear that my choice and use of sources in writing Ajaṅṭā's religious history does not start from the base-line criterion that my data must possess a *verifiable correspondence* to some sort of objective actuality.

In many ways, the difference between our approaches comes down to a problematic important to the philosophy of science. Schopen's take on *the fact* is characteristic of the so-called *Received View* of scientific theories. Within this view, theories are systems of axioms wherein strict rules of correspondence dictate the linguistic expression of empirical observations.<sup>47</sup> Here, empirical observation is the absolute

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<sup>44</sup> Gregory Schopen. "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. 10 (1987): 124.

<sup>45</sup> Schopen. "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha," 124.

<sup>46</sup> Schopen. "Two Problems in the History of Indian Buddhism," 11.

<sup>47</sup> This definition is a paraphrase of Frederick Suppe. *The Semantic Conception of Theories and Scientific Realism*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 415.

prerequisite for all theoretic speech; and, in the ideal, such discourse refers only to observed entities. This view is directly paralleled in Schopen's assertion (I paraphrase from above) that canonical sources which cannot be directly linked to an Indian Buddhist community have no direct documentary value for recovering that community's beliefs, practices, and ideals; when the theoretic speech of Buddhism's canonical sources has no empirical referent in an archaeological artifact it has no interpretive value. Further, the Received View's inductive empiricism occasions a certain methodological consciousness as well, a *strong operational imperative*. "The only theory formulations which may be employed are those in which theoretical terms are operationally defined."<sup>48</sup> Again, as Schopen would ideally have it, only evidence directly found at an archaeological site can provide any factual and really significant information about the religion of that site's community.

Schopen's sympathy for the Received View is patent. None can deny that Schopen's novel approach to Indian Buddhism has led him to uncover practices and beliefs that were heretofore ignored within the field. Yet he is working from a model and methodology that have been long discredited within, at least, the philosophy of science (not to mention philosophy in general and the theory of history, as well as critical theory, anthropology, and even archaeology itself):

by 1963 [the Received View] of theories and accompanying positivistic views on scientific theorizing were coming under increasing attack. . . . These and subsequent attacks were so successful that by 1969 the Received View had been generally discredited. Moreover, the Received View was so central to the entire positivistic program in philosophy of science that its rejection called into question the entire positivist portrait of science: Its views on discovery and the growth of scientific knowledge, reduction, explanation, observation, induction, and so on, became increasingly suspect and a matter of critical debate. Today virtually every significant part of the positivistic viewpoint has been found wanting and rejected by

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<sup>48</sup> Suppe. *The Semantic Conception of Theories*, 86.

philosophy of science.<sup>49</sup>

In trying to treat archaeological material as empirical data for a factual reconstruction of actual practices and actual beliefs of actual people, Schopen has not recognized that even science treats its facts as, in fact, contextual, intertextual *texts*. The more contemporary model within philosophy of science rejects the idea that theories are statements about an objective world induced from an observation of empirical facts. Instead, theories have two aspects. First they are composed of nothing more than a set of systemic local features defined more or less arbitrarily; the universe encompassed within these set features is the universe to which truth claims and hypotheses refer. Second, there is a necessity to elaborate the relationship between this theory structure and the empirical world:

One specifies a theory and asserts a theoretical hypothesis claiming that real-world phenomena . . . stand in some mapping relationship to the theory structure whereby that structure models the dynamic behavior of the phenomena.<sup>50</sup>

The crucial point is this: within this latter paradigm "the laws of theory do not specify what that mapping relationship [between model and 'reality'] is."<sup>51</sup> Like the Piercean icon, this mapping relationship is set by convention.<sup>52</sup> Within Schopen's paradigm, the

<sup>49</sup> Suppe. *The Semantic Conception of Theories*, 415.

<sup>50</sup> Suppe. *The Semantic Conception of Theories*, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Suppe. *The Semantic Conception of Theories*, 4.

<sup>52</sup> One important vector of this theoretics is its correspondence to J. Z. Smith's explication of the Sacred: "Sacrality is, above all a category of emplacement. . . . A sacred text is one that is used in a sacred place -- nothing more is required" (*To Take Place*, 104). In other words, something is sacred because it occurs within a "state space" whose theory structure defines it as *sacred*. For scientists, a theory structure is articulated in terms of its model's local features. For religion, this function is served by ritual: "Ritual is not an expression of or a response to 'the Sacred;' rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual" (*To Take Place*, 105) because "ritual is, first and foremost, a mode of paying attention" (*To Take Place*, 103), demarcating place. Rituals create universes of meaning that bear no necessary relationship to anything outside themselves, yet both are significant insofar as human beings, their creators, can utilize these models pragmatically by stipulating mapping relationships, i.e., ideologies. Suppe himself comes close to bringing these two areas of human interest together:

The mapping relations employed in asserting theories are *counterfactual*. Thus theories do not purport to describe how phenomenal systems *actually* behave, but rather how they *ought* to behave under certain conditions which typically do not obtain. . . . [B]oth theoretical science and moral and social deliberations are

correspondence is treated as implicit in the theory; in Piercean terminology, again, such theories are indexical. Because Schopen conceives of an organic relationship between archaeological evidence and the "actual," such evidence is the "obvious" source for recovering actual practice and belief. For me, this evidence has certain physical and historical properties that make it preferable to textual sources for the phenomena I choose to study. But because I see this data as semeiotic, with the dissertation itself as the pragmatic interpretant, I see the data as no less "textual" than literary texts.

In terms of scholarly practice, what this means is that, very much like this introduction, archaeological sources can be viewed as "a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture," in Roland Barthes' words.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps Schopen recognizes this too. If so, his fidelity to the operational imperative restricts his ability to explore the range of possible cultural significances of archaeological signs. For instance, explaining what he calls *burial ad sanctos* (or alternately *deposito ad sanctos*), Schopen finds this rite fascinating because it combines a text's, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*'s, pronouncement that a divine rebirth is assured for those who die in the Buddha's presence with a

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concerned with *how the world ought to be*. (*The Semantic Conception of Theories*, 280.)

We have already seen that for the ritual/sacred nexus, the mapping is meaningful insofar as it resolves ideology as "a relationship of difference between 'nows' -- the now of everyday life and the now of ritual place" (*To Take Place*, 110). This relativizing of the Sacred, like contemporary philosophy of science's relativizing of Truth, into the product of a mediate, conventional mapping between a theoretical model and the "real-world" is not for everybody, as we see in Kees Bolles' charged characterization of Smith's characterization: "What are we left with? What has religion come to? It has certainly cut all ties with *das ganz Andere*, although some others had already seen to that with some degree of success. Religion has become a mental operation that does not even depend on history. Rather, it is a habitual pattern of thought we can detect in certain people who delude themselves into submission to a superhuman authority or an excuse for what they do. It is fortunate that we are now in a position to look through it all" (Kees W. Bolles. "Imagining Religion," Review of *To Take Place: Toward a Theory in Ritual*, by Jonathan Z. Smith. *History of Religions*. 30 [1990]: 207). One may or may not regret this loss of innocence. But there can be no doubt that any theory which discusses ritual as being "a matter of given, very human activities and desires for power over places" (Bolles. "Imagining Religion," 211) cannot be too quickly discarded when one is studying artifacts of ritual such as the Ajaṅṭā Caves.

<sup>53</sup> Barthes is cited in Jonathan Culler. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982): 33.

"popular" belief, not to be found in texts, that some stūpas contained the Buddha's continuing presence.<sup>54</sup> This is a valuable insight, contributing greatly to our knowledge of Indian Buddhist funeral practices. But something is still missing. For Schopen also demonstrates that contemporary Hinduism possessed the same set of practices, with the same ideological justification: deposit a piece of a dead person in the proximity of a sacred site, empowered by the presence of the local god, and that person is assured of a divine rebirth.<sup>55</sup> That Buddhists disposed of their dead is hardly surprising; that they did so in a manner morphologically and ideologically akin to the Hindu is also not remarkable. But this is where Schopen's analysis ends, for this is where his *positive* sources end. He can show Buddhist monks to have been "influenced and motivated as much by Indian mores, beliefs, and 'legal' conventions, as by specifically Buddhist doctrines,"<sup>56</sup> but cannot explain why, given that these men were so profoundly "Indian," they chose to become Buddhist monks. He cannot tell us about their heaven.

To attempt this latter would require one to dive into the great ocean of intertextuality, perchance to drown, for it is only in this sea of texts that the social ideal is properly articulated. It is here that the material is available for investigating the "multi-modal"<sup>57</sup> nature of these signs -- as indices of acceptance, icons of the accepted canons, or value-laden symbols -- depending upon an interpreter's motivated interest therein. If we ignore this source of interpretation, and look at just what practitioners *do*, or just the artifacts of their actions, we will see only a sliver of the significance. To give what Geertz has called a "thick description" of these artifacts, it is necessary to first acknowledge that

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<sup>54</sup> Schopen. "Burial 'Ad Sanctos,'" 196.

<sup>55</sup> Schopen. "Stūpa and Tīrtha."

<sup>56</sup> Gregory Schopen. "On Avoiding Ghosts and Social Censure: Monastic Funerals in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-Vinaya," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*. 20 (1992): 21.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel. *Fluid Signs*," 39.

when it comes to signs, "complexities are possible, if not practically without end, at least logically so."<sup>58</sup> And it is necessary to acknowledge that because of these potential layers of meaning, thick description is only possible when one does not restrict oneself to the very few texts that "could be shown to . . . have governed religious behaviour that had left traces on the ground."<sup>59</sup> Instead, a scholar is obligated to use texts as pragmatic interpretants, which actively force together sign and object according to the rules which order our current regime of truth. The breadth of a scholar's erudition and the vividness of his imagination are two equal factors simultaneously governing thick description.

Schopen laments that an acceptance of the value of literary texts such as that prescribed here has already resulted in a sad history for the field of Buddhist Studies, developing a picture of Indian Buddhism that "may reflect more our own . . . history and values than the history and values of Indian Buddhism."<sup>60</sup> A response to this accusation is found in Ricoeur's understanding of hermeneutic "appropriation," the process whereby texts become meaningful to readers. Interpretation, for Ricoeur, involves the appropriation "*here and now* [of] the intention of the text;"<sup>61</sup> this "intention" is an *orient* en route towards which a reader places himself through acts of interpretation.<sup>62</sup> This surely is Schopen's program in his *Archaeology*. However, we have also seen that, because Schopen over-values archaeological materials and adopts a strong operational imperative, he finds only very circumscribed intentions and very short *en routes*. That is to say, for Ricoeur texts

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<sup>58</sup> Clifford Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (New York: Harper, 1973): 7.

<sup>59</sup> Schopen. "Burial 'Ad Sanctos,'" 193.

<sup>60</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 23. Caroline Walker Bynum has made a similar critique against "presentism" in the field of Medieval History. See Kathleen Biddick ("Genders, Bodies, Borders: Technologies of the Visible," *Speculum*. 68 [1993]: 396) for a cogent assessment of Bynum's argument.

<sup>61</sup> Paul Ricoeur. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Ed. and trans. by John B. Thompson. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981): 161.

<sup>62</sup> Ricoeur. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 162.

have a vast range of possible significances; appropriation is the acceptance of one (or more) of those significances as presently meaningful. Schopen, by contrast, expects that texts have a very circumscribed range of possible significances; appropriation is the acceptance of one (or more) of those significances based upon what the text itself identifies as meaningful.

Given this presentation of Ricoeur's and Schopen's understandings of textual interpretation, one can see why Schopen views the traditional use of texts within Buddhist studies as overly self-involved. But, let's face it, ancient Indian Buddhism has no intrinsic significance in our culture or society: the value of reading Ajaṅṭā's remains lies in the fact that appropriation "gives the [reading] subject new capacities for knowing himself."<sup>63</sup> Viewed in meta-disciplinary terms, Schopen is an ideal reader, for by appropriating Indian Buddhist sources he has come to know his own scholarly self. Accordingly, Schopen's disparagement of the prior history of Indian Buddhist scholarship is testimony to a shifting of the *here and now* into which the intentions of Buddhist texts are appropriated. As Karl Popper writes, "knowledge is positive *only* in so far as certain theories are, at a certain moment of time, preferred to others."<sup>64</sup> In reading Schopen's reading of his scholarly tradition, we find that the local features of this field's conceptual space have changed; the mapping relationship between the real-world and theory structure has shifted. But we must also recognize that the features and rules governing interpretation *here and now* are no less a reflection of readers' own histories and values than those that came before.

In sum, my use of archaeological and textual sources diverges from Schopen's programme in that my project joyfully exceeds the limits of positive knowledge. In the

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<sup>63</sup> Ricoeur. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 192.

<sup>64</sup> Karl Popper. *Objective Knowledge*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972): 20.

choice "between absolute knowledge and hermeneutics"<sup>65</sup> my sympathies are clear. For if absolute knowledge is first a quality of a conceptual space who rules are imposed from without, then, as Geertz concludes in his study of Negara, the Balinese theater-state: "The real is as imagined as the imaginary."<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, as a scientific model is only valuable insofar as it can be brought to bear upon the explanation of a natural phenomenon, so this hermeneutic model gains meaning insofar as it is brought to bear upon the interpretation of social phenomena, in this case the Ajaṅṭā caves. The preceding subsection was an extended meditation upon what one might expect to gain through such a process of interpretation.

### **Two Scholars Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

As the adequate source for statements of normative Buddhism, texts provide evidence necessary for recapturing the ideological dimension of the rituals that produced our archaeological and art historical data. The publications of early visitors like James Bird and Colonel Alexander are clear documentation of misinterpretations occasioned by a lack of adequate textual information. The great leap forward witnessed in Ajaṅṭā studies when Fergusson and Burgess combined categories derived from the appropriate texts with archaeological investigation is indisputable testimony to the value of literary materials for establishing a general semantic field within which an analysis of Ajaṅṭā's Buddhism might take place. The above examination of Schopen's Archaeology was directed to just that point. Yet, although texts may be necessary, Schopen has nevertheless settled beyond

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<sup>65</sup> Ricoeur. *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*, 193.

<sup>66</sup> Clifford Geertz. *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980): 136.

doubt they are *not sufficient* for establishing a semantic field that can circumscribe analysis of Buddhism as-it-was on the ground. All potential textual materials are not *prima facie* valuable, nor may their testimony in every case guide the interpretation of the site's artifacts. Both the reasoned choice and appropriate application of textual sources are fundamental underpinnings of this project's success.

Accordingly, before I enumerate the textual sources to be used in the following excavation of Ajañṭā's Buddhist matrix, it will be valuable to look at two instances in which a scholar clearly transgresses methodological bounds in his or her use of texts. The first example comes from Dieter Schlingloff's analysis of Cave 17's Wheel of Existence (*bhavacakra*); the second from Sheila Weiner's discussion of Cave 16's main Buddha image. In the first we find that Schlingloff disregards physical evidence from the caves that would to contradict an iconography established in texts; in the second, we find naive Buddhist studies, for Weiner uses Buddhist doctrines without investigating their position within or implications for Buddhist intellectual history, and she uses texts without adequately establishing how those chosen in particular are applicable to Ajañṭā in particular.

Schlingloff was probably the first scholar of Buddhism proper to undertake an extended consideration of Ajañṭā. A significant share of his prior work having been devoted to the study of Buddhist Sanskrit texts, Schlingloff's broad knowledge of this literature has been of particular value in the success of his project to identify precise textual precedents for Ajañṭā's site's narrative paintings. Unfortunately, Schlingloff's zeal in reading the archaeological evidence through the textual can serve as an object lesson in how not to use texts in the study of Ajañṭā. Let us look, in particular, at his discussion of the 'Wheel of Existence' on the left porch wall of Cave 17.<sup>67</sup> As one can see from the accompanying photo (Fig. 20), it appears that the wheel could not have been a complete

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<sup>67</sup> Dieter Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings: Identifications and Interpretations*. (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1988): 167-174.

circle, for its lower right quadrant would have been interrupted by the porch's side-door. Further, even were the door not an impediment, according to the available textual sources concerning the *bhavacakra* -- the *Divyāvādāna* and the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* -- these icons should include five or six realms of rebirth and twelve links of co-dependent origination, whereas it appears that a complete Wheel at Ajaṅṭā would have required the illustration of eight realms and sixteen or seventeen links. Indeed, Fergusson and Burgess alike unwittingly contravened the textual paradigms in their reports: Fergusson in 1845 claimed that Ajaṅṭā's wheel was divided into eight, and Burgess in 1889 testified to seeing an eight-part Wheel at the Kanheri caves near Bombay. Schlingloff rejects Fergusson's account out of hand, and belittles Burgess's as being "a supposed analogy with the Ajanta wheel."<sup>68</sup> Instead, to solve this dilemma, and account for the inconvenient door, Schlingloff suggests that the painter "left a sector of the wheel open, which make [*sic*] it look as if two compartments had been cut through the middle and pushed back to make room for the door. The reason for leaving a relatively large sector above the door vacant, was to accommodate the ornamentation around the door frame (which no longer survives but probably resembled that of other doors) as well as the feet of the monster clasping the wheel (which likewise no longer survive). As a consequence, our wheel contained no more than the customary six compartments and twelve links"<sup>69</sup> (Fig. 21).

Schlingloff's is no doubt an ingenious solution. Unfortunately it does not tally with the archaeological evidence present *in situ*. In proposing this clarification, Schlingloff rejects an observation made by Mr. Gresley (one of the site's earliest Western visitors), to the effect that the top of the doorway was covered to allow the circle's completion. Indeed, Fig. 22 shows very clearly that plugs *were* cut into the door frame near its top to

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<sup>68</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 172.

<sup>69</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 169.

hold a piece of wood. If not for this reason, then why the plugs? On Caves 16 and 17 alike, the side doors on the porches' rear-walls were cut very large at first -- probably to allow maximum light into the caves during excavation -- and subsequently were partially blocked in order to provide additional surface for painting on the porches. Like the door on the Wheel of Life's wall, these side-doors on Cave 16 and 17's rear walls also have plugs for anchoring the cover. Further, app. A, No. 81, from Cave 17 makes this practice abundantly clear. As it exists today, this record reads *śrī*, "Mister;" an epithet that, in Sanskrit as in English, is followed by a man's name. This *śrī* is found directly to the left of the porch's rear wall's left side doorway. Were this record longer (as it would have been), the only place the additional *akṣaras* could have been placed was over what is now the doorway's empty space, but was then a plastered surface. Most significantly, on the Wheel of Existence wall, a small area of painting remains over the door's top right corner. This is visible on Fig. 22, although it was not represented in Schlingloff's line-drawing. This patch has the same color as the background used in the compartments of the Wheel's co-dependent origination links, and is in the correct arc to have fit within that circle! This would suggest that the Wheel's rim continued up to and over what is now the top of the doorway. Finally, the angles and layout of the Wheel as reconstructed in Schlingloff's text make no sense as part of an overall composition on the wall. Fig. 20 shows that, if the door had any border at all, it was very narrow; only a small area is left on the right side, and typically at Ajaṅṭā borders are symmetrical all around.

The extant evidence does not reveal whether eight realms or sixteen limbs of dependent origination were indeed depicted on Cave 17's porch. It does tell us that the textual materials at our disposal are not sufficient for fully reconstructing this element of Cave 17's iconographic programme. Regarding a *jātaka* portrayed inside this cave, Schlingloff criticizes Yazdani's identifications, writing: "YAZDANI's description exemplifies

the fact that it is impossible to give an adequate account of even minor details without having identified the literary text on which they are based."<sup>70</sup> We see here that, when one rejects the evidence presented by the caves themselves in favor of texts, a strength can become a weakness.

Schlingloff had the opportunity to set the study of Ajañṭā's Buddhist dimension on a credible footing. Although his textual identifications are usually very helpful, we have just seen he gives too great an authority to these sources. Observations such as "Nāgas and Yakṣas . . . were painted in Buddhist monasteries to satisfy the needs of Buddhist laymen who visited the monasteries on festival days" and "Buddhist artworks financed by laymen and executed by lay artists were primarily intended to help and guide the monks on their path toward salvation"<sup>71</sup> further show that Schlingloff's understanding of Ajañṭā is largely built upon pious fictions that have less to do with the historical Ajañṭā as it was than with his desire to find in Ajañṭā his own ideal Indian Buddhist community. In a recent publication, Geri Malandra makes a methodological critique which would place Schlingloff in the mainstream of Indian art-historical scholarship: "Among South Asian art historians, a tendency persists to seek a formal literary text to 'prove' the meaning of what we observe in sculpture or architecture."<sup>72</sup>

Nevertheless, at least Schlingloff is sensitive to the histories and affiliations of the texts he uses. Art historians' studies of Buddhism at Ajañṭā have also by and large been founded upon facile stereotypes, but they have the added problem of evincing little sensitivity to the categories through which Buddhism is formally studied and less awareness yet of the methodological, evidential, and conceptual problematics that engage this religion's

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<sup>70</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 113.

<sup>71</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 177.

<sup>72</sup> Geri H. Malandra. *Unfolding a Mañḍala: The Buddhist Cave Temples at Ellora*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993): xviii.

students in the modern academy. Perhaps the work of scholarship that best exemplifies the complications encountered by an art-historian writing about Ajaṅṭā's Buddhism is Sheila Weiner's *Ajaṅṭā: Its Place in Buddhist Art*. Weiner characterizes Ajaṅṭā as "a kind of document which visually traces the development of Buddhist thought,"<sup>73</sup> and states one of her aims as being "to throw some light upon the development of Buddhism itself as reflected in its monuments and art."<sup>74</sup> Although Weiner begs the question when she unquestioningly accepts Fergusson and Burgess's tenet that this "development" is adequately encapsulated under the rubric of a shift from the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna, such an assumption is almost universal in the literature on Ajaṅṭā and need not disturb us here. Rather, Weiner's monograph is instructive for her use of Buddhist textual sources and concepts derived from those texts: she shows us how *not* to use such evidence in the study of Ajaṅṭā.

Let us attend to a single emblematic moment of Weiner's text, in which she attempts to explain the significance of the central image in Cave 16 (Fig. 23), perhaps the first monolithic *pralaṃbapādāsana* Buddha excavated in Western India. Weiner posits this icon as the quintessential *Mahāyāna* cult figure at Ajaṅṭā, for in her view, "the *Mahāyāna* threshold" is crossed when there is evidence for "a striving toward, if not actual visual expression of, the concepts inherent in the evolution of the *trikāya* doctrine as they appear particularly in the *Ratnagotravibhāgamahāyānottaratantra Śāstra* [(RGV)] and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*."<sup>75</sup> Simply put, this statement is a muddle. But I wish to point out two

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<sup>73</sup> Sheila L. Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā: Its Place in Buddhist Art*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977): 3.

<sup>74</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 4.

<sup>75</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 66.

problems in particular. First, why is the *trikāya* the characteristic Mahāyāna doctrine?<sup>76</sup> Second, why are the two texts here named *particularly* preferred representations of that doctrine?

Weiner justifies her imputation of a connection between the Cave 16 icon and the *trikāya* doctrine with the observation that the iconography and physical presentation of this image within the cave suggest "a manifestation or hypostasis of different Buddha principles than [the images in other Ajaṅṭā shrines]."<sup>77</sup> She uses the *trikāya* doctrine to explain the "increas[ed] emphasis placed upon the Buddha as the principle among the *triratna*, or three jewels,"<sup>78</sup> which she sees embodied in this image. Surely this is the single most majestic Buddha at the site, and scholars of Buddhism, such as Akira Hirakawa,<sup>79</sup> have indeed posited the move from Hīnayāna to Mahāyāna as a movement from a Saṅgha-

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<sup>76</sup> The *trikāya* doctrine, the doctrine of the Buddha's three bodies is a Buddhology (akin to a Christology) which analyzes and explains the multimodal nature of this religion's sacred Source. In a basic formulation these three bodies are: 1) an immaterial *dharmakāya*, unconditioned, permanent, essential Buddhahood in and for itself; and two material bodies: 2) the *sambhogakāya*, the body in which an individual Buddha enjoys the bliss of Buddhahood; 3) the *nirmāṇakāya*, a body which a Buddha manifests and sends to places like Earth to preach and convert. Although a three-body theory became the standard Mahāyānist formulation, there are two, four, and five body schemes as well. The best introduction to this Buddhology is Gadjin Nagao's "On the Theory of Buddha Body (*Buddha-kāya*)" in the collection of his essays *Mādhyamika and Yogācara*. (Ed. by Leslie Kawamura. [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991]: 103-22). Suffice it at present to point out that Weiner could consider herself in good company in her assumption that the *trikāya* dogma has explanatory value for Ajaṅṭā, as one of the seminal voices of Indian Art History, Benjamin Rowland, speaks of this concept as finding its "inevitable reflexion in the iconography of [Buddhist] art" (*The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. [Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971]: 33). Nevertheless, Lewis Lancaster offers a thoughtful and important caution against the too-free use of this dogma in the study of Buddhist iconography ("An Early Mahāyāna Sermon About the Body of the Buddha and the Making of Images," *Artibus Asiae*. 36 [1974]: 287-291). Lancaster's criticisms may be apropos to Weiner's overall project and to Ajaṅṭā, but because the site certainly post-dates preliminary scholastic formulations of the *trikāya*, it is also possible that Ajaṅṭā's community was familiar with this idea. Be this as it may, right now my interest is not in the presence of this doctrine at Ajaṅṭā, but rather in Weiner's choice and use of textual sources to explain Ajaṅṭā's icons under the *trikāya* rubric.

<sup>77</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 68-9.

<sup>78</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 116.

<sup>79</sup> Akira Hirakawa. "The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism and its Relationship to the Worship of Stūpas," *Memoires of the Research Department of the Toyo Bunko*. 22 (1963): 57-106.

oriented religiosity to one that is Buddha-oriented. Nevertheless, within the Mahāyāna sūtra literature there is perhaps even stronger testimony to a devaluing of Buddha and Saṅgha alike, in favor of the Dharma, manifest in the widespread Cult of the Book.<sup>80</sup> Or, even if one were to acknowledge an aggrandizement of Buddha as a primary characteristic of Mahāyāna, important sources exist within the Mahāyāna that emphasize the Buddha without positing a formal Buddhology framed in terms of body numbers or types.<sup>81</sup>

Setting aside Weiner's invocation of the *trikāya* doctrine, it is manifestly unclear why she cited the RGV and *Laṅkāvatāra* as the "particularly" privileged sources for its presentation. Her grasp of these sources is tenuous at best: at one point Weiner says that "the distinctions formulated in the *Laṅkā* . . . are more fully elaborated upon in the *Ratna*," but in the very next paragraph she claims that "the *Laṅka* . . . draw[s] upon the *Ratna*. and [is] in some respects more fully developed."<sup>82</sup> This is confusing, but no more so than when Weiner remarks that the RGV was crucial to the development of Mahāyānist Yogācāra school of philosophy, and that the *ekayāna* theory found in this text is "one of the basic characteristics of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism."<sup>83</sup> However, not only is the RGV *not*

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Gregory Schopen. "The Phrase '*sa pṛthivīpradeśāś caityabhūto bhavet*' in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna," *Indo-Iranian Journal*. 17 (1975): 147-181.

<sup>81</sup> To name just two highlights: the *Lotus Sūtra*, perhaps the most popular statement of a Mahāyānist Buddhology, never represents the Buddha in terms of *bodies*, though later scholastics in India and China interpreted the text along such lines. On this point see Terry Rae Abbott. *Vasubandhu's Commentary to the 'Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra': A Study of its History and Significance*. (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1986) and Young-ho Kim. *Tao-Sheng's Commentary on the Lotus Sutra: A Study and Translation*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990). Similarly the *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha sūtras* aggrandize Buddhas and Buddhahood without taking recourse to the *trikāya*, albeit in China this analysis was used extensively in its exegesis (cf. David W. Chappell. "Chinese Buddhist Interpretations of the Pure Lands." In *Buddhist and Taoist Studies I*. Ed. by D. Chappell and M. Saso. [Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1977]: 23-53).

<sup>82</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 67.

<sup>83</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 68.

associated with either the Madhyamaka or Yogācāra school in particular,<sup>84</sup> one hallmark of the Yogācāra is that it does not accept the *ekayāna* doctrine!<sup>85</sup> In fact, according to a recently published introduction to the Mahāyāna, "the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and its commentary seem to have exerted no obvious or direct influence on the development of Indian Buddhist philosophical thought prior to the eleventh century."<sup>86</sup> The *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, by contrast, is cited in both Nāgārjuna's *Sūtrasamuccaya*,<sup>87</sup> and Śāntideva's *Śikṣa-samuccaya*,<sup>88</sup> the latter for its vociferous condemnation of the carnivore's sin, not its Buddhology. Anyone with a passing familiarity of Buddhist intellectual history must wonder why widely read texts for the developed *trikāya* doctrine, such as the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* and *Mahāyānasamgraha*, were not mentioned.

Weiner never draws a convincing link between this Mahāyānist doctrine and the Ajaṅṭā caves, nor between the caves and the texts she identifies as containing that doctrine, because the sub-text of her argument is a simple lack of methodological rigor: Weiner treats her sources as if the Mahāyāna was a single, coherent, unilinear doctrinal

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. David Seyfort Ruegg, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra: Études sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme*. Publications de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. volume LXX. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1969): 57f. and Paul Williams. *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*. (New York: Routledge, 1989): 96.

<sup>85</sup> This statement is not quite correct. Abbott's study of Vasubandhu's commentary to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* reveals that Yogācāra philosophers did have to come to terms with this doctrine. However, in this *śāstra*, Vasubandhu does not adopt the universalist interpretation of the *ekayāna* doctrine suggested in most readings of the *Lotus* or *Śrīmālādevīsīmhanāda sūtra*. Instead, Vasubandhu utilizes the *Yogācārabbūmi*'s analysis of Śrāvakas into four types, enabling him to present some Śrāvakas as able to attain Buddhahood, and others not. In point of fact, as I shall discuss below in my chapter on *Dbarma*, it is quite likely that the doctrine, presented in many Yogācāra texts, that beings have specific *gotras* -- "genetic" capacities for spiritual attainment, which enable some to become Buddhas and others only arhats -- was an important factor in the self-conception of Ajaṅṭā's community.

<sup>86</sup> Williams. *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 96.

<sup>87</sup> Christian Lindtner. *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987): 176.

<sup>88</sup> Cecil Bendall and William Henry Denham Rouse (trans). *Sikṣā-Samuccaya; A Compendium of Buddhist Doctrine, Compiled by Śāntideva, Chiefly from Earlier Mahāyāna Sūtras*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971): 323.

tradition, and she treats Ajaṅṭā as if its inhabitants were in a synchronic harmony with all the other Mahāyānist of their own and every other day. To finish, Weiner is so little conversant with the fundamentals of Buddhist and Buddhological discourse that she opines that the following coincidences "seem other than accidental:"<sup>89</sup> Cave 16 was dedicated to the Three Jewels and the RGV is an extended analysis of these same Three Jewels; the *Laṅkāvatāra* contains a discussion of the term "Sugata," a common epithet of the Buddha, and Cave 16's dedicatory inscription uses this epithet; the Cave 16 inscription has a benediction that the whole world may enter nirvāṇa, and the *Laṅkāvatāra* an entreaty that those who read the *sūtra* retire to forest retreats to study the doctrine. One need not read very long in Buddhist literature before the Three Jewels, the term "Sugata," or praises for nirvāṇa and the homeless life are encountered. As Weiner claims, *it is other than accidental*: the texts Weiner cites and the Ajaṅṭā caves both glean from the same domain of Buddhist terminology and doctrine. Let us now set forth, the materials this study may appropriately harvest from that field.

### The Ajaṅṭā Canon

This sub-section, the final of my prolegomena, presents the specific textual materials this dissertation's second half will utilize for studying Ajaṅṭā's Buddhism. Schopen's exhortation that an Archaeology of Religions should rely upon "only those [texts] that could be shown to have been actually known or read at a given time, or to have governed or shaped the kind of religious behavior that had left traces on the ground"<sup>90</sup> provides a valuable basis for compiling this list of sources. The previous examination of this Archaeology showed, however, that whereas the first half of this stipulation is

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<sup>89</sup> Weiner. *Ajaṅṭā*, 74.

<sup>90</sup> Schopen. Burial 'Ad Sanctos,' 193.

workable (it is conceivable to privilege specific texts that can be shown to have been used at the site), the second half brooks two interpretations, one overtly exclusive, the other overtly inclusive.

The use of texts will be exclusive if the wording "governed or shaped the kind of religious behavior that had left traces on the ground" means that to discuss a Buddha image, for instance, one may use the specific statements about Buddha images or their rituals contained in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, for instance, but one may not similarly apply to the image Buddhologies or philosophical categories found elsewhere in that same text. Schopen's wording could be taken as inclusive when read in the light of the previous section's argument that ritual (the context in which most significant traces-on-the-ground were produced) is performed as a means of mediating the ideological gap between the socially real and socially ideal. In the scholar's attempt to recover the striving-towards-which of an ancient ritual, all spatially and temporally viable nomological statements are useful *in potentia*. One must remember, however, that Schopen strategically shifts the focus from the *sources* used for recovering Buddhism to this religion's conceptual *location*.

To reiterate, scholars in the field have traditionally sought Buddhism in its doctrines; Schopen searches for Buddhism in "what religious people actually did."<sup>91</sup> Although I follow Schopen to this place, I must then dis-place that which I find, for I consider the "why" -- the ideological tension -- to be part of the "what." Thus, whereas Schopen tends towards exclusivity and the strong operational imperative, as one already knows I shall err on the side of inclusion. The remainder of this chapter will attempt to set forth the texts I would include within a 'canon' of literature for the recovery of Ajaṅṭā's Buddhism. Not every one of these sources will find its way into the dissertation's second

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<sup>91</sup> Schopen. "Burial 'Ad Sanctos,'" 193.

half, which investigates the complex culture of Buddhism at the Ajañṭā caves.

The basic sources for recovering Ajañṭā's Buddhism are the numerous epigraphs present at Ajañṭā and Ghaṭotkaca (included in this study because it was commissioned by Cave 16's Varāhadeva). Between them, these two sites boast a total of 99 records, painted and incised. Of these, six derive from a period of activity spanning the first centuries B.C.E to C.E. The remaining inscriptions may be subdivided further into two broad temporal groups, the Vākāṭaka and Rāṣṭrakūṭa.<sup>92</sup> The inscriptions from the Vākāṭaka period run the gamut from simple identifications of donors, to variously elaborate formulae describing donors, their gifts, and their motivations for giving; to labels that identify the figures in narrative paintings; to didactic verses from a popular literary text, Ārya Śūra's *Jātakamālā*; to the verse inscriptions from Caves 16 and 17 that were so instrumental in the reconstruction of Ajañṭā's history. Based upon the previous chapter's reconstructed history, Vākāṭaka period records may be broadly analyzed into two divisions: the programmatic and the intrusive. The importance of this dichotomy lies in its ability to segregate the strata of donative activities, synchronically across the entire site and diachronically within a single cave. Lacking this periodization, we would possess no clear vision of the patterns of patronage at Ajañṭā.

I need not discuss here the specific content of Ajañṭā's inscriptions, as that material will provide the many *points d'appui* for my elaboration of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha in the chapters to follow. However, precisely because I do value these sources so, it is

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<sup>92</sup> A group of six epigraphic records (app. A, Nos. 80, 81, 82, 85, 97, 99) may be dated to the late seventh to early eighth centuries (approximately), when, according to Geri Malandra, the Rāṣṭrakūṭa dynasty governed the territory surrounding Ajañṭā ("The Date of the Ajañṭā Cave 27 Inscription," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Sudasiens*. 26 [1982]: 37-46). Except for No. 99, these post-Vākāṭaka inscriptions have no specifically Buddhist content; nor do they signal new dedications or donations. Rather, these records seem mostly to be simple graffiti, recording the names and titles of latter-day visitors to the caves. A single exception is a notoriously damaged paean to the Rāṣṭrakūṭa family, located on the wall connecting Cave 26 and Cave 26 Lower Left. None of these later epigraphic records give grounds for inferring that the caves were still functioning as Buddhist viḥāras at the time of their writing.

worth addressing the evidential nature of epigraphic data, albeit in an abbreviated manner. We have already seen Schopen characterize inscriptions as one of the Archaeology of Religions' three primary source materials (the others being religious constructions and architectures, and art-historical remains). Epigraphs are thus privileged because they are generally localizable in space and time, largely unedited, and not meant to be circulated.<sup>93</sup> In short, they are sources indisputably tied to their locales. This is a fair enough presentation, which simply means that Ajaṅṭā's own epigraphs provide the most secure basis from which to address the doctrinal positions and ideological tensions within Buddhism at Ajaṅṭā. Nevertheless, we have also seen that however local such records may be, they are always already implicated within a textual web reaching well beyond the local community. This point is clear in regard to three of the four types of Ajaṅṭā's Vākāṭaka-period inscriptions: *labels* are placed on painted figures so people can know who they are and recollect to themselves or tell others the figures' stories; the *didactic verses* come from known texts, their referentiality goes without saying; the *long inscriptions* on Caves 16, 17, 26, and Ghaṭotkaca are literate and well-conceived celebrations in verse of these caves donors, there can be no question of *not* treating these as literary texts.<sup>94</sup>

But what of the bulk of Ajaṅṭā's records, the formulaic donative inscriptions? As noted, these vary from the naming of a donor, or even the mere deixis of one, to providing information about a donor's secular or monastic status, his family, and his purpose in making the donation. Though such information is historically useful to us, with this particular species of evidence it is not quite clear that the cognitive or discursive dimension was where its native import lay. The possibility that these inscriptions had functions other than to provide public information about donors is highlighted by

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<sup>93</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 1-3.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Shri Ram Goyal. *A History of the Imperial Guptas*. (Allahabad: Central Book Depot, 1967): 7, and Ronald Inden. *Imagining India*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990): 232.

Schopen's observation of the "curious fact" that throughout Buddhist India many inscriptions were placed out of view -- underneath, behind, or atop the inscribed object -- such that they could neither be seen, nor read.<sup>95</sup> At Ajañṭā too, numerous records in Caves 9 and 10 are placed well beyond the vision of a causal observer on the ground. Moreover (though argumentation from evidentiary lack is suspect), despite all the losses of painting over the centuries it is evident that some donors *chose* to inscribe their images and some *chose* not to do so. It may be that the discursive element in these formulaic donative records was less important than the bare fact of their creation: the medium, rather than the message, was the message.

The inclusion of a dedicatory record with a donation may have been a religious practice with integral liturgical significance (*not* primarily a means of communicating social information), whose canonical implications Ajañṭā's Buddhists were able to choose personally to accept or ignore. As a liturgical pericope, these formulaic donative inscriptions all provide both indexical and canonical information: the former entails personal information about the donor, and is transmitted in the ever-variable aspects of these records; the latter is contained in the liturgy's invariant aspects, which are not encoded by the performers themselves. Accordingly, however local any individual donative inscription may be, the illocutionary force of an epigraph's mere materialization is *generic*; it is not self-referential either to the record itself or the individual donor. As I noted above, through this material one can learn what Ajañṭā's Buddhists accepted, not what they believed. This requires, in turn, that one not treat epigraphic records as privileged sources of on-the-ground religiosity, but as distinctly contextualized, highly formalized, strictly conventionalized redactions, even privately public distillations of specific ideals and ideas also found in the literary record.

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<sup>95</sup> Schopen. "Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions," 2.

Turning to that literature, much of the prior research on Ajaṅṭā has been concerned to locate precedents for the narratives painted on the caves' walls. The only text that can be indisputably shown to have been read at Ajaṅṭā is the *Jātakamālā* of Ārya Śūra:<sup>96</sup> verses 4, 15, 19, and 56 from the Kṣāntivādi Jātaka and verse 44 from the Maitrībala Jātaka of this author's collection are to be found in Cave 2's porch left-side cell (app. A. Nos. 5, 6, 8). As a source for reconstructing Ajaṅṭā's material history, the *Jātakamālā* is not particularly useful. Little is known of this text's author. The Tibetan historian Tāranātha claims that Śūra was an alternate name for the poet Mātṛceṭa,<sup>97</sup> who is thought to have been King Kaniṣka's contemporary.<sup>98</sup> But this identification is likely just one of the many confluences of distinct individuals found in Tāranātha's text. In any event, a terminus is available, for the poet Haribhaṭṭa cites Ācārya Śūra as providing the inspiration and model for his own *Jātakamālā* collection. Hahn has attempted to show that the *Hsien-yü-ching*, translated into Chinese in 455, cites a passage from Haribhaṭṭa's *Prabhāsajātaka*, thereby setting an upper limit for Ārya Śūra to the late fourth century.<sup>99</sup>

A more interesting piece of information, albeit not terribly reliable, is that the only extant Sanskrit commentary on the *Jātakamālā*, the *Jātakamālāṭīkā*, assigned to

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<sup>96</sup> Hendrik Kern (ed). *The Jātaka-mālā: Stories of Buddha's Former Incarnations, Otherwise Entitled Bodhsattva-avadāna-mālā, by Ārya-śūra*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1891); Jacob Samuel Speyer (trans). *The Jātakamālā: Garland of Birth-stories of Āryaśūra*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971); Peter Khoroché. *Towards a New Edition of Ārya-Śūra's Jātakamālā*. (Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1987); Peter Khoroché (trans). *Once the Buddha was a Monkey: Ārya Śūra's Jātakamālā*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>97</sup> Tāranātha. *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*. Ed. and trans. by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990): 131-2.

<sup>98</sup> F. W. Thomas. "The Works of Āryaśūra, Triratnadāsa, and Dhārmika-Subhūti." In *Album Kern*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1903): 405-408.

<sup>99</sup> Carol Meadows. *Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections: Text, Translation and Analysis of the Pāramitāsamāsa*. (Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1986): 4.

somewhere between the seventh and fourteenth centuries.<sup>100</sup> The introduction to this commentary reads:

Formerly, Reverend Teacher Śūra was the son of the supreme lord of the South. Though he came next in line [for the throne, Śūra] foreswore the kingdom. A renunciate, he was established on the path to Awakening, and abided on the first [bodhisattva] stage. . . . While wandering, he wrote the *Jātakamālā* on *tamāla* leaves using a thorn.<sup>101</sup>

One can of course fantasize that this Deccan king was a Vākāṭaka, even a Vatsagulma; thereby explaining why the front aisle of Cave 16's vihāra, commissioned by the Hariṣeṇa's faithful minister, was covered by representations of the *Jātakamālā*'s 34 stories.<sup>102</sup> Ārya Śūra's potential association with this Vākāṭaka branch is suggested by the tenth century author Ratnaśrījñāna citing the *Jātakamālā* as an epitome of Vidarbha style, *Vaidarbhī rīti*;<sup>103</sup> this style is also found under the name *vātsagulmī*, after the city of Vatsagulma.<sup>104</sup> Apropos to the previous chapter's investigation of Vidarbha, Vatsagulma, and Aśmaka, the fourth or fifth century Buddhist literary critic Bhāmaha put forth the now-lost *Aśmakavaṃśa* ("History of Aśmaka") as a leading example of this style named alternately after Vidarbha and Vatsagulma.<sup>105</sup> This evidence cannot be relied upon too strongly, however, for the naming of this style after Vidarbha or Vatsagulma quickly became metonymic for that geographic region which included Vidarbha, Vatsagulma, and Aśmaka all. Even Daṇḍin, who lived in Kāñcīpura in the far South, was a staunch champion and

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<sup>100</sup> Peter Khoroché. "Jātakamālāṭīkā," *South Asian Studies* (Journal for the Society of South Asian Studies, British Academy, London). 1 (1985): 63.

<sup>101</sup> *tatra bhādanācāryyasūrah p<u>rā dākṣiṇātyabhūpatisūtaḥ kramād āgatam api rājyaṃ parityajya pravrajito bodhimārgaprasthūtaḥ prathamabhūmisthito . . . caṃkramyamāṇas tamālapatreṣu kaṃtakalikbitākṣarāṃ jātakamālāṃ cakāra* Khoroché. "Jātakamālāṭīkā," 63.

<sup>102</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 143-156.

<sup>103</sup> Khoroché. *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, xvi.

<sup>104</sup> Anthony Kennedy Warder. *Indian Kāvya Literature*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1972): vol. 3, 59.

<sup>105</sup> Warder. *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 1, 93.

accomplished practitioner of *Vaidarbbhī/Vātsagulmī* style.

Doctrinally, Ārya Śūra's text seems to have no polemic vis-à-vis the Hīnayāna/Mahāyāna division or in terms of the various school and *nikāya* separations. Once he does mention the *yānavara*, "the best vehicle," which both Meadows<sup>106</sup> and Khoroché<sup>107</sup> take to mean the Mahāyāna in particular. In context, however, *yānavara* could as readily describe the Buddha's religion, rather than a division therein. Instead, the *Jātakamāla* is notable for its concern to address the issue of kingship from a staunchly Buddhist perspective, and especially to denigrate the *real politik* of Kauṭīliya as an mode of governance inferior to policy based upon righteous Dharma:<sup>108</sup> an understandable preoccupation for a crown-prince who had renounced the throne to become a wandering mendicant.

In addition to Śūra's *Jātakamālā*, it is possible that a great many more texts were familiar to the planners of Ajaṅṭā's artistic programmes. Lalou<sup>109</sup> and Schlingloff<sup>110</sup> have sought to identify specific textual precedents for most of Ajaṅṭā's narrative paintings. The methodology underlying their scholarship is plain enough: they analyze tales into their distinct narrative elements, compare those elements with known texts, and voilà. For instance, the front of the pillar-capitals on the right side of Cave 1's porch depict highlights from the Buddha's life, the rightmost pillar portraying the bodhisattva being given the

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<sup>106</sup> Meadows. *Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections*, 12.

<sup>107</sup> Khoroché. *Once the Buddhas Was a Monkey*, 257, n. 1.8.

<sup>108</sup> Meadows. *Ārya-Śūra's Compendium of the Perfections*, 9ff.; Khoroché. *Once the Buddha Was a Monkey*, 259, n. 6.2.

<sup>109</sup> Marcelle Lalou. "Trois Récits du Dulva reconnus dans les peintures d'Ajaṅṭā," *Journal Asiatique*. 207 (1925): 333-37.

<sup>110</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*.

bowl of milk-rice after his repudiation of harsh asceticism (Fig. 24). In the *Mahāvastu*,<sup>111</sup> *Lalitavistara*,<sup>112</sup> and *Nidānakathā*,<sup>113</sup> the food is offered by a single girl named Sujātā; in the *Buddhacarita* she is called Nandabalā;<sup>114</sup> the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*<sup>115</sup> and the *Divyāvadāna*<sup>116</sup> mention two sisters as the donors, Nandā and Nandabalā; in the *Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*<sup>117</sup> two girls are mentioned, but only one, Sujātā, offers the bodhisattva milk-rice, and contrary to all the other versions, she presents it at the threshold of her house rather than while the bodhisattva is seated beneath a tree. On Cave 1's pillar, two female figures are clearly visible, as is a seated bodhisattva, suggesting either the MSV or *Divyāvadāna* for this depiction's precedent. One can resolve the matter by the fact that besides the two women, the scene also has two men, an ascetic and a god: the MSV alone records that, before Nandā and Nandabalā provided the milk-rice to the bodhisattva, an ascetic named Upaga requested it, and it was offered to the gods but they declined to accept. Strong evidence, to be sure, that the sculptor, or monk who taught the sculptor the story (this point is in need of clarification), was familiar with the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*.

Following this line of reasoning, the MSV was not only used by those responsible

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<sup>111</sup> J. J. Jones (trans). *The Mahāvastu*. (London: Pāli Text Society, 1987), vol. 2, 195.

<sup>112</sup> Parasurama Lakshmana Vaidya (ed). *Lalitavistara*. (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1987): 220.

<sup>113</sup> T. W. Rhys Davids. *Buddhist Birth-Stories (Jataka Tales); The Commentatorial Introduction Entitled Nidāna-Kathā, The Story of the Lineage*. (Varanasi: Indological Book House, 1973): 184-6.

<sup>114</sup> Aśvaghōṣa. *Aśvaghōṣa's Buddhacarita, or, Acts of the Buddha, in three parts*. Ed. and trans. by E. H. Johnston. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984): vol. 1, 142; vol. 2. 185.

<sup>115</sup> Raniero Gnoli (ed). *The Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu, Being the 17th and last Section of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādin*. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1977): vol. 1, 108-11.

<sup>116</sup> Edward Byles Cowell and R. A. Neil (eds). *The Divyāvadāna, A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends*. (Delhi: Indological Book House, 1987): 392.

<sup>117</sup> Samuel Beal (trans). *The Romantic Legend of Śākyā Buddha: A Translation of the Chinese Version of the Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1985): 193-4.

for this frieze, it had further presence in Cave 1, as well as in Caves 16 and 17. By the same token, Ārya Śūra's *Jātakamālā* can be related to paintings within Caves 1, 2, 16 and 17, the *Lalitavistara*<sup>118</sup> to Cave 2, Aśvaghōṣa's *Saundarananda*<sup>119</sup> to Cave 16, and to Cave 17 alone a number of other texts are traced: Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*,<sup>120</sup> Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*,<sup>121</sup> a palm-leaf manuscript discovered in Central Asia called *MQR 1069*, which would also have influenced a frieze in Aurangabad's Cave 3,<sup>122</sup> and possibly the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*.<sup>123</sup>

Following Schlingloff's lead, I will accept these literary texts as direct models for many of the narratives illustrated in Caves 1, 2, 16, and 17. Yet, one should understand that this acceptance is a pragmatic strategy, to foster interpretation. Most of *the jātaka* stories and tales of the Buddha's life represented at Ajaṅṭā would have had vivid oral traditions of transmission in addition to the known written textual traditions. Naturally the two overlapped and cross-fertilized one other, but because of our ignorance of the oral redactions, there is no certainty that the written were those used at the site. In some cases, it seems, extant texts were followed with what Schlingloff deems "extreme precision."<sup>124</sup> At

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<sup>118</sup> S. Lefmann (ed). *Lalitavistara, Leben und Lebre des Śākyā-Buddha*. 2 vol. (Halle: Verlag der Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1902-8); Vaidya. *Lalitavistara*; Ph. E. Foucaux (trans). "Le Lalita Vistara," *Annales du Musée Guimet*. 6 (1884) & 19 (1892); Gwendolyn Bays. (trans. of Foucaux). *The Voice of the Buddha: The Beauty of Compassion (The Lalitavistara Sūtra)*. 2 volumes. (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1983).

<sup>119</sup> Aśvaghōṣa. *The Saundarananda of Aśvaghōṣa*. Ed. and trans. by E. H. Johnston. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975).

<sup>120</sup> Heinrich Lüders. *Bruchstücke Buddhistischer Dramen; Bruchstücke der Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā des Kumāralāta*. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979); Édouard Huber (trans). *Aśvaghōṣa, Sūtrālamkāra, traduit en Française sur la version chinoise de Kumārajīva*. (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1908).

<sup>121</sup> Kālidāsa. *The Raghuvaṃśa of Kālidāsa*. Ed. by G. G. Nandargikar. (Motilal Banarsidass, 1971).

<sup>122</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 96-101.

<sup>123</sup> Parasurama Lakshmana Vaidya (ed). *Mahāyāna Sūtra Saṃgraha, Part I*. (Darbhanga: Mithila Insitute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1961): 258-308.

<sup>124</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 150.

other times, the painted narrative appears to have been influenced by two disparate traditions simultaneously. Cave 17's depiction of the Śyāma Jātaka, for instance, follows the MSV tradition, except for one narrative element, which is found only in Kālidāsa's *Raghuvaṃśa*: this would suggest that the painter either composed his own favorite version of the story from the various literary sources or that both the MSV and Kālidāsa drew upon a narrative fund, whose only representative is the painting itself. In other places, where a textual reference is not forthcoming, Schlingloff attributes such deviations to the artist's personal vision. The potential for relationship between various traditions, either oral or textual, is further exemplified by Cave 17's *Simbalāvadāna* painting. Schlingloff assures his readers that the MSV, as transmitted through the *Divyāvadāna*, was the painter's model here.<sup>125</sup> However, when one turns to the written text, the *Divyāvadāna* is found to have omitted the story's central portion, and instead tells the reader "the entire *Rākṣasī sūtra* should be recited at length."<sup>126</sup> Przyłuski notes that this *Rākṣasī sūtra* is preserved in the *Ekottarāgama* (T. 125), and tells precisely the story one would expect here, that of a flying horse who saves shipwrecked mariners from an island of ogresses.<sup>127</sup> The same story is preserved in the Mahāyāna's *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, as a celebration of Avalokiteśvara's wonderworking. Not only did oral traditions inspire disparate written versions of a tale, but the coherent reading of some of Ajaṅṭā's paintings may rely upon appeal to what would seem *prima facie* unconnected literary traditions.

With this in mind, it becomes problematic that a near majority of the identified narratives at Ajaṅṭā were based upon the MSV. Whereas some vinayas are quite spare, presenting the monastic rules with a slight admixture of narrative, the MSV varies widely

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<sup>125</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 263.

<sup>126</sup> *vistareṇa rākṣasīsūtram sarvaṃ vādyam* | Cowell and Neil. *Divyāvadāna*, 524.

<sup>127</sup> Jean Przyłuski. "The Horse Balaha and the Indian Kings," *Indian Historical Quarterly*. 13 (1937): 223.

from chapter to chapter, some containing rule after rule, and some being a hodge-podge of tales. The MSV served as the basis for such narrative collections as the *Divyāvadāna* and *Avadānaśataka*, as well as being widely cited by the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* attributed to Nāgārjuna. On this point, Gnoli suggests:

This Vinaya must have enjoyed a noticeable fortune . . . on account of its unusual literary qualities. Jātakas, avadānas, vyākaraṇas, sūtras, tales written in a style both plain and vivid, relieve the dry enumeration of the disciplinary duties, that ruled the life of the Buddhist communities.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, the further observation that this vinaya itself is "not a homogenous work, marked by a unity of conception, but rather an aggregate of different texts, laid down in different epochs, and subsequently patched up together"<sup>129</sup> suggests that we cannot hold too tenaciously to the MSV itself as being the site's major inspiration, based solely upon Lalou's and Schlingloff's associations.

Again let us look at an example from Schlingloff's work. In the course of an identification, Schlingloff's methodology forced him to attribute a relief from Bhārhuṭ to the MSV.<sup>130</sup> However, a Mūlasarvāstivāda sect, let alone its vinaya, did not exist at the time of Bhārhuṭ's creation. And thus Schlingloff was forced to concede that this Bhārhuṭ medallion was based upon an early redaction of the *jātaka*, now lost, which was later included in the MSV collection. Needless to say, many such stories, though included in the MSV, may well have retained their own parallel and independent lives in Ajaṇṭā's day.

Despite these caveats, because I still plan to utilize the MSV as if it had direct influence upon Ajaṇṭā, there is one implication for the site's patronage I must now address. As the reader should be aware, the *vinaya* is the division of the Buddhist canon pertaining to the rules and regulations of monastic life. As a canonical and nomological text, its

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<sup>128</sup> Gnoli. *Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, vol. 1, xxii.

<sup>129</sup> Gnoli. *Gilgit Manuscript of the Saṅghabhedavastu*, vol. 1, xx.

<sup>130</sup> Schlingloff. *Studies in the Ajanta Paintings*, 228.

overwhelming presence at Ajaṅṭā is intriguing, for this will provide a clear *point d'appui* from which to recover the sectarian affiliations and doctrines of Ajaṅṭā's monastic community.<sup>131</sup> Unfortunately, the MSV is not without its controversies. The dating, geographical provenance, and contents of this text are all disputed, and I will treat these difficulties in a subsequent chapter. Here, the problem is simply that *as a vinaya* it is uncertain who would have had access to the MSV. Who was responsible for the scenes depicted at Ajaṅṭā if they were modeled on the MSV? Spink's historical reconstructions often characterize the site as micro-managed by donors and architects in far away Vatsagulma. If such were the case, it would not have been at all unlikely that one or more monks, such as Cave 26's Buddhahadra, might have advised these donors and architects. Schlingloff and others have assumed that the paintings were laid-out by the painters themselves, who were members of professional family-guilds hired by the various patrons. The MSV's testimony on the decoration of monasteries does not settle this matter. In a later addition to this text, the *Kṣudrakavastu*, it is told that Anāthapiṇḍada wished to paint the Jetavana monastery, which he felt lacked majesty. Unsure of the propriety of this undertaking, he requested the Buddha's permission, and, receiving it, hired painters for

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<sup>131</sup> In line with the predominant trend of scholarship I refer to this text as the *Mūlasarvāstivādin vinaya*, based upon the name given the text in the Tibetan *bKab 'gyur* and I-Tsing's testimony to wide-flung presence of this sect in the late seventh century (*A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (AD 671-695)*. Trans. by J. Takakusu. [Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982]: 8-10). Nevertheless, the colophon at the end of the Gilgit manuscript of the *Saṅghabhedavastu*, the MSV's final chapter, reads "*vinaye saṅghabhedavastu samāptaḥ || noch o | ( | vinayava)stvāgamam || o | |*" (Klaus Wille. *Die Handschriftliche Überlieferung des Vinayavastu der Mūlasarvāstivādin*. [Stuttgart: Frans Steiner Verlag, 1990]: 17). Here this work is named simply as a "canonical text on monastic matters," without any specification of the sect to which it belonged. As Klaus Wille also points out, this *Vinayavastu-āgama* does not by itself comprise the entirety of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*. A vinaya properly includes 1) paracanonical material, i.e., the *Prātimokṣa* and the *Karmavācanā*, both of which are available in Sanskrit (cf. Anukul Chandra Banerjee. *Two Buddhist Vinaya Texts in Sanskrit: Prātimokṣa Sūtra and Bhikṣukarmavākya*. [Calcutta: World Press Private, 1977]); 2) canonical material, i.e., the Sūtra-vibhaṅga (an analysis of the Prātimokṣa), the Skandhaka (=the above name *Vinayavastvāgama*, plus the *Vinayakṣudrakavastu*), as well as various appendices, the *Vinaya-uttaragrantha*; finally 3) non-canonical commentaries, which for the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition are preserved in Tibetan with the exception of a portion of Guṇaprabha's commentary on the Pravrajyāvastu, retrieved in Sanskrit (cf. P. V. Bapat and V. V. Gokhale (eds). *Vinaya-Sūtra and Auto-Commentary on the Same by Guṇaprabha, Chapter I - Pravrajyā-vastu*. [Patna: K. P. Jayswal Research Institute, 1982]).

the task. The painters did not themselves know what to depict, so Anāthapiṇḍada again inquired of the Buddha, who replied:

On the outer door, you should represent a yakṣa holding a staff; in the vestibule (*niryūha*), the Great Miracle [at Śrāvastī] and the Wheel [of Existence] in five divisions; in the pavilion (*maṇḍapa*), a cycle of jātaka stories (*jātakamālā*<sup>132</sup>); at the entrance to the Gandhakuṭī, yakṣas holding garlands; in the assembly hall (*upasthānaśāla*), the most venerable monk [=Buddha] descending [from Trāyastriṃśa heaven] to teach the Dharma; in the kitchen, yakṣas holding food; on the treasury door, a yakṣa with an iron hook; at the well, nāgas adorned with ornaments, holding water vessels; in the bathhouse and steam-room, sufferings from the *Deva-sūtra*<sup>133</sup> or the different hells; in the infirmary, the Tathāgata giving treatment; in the toilet, a horrible cemetery; on cell doors, draw a skeleton and skull.<sup>134</sup>

Of all the excavations at Ajaṅṭā, Cave 17 clearly comes closest to this description.

Nevertheless, the MSV still does not specify which scenes should be depicted as part of the cloister's so-called *jātakamālā*, though it surely suggests that Buddha (and later the saṅgha) was accepted as the authority to be consulted on this matter.

<sup>132</sup>Note that I-Tsing (*A Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 163) uses the term *jātakamālā* as a generic description of any cycle of Jātaka stories as well as the title of a specific, highly popular work, possibly Śūra's. Accordingly, Ārya Śūra's *Jātakamālā* can not be taken as the referent of this prescription, though clearly its stories were included in at least one vihāra's decoration.

<sup>133</sup>As first suggested by Marcelle Lalou ("Notes sur la Décoration des Monastères Bouddhiques," *Revue des Artes Asiatiques*. 5 [1928]: 183-185), this is probably the "Devadūta sūta," the Divine Messengers Sūtra, found in the Pāli canon's *Majjhima-nikāya* (I. B. Horner (trans). *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya)*. [London: Pāli Text Society, 1987]: vol. 3, 223-230) and *Aṅguttara-nikāya* (F. L. Woodward (trans). *The Book of the Gradual Sayings (Aṅguttara-Nikāya)*. [London: Luzac, 1960]: 121-125), as well as an independent text translated into the Chinese as "The Sūtra of the Five Divine Messengers." In brief, this sūtra claims that in the course of an individual's life, Yama, the lord of hells, will send five messengers to remind him of the proximity of death and turn him towards the Dharma. These messengers range from a baby boy fallen prostrate in his own excrement to a three-day dead decomposing corpse. The sūtra's second part describes the horrific tortures that individual will undergo if he ignores Yama's messengers.

<sup>134</sup>*de shig pnyi sgor gnod sbyin lag na dbyug thogs 'brir bcug nas | sgo khang du ni cho 'pbrul chen po dang 'khor lo cha lnga pa | khyams su ni skyes ba'i rabs kyi pbreng ba | dri gtsang khang gi sgor ni gnod sbyin lag na pbreng ba thogs pa dag | rim gro'i khang bar ni gde slong gnas brtan gnas brtan chos rnam par gian la 'babs par byed pa | bkad sar ni gnod sbyin lag na zas thogs pa dag | mdzod kyi sgor ni gnod sbyin lag na lcags kyu thogs pa dag | chu'i khang bar ni klu lag na bum pa thogs pa rgyan snags tsbogs kyis brgyan pa dag | kbrus khang dam | bsro khang du ni lba'i mdo las 'byung ba 'am | gzhan dmyal ba'i rabs | nad pa'i sman khang du ni de bzhin gsbegs pa nad pa'i nad gyog mdzad pa | chab khang sar ni dur khrod shin tu 'jigs su rung ba | gnas khang gi sgor ni rus pa'i keng rus dang mgo'i thod pa bri'o | (Peking 87-3-4 -- 87-3-8 [=bKa' gyur De 213<sup>3</sup> f.]*

As some of the stories at Ajaṅṭā may have come from the MSV itself, the question becomes, would this vinaya have been accessible to all, or only the monks? I have found only spotty evidence on this point, and none from the MSV itself. The *Abhiniṣkramaṇa sūtra* records a story placed at the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, in which a child (whose father had become a monk) was allowed to hear a certain segment of the Dharma, "but the other part of it, with respect to discipline, he was not allowed to hear. This having happened more than once, he inquired the reason, and was told that only the Bhikshus were allowed to hear the entire rules of the community."<sup>135</sup> A kin tradition is recorded in the Khotanese *Book of Zambasta*, which numbers among those who are *not* to be saved by Maitreya, monks "who will reveal to the householders all the secrets in the *Prātimokṣa*, which should be heard only by a monk." For by doing so, "they will corrupt the householders. They will destroy their faith."<sup>136</sup> One might presume because the monks were not abiding by that *Prātimokṣa*. Further, I-Tsing reports that the *Prātimokṣa* is the first text a novice learns, the larger vinaya follows thereupon, and only after mastering these texts can he read the śūtras and śāstras.<sup>137</sup> It may be probable that, *if* the paintings depicted on Ajaṅṭā's walls were based upon the MSV directly, the monks would have had a hand in their artistic representation. Not a radical point perhaps, but it reminds us that as Ajaṅṭā's viḥāras and caityas were ultimately intended as gifts for the Buddhist saṅgha, this single segment of the site's community may have had a great deal of control over every aspect of the excavation and decoration. Since we have no evidence through which to determine conclusively whether the stories as depicted were in fact based upon this text directly or upon oral versions thereof, this is a large 'if.' Nevertheless, one should scrutinize the stipulations of

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<sup>135</sup> Beal. *Romantic Legend*, 359.

<sup>136</sup> R. E. Emmerick (ed. and trans). *The Book of Zambasta*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968): 341.

<sup>137</sup> I-Tsing. *Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 102-3.

vinaya and spatial requirements of Buddhist liturgy when exploring Ajaṅṭa's artifacts. The fact that we can identify an appropriate vinaya with any degree of probability is fortunate indeed.

So far I have introduced three sets of textual sources, all of which may in some way be directly linked to Ajaṅṭā: 1) Ajaṅṭā's inscriptions (along with other contemporary epigraphs that allow one to consider these within their generic context); 2) Ārya Śūra's *Jātakamālā*, the single text indisputably known to the local community; and 3) the possible models for specific narrative depictions at Ajaṅṭā, whose identifications are based upon the assumption that literary, rather than oral, traditions were directly responsible for the work. Working from here, the next step in this inverted pyramid of sources, comprises those texts which would have been current at the time of the caves, and may have been known to their community. These literary sources come to our attention in a number of ways. Bāṇabhaṭṭa's *Harṣacarita*, for instance, mentions two Buddhist texts as actively used by his contemporaries. First, in a description of the ministrations made to Harṣa's father at the time of death, Bāṇa notes that among the general activities people were reciting the *Mahāmāyūrī*;<sup>138</sup> second, in the description of the forest monastery of Divākaramitra, a monk who becomes Harṣa's spiritual advisor, we read that "devout householder pigeons, skilled in the teachings of the Śākya, were explicating the *[Abhidharma]kośa*."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Bāṇabhaṭṭa. *The Harṣacarita of Bāṇabhaṭṭa*. Ed. by P. V. Kane. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1965): 21; Bāṇabhaṭṭa. *The Harṣa-carita of Bāṇa*. Trans. by E. B. Cowell and F. W. Thomas. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1961): 137. For the *Mahāmāyūrī* see: H. Oldenbourg. "Mahāmāyūrī Vidyārājñī," *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdelenija Imp. Russk. Archeol. Obschestva*. 11 (1899): 218-261; Sylvain Lévi. "Le Catalogue Géographique des Yakṣa dans la Mahāmāyūrī," *Journal Asiatique*. xi serie. 5 (1915): 19-138; Shuyo Takubo (ed). *Ārya-Mahā-Māyūrī-Vidyā-Rajñī*. (Tokyo: Sankibo, 1972).

<sup>139</sup> *paramopāsakaiḥ sukair api śākyaśāsanakuśalaiḥ kośaṃ samupadiśadbhiḥ* Bāṇabhaṭṭa. *Harṣacarita* (Sanskrit ed. of Kane), 76; Bāṇabhaṭṭa. *Harṣa-carita* (Eng. trans of Cowell and Thomas), 236. For the *Abhidharmakośa* see: Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabbāṣyam of Vasubandhu*. Ed. by P. Pradhan. (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1975); Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośa and Bhāṣya of Ācārya Vasubandhu with Sphūṭārthā Commentary of Ācārya Yaśomitra*. Ed. by Dwarika Das Shastri. (Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1987); Vasubandhu. *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*. 6 volumes. Trans. by Louis de la Vallée Poussin. (Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1980); Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośabbāṣyam*. 4

Furthermore, Divākaramitra tells a story in which he reveals himself as an heir of Nāgārjuna, and alludes to the renowned friendship between Nāgārjuna and a Śātavāhana king as a model for the proper relationship between himself and King Harṣa. The story of this friendship between a famous Buddhist philosopher and the great Śātavāhana was kept alive through Nāgārjuna's *Subhṛllekha*,<sup>140</sup> and, indeed, I-Tsing reports this text as very popular, and that students learned it early in their course of instruction.<sup>141</sup> Other texts I-Tsing reports as standard literature for a Buddhist monk include: two poems of Mātṛceṭa (one of which was commented upon by Dignāga), which treat the six *pāramitās* and eulogize the Buddha but are taught to Hīnayānists and Mahāyānists alike;<sup>142</sup> the *Samāntamukha* chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, in praise of Avalokiteśvara;<sup>143</sup> the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*,<sup>144</sup> the *Jātakamālā* (albeit as I noted above this title designates a genre as well as Ārya Śūra's text); Candragomin's *Lokānandanātaka*, a dramatic retelling of the

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volumes. Trans. by Leo M. Pruden from the French translation of Louis de La Vallée Poussin. (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1988).

<sup>140</sup> Leslie Kawamura (trans). *Golden Zephyr*. (Emeryville, CA.: Dharma Publishing, 1975); Lindtner. *Nāgārjuniana*, 218-224.

<sup>141</sup> I-Tsing. *Record of the Buddhist Religion*, 158-163.

<sup>142</sup> Mātṛceṭa. *The Śātapañcāśataka of Mātṛceṭa*. Ed. and Trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951); Pierre Python. *Vinaya-viniścaya-Upali-paripṛcchā*. (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1973).

<sup>143</sup> Hendrik Kern and Bunyiu Nanjio (eds). *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*. Bibliotheca Buddhica vol. 10. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992): 438-56; Parasurama Lakshmana Vaidya (ed). *Saddharma-puṇḍarīkasūtram*. (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, 1960): 250-57; Hirofumi Toda (ed). *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra: Central Asian Manuscripts Romanized Text*. (Tokushima: Kyoiku Khuppan Center, 1981): 206-211; Hendrik Kern (trans). *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka or The Lotus of the True Law*. (New York: Dover, 1963): 406-418; Leon Hurvitz (trans). *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sūtra), Translated from the Chinese of Kumārajīva*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976): 311-319.

<sup>144</sup> Ernst Waldschmidt (ed). *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*. 3 parts. Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Philosophisch-historische Klasse Jahrgang 1949 No. 1, Jahrgang 1950 No. 2, Jahrgang 1950 No. 3. (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1950-51).

Viśvantara Jātaka, is said to have been sung and performed throughout Indian Asia;<sup>145</sup> finally, I-Tsing mentions Aśvaghōṣa's *Sūtrālaṃkāraśāstra*,<sup>146</sup> and the *Buddhacarita*.<sup>147</sup> Other texts to be included in this tier of sources are the *Daśakumāracarita*,<sup>148</sup> the *Harṣacarita*, the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*,<sup>149</sup> numerous *purāṇas* and Pāñcarātra *saṃhitās*, the *Mattavilāsaprabasana*,<sup>150</sup> and the *Nāgānandanāṭaka*.<sup>151</sup> Non-Buddhist texts all, these works either represent or discuss Buddhists as an integral community, giving us insight into how outsiders thought and spoke of Buddhists. Within the sphere of Buddhist literature, the Gilgit manuscripts are of exceptional value, as they are the best records we have for examining the mentalité of a Buddhist community contemporary with Ajaṅṭā's

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<sup>145</sup> Candragomin. *Candragomins Lokānandanāṭaka*. Ed. and trans. by Michael Hahn. (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1974); Candragomin. *Joy for the World*. Trans. by Michael Hahn. (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1987).

<sup>146</sup> The text named here *Sūtrālaṃkāra* attributed to Aśvaghōṣa is perhaps Kumāralāta's *Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā*, which we have already found to have been known to Ajaṅṭā's community. Apparently, Kumārajīva, who translated this work into Chinese c. 402-412 was the first to make this mistaken attribution which I-Tsing follows. However, the colophon of a 4th century Sanskrit manuscript of the work, first edited by Lüders, identifies the author and title as "Kumāralāta" and "Kalpanāmaṇḍitikā" respectively on several occasions (*Bruchstücke Buddhistischer Dramen*, 137). See also E. J. Thomas. "Aśvaghōṣa and Alaṃkāra," *Indian Culture*. 13 (1947): 143-46 for further study of this text's authorship.

<sup>147</sup> Aśvaghōṣa. *Aśvaghōṣa's Buddhacarita, or, Acts of the Buddha, in three parts*. Ed. and trans. by E. H. Johnston. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1984).

<sup>148</sup> Daṇḍin. *The Daśakumāracarita of Daṇḍin*. Ed. and trans. by M. R. Kale. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986).

<sup>149</sup> Varāhamihira. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā, with the commentary of Bhaṭṭotpala*. (Varanasi: Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, 1968); Varāhamihira. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*. Ed. and trans. by M. Ramakrishna Bhat. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981).

<sup>150</sup> Mahendravikramavarman. *Mattavilāsaprabasana*. Ed. and trans. by N. P. Unni. (Trivandrum: College Book House, 1974).

<sup>151</sup> Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya (ed). *Nāgānanda-Nāṭaka of Śrī Harṣadeva*. (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1957); Henry Willis Wells (ed). *Six Sanskrit plays: In English Translation*. (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1964).

own;<sup>152</sup> needless to add, the presence of the MSV at Gilgit and the apparent popularity of this codex at Ajaṅṭā, as well as evidence (to be treated in the *Dharma* chapter) that Ajaṅṭā's community included refugee monks from the North-West, suggests a stronger link between these two locales than is at first apparent.

This list is by no means complete. To name of two works cited in the subsequent chapters that have not yet been mentioned, there are the *Abbisamācārikā*, a vinaya text belonging to the Lokottaravāda branch of the Mahāsāṃghika sect that was preserved in a Sanskrit manuscript in Tibet,<sup>153</sup> and the *Book of Zambasta*, a popular work composed at the request of a Khotanese official. In the end, despite my pretense of setting a 'canon' of sources for the study of Ajaṅṭā, the hermeneutic principles elaborated in the first section of this chapter leaves the upper level of this inverted pyramid indeterminate and functionally boundless.

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<sup>152</sup> Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra (eds). *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts (Facsimile Edition)*. Śata-Piṭaka Series 10. (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1974); Nalinaksha Dutt (ed). *Gilgit Manuscripts*. 4 volumes. (Delhi: Sri Satguru, 1984); A. Nakamura. "Gilgit Manuscript of the *Mahāsannipātaratnaketusūtra*, Kept in the National Archives, Katmandu," *Hokke-Bunka Kenkyū*. 1 (1975): 13-37; Gregory Schopen. *The Bhaiṣajyaguru-Sūtra and the Buddhism of Gilgit*. Ph.D. Thesis. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1978); Gregory Schopen. "The Five Leaves of the *Buddhabalādhānaprātibhāryavikurvāṇanirdeśa-Sūtra* Found at Gilgit," *Journal of Indian Philology*. 5 (1978): 319-336; Gregory Schopen "The Manuscript of the *Vajracchedikā* Found at Gilgit." In *Studies in the Literature of the Great Vehicle: Three Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts*. Ed. by Luis O. Gómez and Jonathan A. Silk. (Ann Arbor: Collegiate Institute for the Study of Buddhist Literature and Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies, The University of Michigan, 1989): 89-139; Adelheid Mette. "Zwei kleine Fragmente aus Gilgit," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*. 7 (1981): 133-151; Chandrabhal Tripathi. "Gilgit-Blätter der Mekhalā-dhāraṇī," *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik*. 7 (1981): 153-161; Oskar von Hinüber (ed). *A New Fragmentary Gilgit Manuscript of the Sadbharmapūṇḍarīkasūtra*. (Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1982); Okubo Yusen. "The Ekottara-āgama Fragments of the Gilgit Manuscript -- Romanized Text," *Bukkyō Semina*. 35 (1982): 120-91; Yael Bentor. "The Redactions of the *Adbbutadbharmaparyāya* from Gilgit," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*. 11 (1988): 21-52.

<sup>153</sup> B. Jinanda (ed). *Abbisamācārikā (Bhikṣuprakīrṇaka)*. (Patna: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute, 1969); Sanghasen Singh and Kenryo Minowa. "A Critical Edition and Translation of the *Abbisamācārikā Nāma Bhikṣuprakīrṇakaḥ* (Chapter One)," *Buddhist Studies* 12 (1988): 81-146.

## **PART II**

### **THE THREE JEWELS AND OTHER VALUABLES**