

compound leaves open the implication that it has also fallen *because* of pride; the ambiguity is richly poetic. This pun may also explain why in the metaphor the house is said to be *apalepa-patito* rather than *patitāpalepo*, as one might expect in a *bahubbīhi*.

“Such was this body. A crumbling home of many sufferings, it is a decayed mansion shedding the pride of its plaster. Unfailing is the word of the Truthful.”

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## MAKING MOUNTAINS WITHOUT MOLEHILLS: THE CASE OF THE MISSING STŪPA

Those who share my admiration for the contribution that Professor Gregory Schopen has been making in recent years to the study of early Buddhist history will have shared also my excitement at seeing that he had contributed an article to a recent number of this journal. *The Stūpa cult and the extant Pāli Vinaya* (JPTS XIII, 83–100) tells an exciting tale of doctored texts, perhaps monastic censorship. But alas, it turns out to be much ado about nothing.

The article begins: “One of the more curious things about the Pāli *Vinaya* as we have it is that it contains no rules governing the behaviour of monks in regard to *stūpas*.” One of the more curious things about the article (as we have it) is that it goes on to cite several passages in the *Vibhaṅga* section of the Pāli *Vinaya* which do refer to stupas, including a reference to their worship (p. 92). What Schopen means, it soon turns out, is that there are no references to the construction and cult of stupas in the other main part of the Pāli *Vinaya*, the *Khandhaka*. As Bareau pointed out,<sup>1</sup> all the parallel versions of this part of the *Vinaya* which are preserved in other languages do contain such details.

Schopen bases his exciting hypothesis on the claim that a twelfth-century Sinhala inscription, the *Mahā-Parākramabāhu katikāvata*, says that a monk’s duties towards stupas are mentioned in the *Khandhaka* — but they are not. This is the molehill which he elevates to the mountain of systematic monastic censorship. But there is not even such a molehill: unfortunately his case rests on a simple mis-translation. The inscription describes daily monastic routine and says that each morning monks should perform two sets of duties: “both the duties towards stupa,

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<sup>1</sup> André Bareau, “La construction et le culte des stūpa d’après les *Vinayapiṭaka*”, *Bulletin de l’école française d’extrême orient*, L, 1962 (not 1960 as cited by Schopen), 229–74.

towards stupa, great Bo tree and courtyard and the *Khandhaka* duties such as those towards teachers, elders, the sick and lodgings.” This makes it clear precisely that the first set of duties is *not* specified in the *Khandhaka*. The translators Schopen relies on have missed the word *du* “and” (derived from Sanskrit *ca*), which occurs twice in the passage: ... *ñgaṇa-vatu-du* ... *kandu-vatu-du*.

We are thus spared the problem of guessing why all references to the stupa have gone missing from the text of the *Khandhaka* between the twelfth century and modern times. Schopen says that “any discomfiture with monastic participation in *stūpa* or relic cult activity is distinctly modern” (p. 96); I have not come across such discomfiture. Similarly, I am not aware that Buddhists have ever understood the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* to prohibit monastic participation in the cult of stupas. Schopen refers (p. 95) to a “purported prohibition” but does not say who has purported. Schopen’s claim that some people have attributed an anti-stupa ideology to Theravāda Buddhism seems to be based on an article by Gustav Roth (cited on p. 83); maybe he is also referring to remarks in the cited article by Bareau.

Schopen and I would agree that such an anti-stupa ideology would be extremely odd. Small stupas (closer to molehills than to mountains) cover the ashes of monks in Sri Lanka to this day. I have always assumed that this practice must go back to the very beginnings of Buddhism; that the stupa originates as a tumulus over the ashes of a monk or nun, in direct continuation of Vedic burial practices (*saṃcayana*).<sup>2</sup>

I would therefore more or less agree with Bareau’s suggestion, which Schopen sets out to refute, that the absence from the Pali *Khandhaka* of some things which are in parallel texts “results from the relatively early date of the ‘closing’ of its compilation” (p. 83). The fact

<sup>2</sup> This idea is hardly new, but I have been hoping to find the time to explore it a bit further in collaboration with Dr Gillian Evison, whose D.Phil. thesis (Oxford 1989) on Hindu death rituals includes thought-provoking material on Vedic funeral customs and their later development.

that these details about stupa construction and worship occur in the miscellaneous section of the text, the *Kṣudraka-vastu*, which is the most diverse between versions and evidently the most open to accretion, strengthens this hypothesis.

I do not however entirely agree with the conclusions to Bareau’s learned and informative article. As already mentioned, I agree with Schopen in seeing no need to posit a lay origin for the stupa cult. But there is a further point. Bareau says that most of the descriptions he has cited “refer to a state of affairs in the last two or three centuries B.C.” (p. 268) (my translation). But so far as I can discover (and I am no expert on Chinese Buddhism) the earliest date we have for any of the *Vinaya* texts he uses is the early 5th century A.D., the date of translations into Chinese. So the texts could well be describing developments in India after the turn of the Christian era. The Pali *Vinaya*, on the other hand, is plausibly recorded to have been written down in Sri Lanka in the first century B.C. — nearly half a millenium before those Chinese translations. One does not have to posit that it received no further additions after the first century B.C., merely that the Pali tradition had left the mainstream and naturally failed to record later developments on the Indian mainland.

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