

Author (full names) .. ABHISHEK SINGH AMAR ..
Title of thesis .. CONTEXTUALISING THE NAVEL OF THE EARTH: THE EMERGENCE,
SUSTENANCE AND RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATION OF BUDDHISM IN THE
BODHGAYA REGION (C. 300 BCE - 1200 CE) Degree .. PHD ..

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the history of Buddhism at its birth-place, Bodhgayā, in the South Bihar region in early India (c. 300 BCE – 1200 CE) by analysing its social milieu and broader regional context. In an attempt to inquire into processes that helped the Buddhist *saṅgha* emerge and sustain itself at Bodhgayā, this research highlights the key role of Buddhist *saṅgha* in the development of a sacred landscape in and around Bodhgayā. Based on the findings of an archaeological survey of the region that surrounds Bodhgaya, conducted in 2005-06, this work traces the spread of Buddhism in tandem with settlements and the impact this spread had on socio-economic processes in the region. While doing so, it argues that the Buddhist *saṅgha* played a crucial role in the material and economic development of the local settlements by introducing and regulating irrigation mechanisms to promote rice-production, which helped them in spreading Buddhism and developing a new network of patronage for their sustenance. Finally, it also examines the nature, dynamics and responses of Buddhism to the competition and contestation that it faced from Brāhmanical religious orders (Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva) in the study period. While analysing Buddhist responses, this thesis argues that the Buddhist *saṅgha* dominated the Bodhgayā region by adopting a policy of ‘*hierarchical-inclusion*’, which was informed by the political dynamics and religio-political order of the south Bihar region. Thus, this thesis provides a historical analysis of the processes that were devised by the Buddhist *saṅgha* for its development and sustenance in the Bodhgayā region.

ProQuest Number: 10731395

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



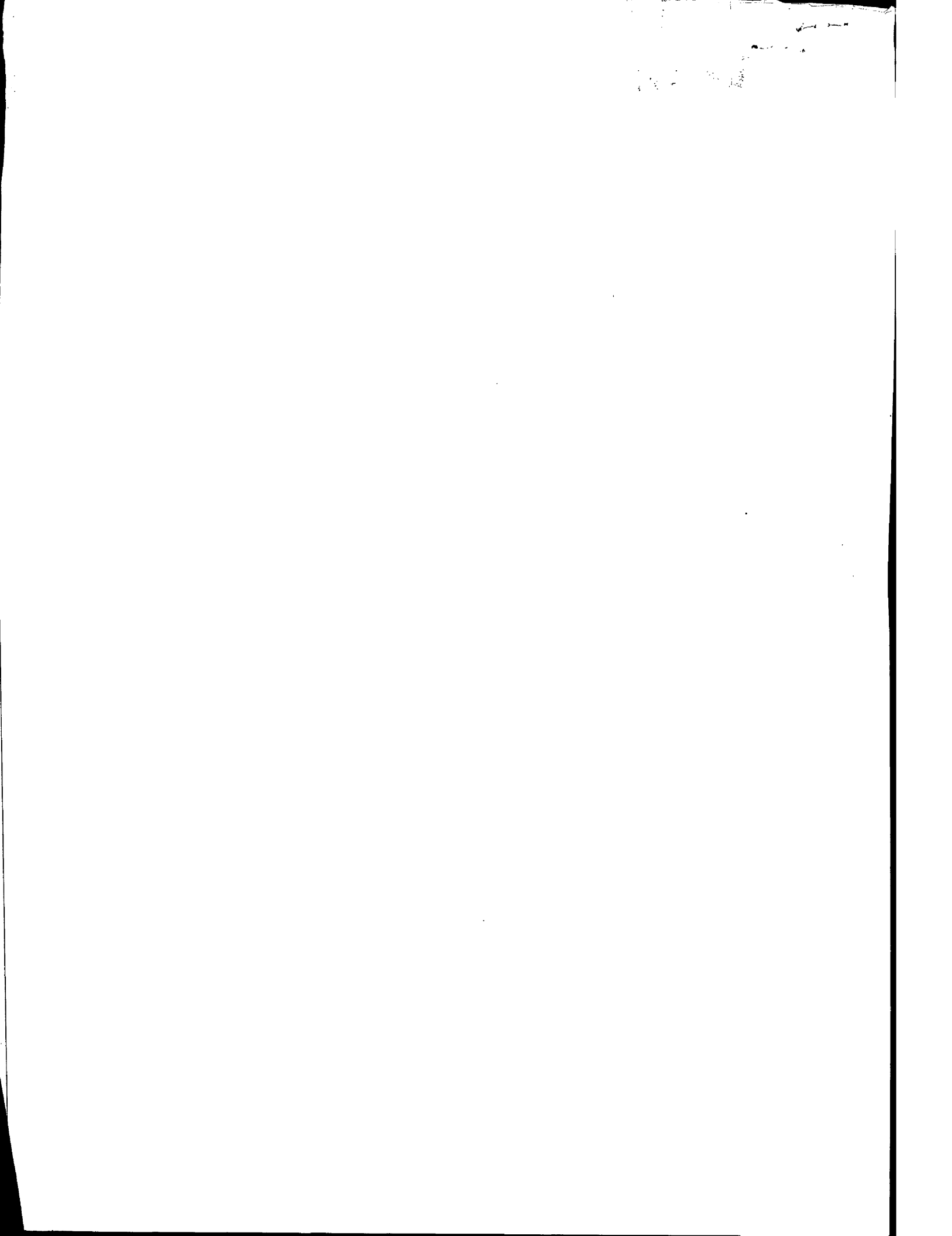
ProQuest 10731395

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346



**Contextualising the Navel of the Earth: The
Emergence, Sustenance and Religious
Transformation of Buddhism in the Bodhgayā Region
(*Circa. 300 BCE – 1200 CE*)**

Abhishek Singh Amar

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

School of Oriental and African Studies

Department of History

University of London

June 2009

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the history of Buddhism at its birth-place, Bodhgayā, in the South Bihar region in early India (c. 300 BCE – 1200 CE) by analysing its social milieu and broader regional context. In an attempt to inquire into processes that helped the Buddhist *saṅgha* emerge and sustain itself at Bodhgayā, this research highlights the key role of Buddhist *saṅgha* in the development of a sacred landscape in and around Bodhgayā. Based on the findings of an archaeological survey of the region that surrounds Bodhgaya, conducted in 2005-06, this work traces the spread of Buddhism in tandem with settlements and the impact this spread had on socio-economic processes in the region. While doing so, it argues that the Buddhist *saṅgha* played a crucial role in the material and economic development of the local settlements by introducing and regulating irrigation mechanisms to promote rice-production, which helped them in spreading Buddhism and developing a new network of patronage for their sustenance. Finally, it also examines the nature, dynamics and responses of Buddhism to the competition and contestation that it faced from Brāhmaṇical religious orders (Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva) in the study period. While analysing Buddhist responses, this thesis argues that the Buddhist *saṅgha* dominated the Bodhgayā region by adopting a policy of ‘*hierarchic-inclusion*’, which was informed by the political dynamics and religio-political order of the south Bihar region. Thus, this thesis provides a historical analysis of the processes that were devised by the Buddhist *saṅgha* for its development and sustenance in the Bodhgayā region.

For *Maa and Papa*,

Table of Contents

LIST OF FIGURES	Page 10
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	16
ABBREVIATIONS	18
NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTIONS	21

PART I: TEXT

Chapter 1: Introduction	22
I. Discovery of Bodhgayā and Early Works	27
II. Historiography of the site	30
III. Methodological Problems	35
IV. Possible Approaches	37
IV.1 Reconstruction of the Sacred Landscape	37
IV.2 Contextualisation of the Site	39
V. The Bodhgayā Region and Methodology	41
V.1 The Survey Area	42
V.2 Methodology	44
VI. Chapterisation: The Scheme of this Study	48
Chapter: 2 The <i>Buddhakṣetra</i> of Gotama: The Sacred Landscape of Bodhgayā	50
I.1 Historiography	51
I.2 Texts and Bodhgayā	52
II. The Pāli Texts and Sacred Landscape of Bodhgayā	55
II.1 First Phase: The Early Development	56
III. Second Phase: The Sanskrit Texts and Sacred Landscape	63

III.1 Pre-Enlightenment Stay	Page 64
III.2 Post-Enlightenment	66
III.3 Discussion	69
III.4 Archaeological Growth	71
IV. Third Phase: Archaeological Growth (c. 550-1200 CE)	75
IV.1 Bodhi Tree: Nomenclature and Perception	75
IV.2 The Emergence of <i>Vajrāsana</i> and the Mahābodhi Temple	78
IV.3 Other Components	80
IV.4 Summary	84
V. CONCLUSION	88

Chapter-3 A Chronological Study of the Settlements

and Religious sites	91
I. Historiography and Background	91
I.1 Buddhist sites and Settlement History of Bodhgayā: Background	91
I.2 Historiography	92
II. Archaeological-Survey and Field-Method	94
II.1. Survey-Objectives	94
II.1.1 Intensive Five Square Kilometres Survey	95
II.1.2 Village to Village Survey along Rivers, Hills and Old Routes	96
II.2 Organising and Presenting the Data into Quadrants	97
III. Identification, Nature and Chronology of the sites	99
III.1 Methodological Discussion: Non-Monastic and Monastic Sites	100
III.1.1 Non-Monastic Sites	100
III.1.2 Monastic Sites	101
III. 1.2.1 Miniature Stone <i>Stūpas</i>	103
III.1.2.2 Temples	104
III.1.2.3 Dating the Sculptures	104

III.1.3 Discussion	Page 106
III.2. Chronological-Sequence: Methodological discussion	106
III. 2.1 Background of Settlement history of the Middle-Gangetic Zone	107
III.2.1.1 Neolithic Period	107
III.2.1.2 Chalcolithic Period	109
III.2.1.3 Early Historic Period-I	111
III.2.1.4 Early Historic Period-II	113
III.2.1.5 Gupta and Post-Gupta Period	114
III.2.1.6 The Early Medieval Period	115
III.3. Summary	116
IV. Presentation of the Data	118
IV.1. North Quadrant	118
IV.2 South Quadrant	125
IV.3 East Quadrant	129
IV.4 West Quadrant	137
V. Discussion	146
V.1 Settlement pattern	146
V.2 Spread of Buddhism and Spatial Pattern	149
V.3 Summary	151
Chapter 4: Foundations and Sustenance	154
I. Historiography	155
II. The Physical Environment of the South Bihar and the Bodhgayā Region	156
II.1 Soil Types, Land Use, and Crop-Pattern in the South Bihar Region	157
II.2 Climate, Rainfall, Drainage and Irrigation in the South Bihar Region	159

III. The Agricultural and Irrigation History of the Bodhgayā

Region in the Nineteenth Century	Page 162
III.1 Rice Cultivation	162
III.2 Irrigation Means: Colonial Records and Fallacies	164
III.3 Irrigation Strategies	165
III.4 Plains: Structures and Functions	167
III.5 Hilly Area: Structure and Functions	169
III.6 Impact: Water Table and Land Use	170

IV. Dating Water Management Systems: Chronology

and Construction	171
IV.1 Dating Irrigation Techniques	171
IV.2 Textual Evidence and Etymology	172
IV.3 Construction and Maintenance	176
V.1 Buddhism and Development	179
V.2 Undeveloped Bodhgayā Region of Magadha	179
V.3 Transformations: Growing Populations and Sustainable Agriculture	180
V.4 Buddhist Landscape: Settlements, <i>Caitya</i> and Water Bodies	181
V.5 Buddhist <i>Saṅgha</i> and Water Bodies: Early Linkages	182
V.6 <i>Saṅgha</i> and Irrigation Management	183
V.7 Dating Technical Diffusion	183
V.8 <i>Saṅgha</i> and Maintenance	184
V.9 The <i>Saṅgha</i> and Water Bodies: Early Medieval Period	186
VI. Discussion: Analysis of Impact	191
VI.1 Socio-economic Implication	191
VI.2 Social Support System: Satellite monasteries of the region and Mechanism for Sustenance	192
VI.3 Associational/Negative Evidence	195
VII. Conclusion	196

Chapter 5: Negotiating Dominance: Inter-Religious Dynamics and Religious Transformations **Page 198**

I. Historiography	198
II. Trajectories of Religious Developments	200
II.1. Buddhism	200
II.2 Emergence of Vaiṣṇavism in the Bodhgayā region	203
II.2.1 The GM and the Emergence of the Vaiṣṇava Gayā	207
II.3 The spread of Śaivism in the Bodhgayā region	215
II.4 Analysis	218
III. Inter-religious Dynamics: Buddhist Responses to the Brāhmaṇical Challenges	220
III.1 Buddhist Response to the Śaivism	221
III.2 Buddhist Response to Vaiṣṇavism	226
III.3 Discussion	228
IV. Early Medieval State and Inter-Religious Dynamics	231
IV.1 The Buddhist Affiliation of the Pāla Kings	232
IV.2 Pāla Patronage to Buddhism	234
IV.3 Discussion	237
V. Politics of Negotiation	240
V.1 The Pāla King and his Ministers	240
V.2 The Pāla Kings and Their Feudatories	241
V.3 Political Dynamics within the Bodhgayā Region	242
VI. Conclusion	243
Chapter 6: Conclusion	245

APPENDIX

A. List of Inscriptions from Bodhgayā	Page 258
B. List of Sites from the Bodhgayā region	263
C. Main Pottery Types from the Bodhgayā Region	271
D. Distribution of Viṣṇu Sculptures in the Bodhgayā Region	273
E. List of Inscriptions from Gayā	274

BIBLIOGRAPHY	276-299
---------------------	----------------

LIST OF FIGURES

CHARTS (in Text)

2.1 Conception of Post-Enlightenment Stay	Page 68
3.1: Chronological-Frame	117
3.2 Chronological-chart of the surveyed-sites	147
3.3: Geographical-distribution of the surveyed-sites	150
4.1 Weather Cycle of Bihar	159
4.2 Rainfall Pattern of Bihar	160
4.3 Average Annual Rainfall of the Gayā District	163
4.4 Population Density of Northern Gayā	164
4.5 <i>Saṅgha</i> and Settlement Distribution Patterns	188
4.6. Tri-partite system of Bodhgayā, satellite monasteries and settlements	193

PART II: ILLUSTRATIONS (after Page 300)

INTRODUCTION

- Fig. 1.1 Cunningham's Plan of Bodhgayā, (BM, Asia, Cunningham Bodhgayā Archive)
- Fig. 1.2 The Mahābodhi Mahāvihāra
- Fig. 1.3 The Bodhgayā Region

CHAPTER TWO

- Fig. 2.1 Sacred Sites in and around Bodhgayā
- Fig. 2.2 The Bakror *Stūpa*
- Fig. 2.3 The Bodhi Tree
- Fig. 2.4 The Bodhi Seat (BM, Asia, Cunningham- Bodhgayā Archive)
- Fig. 2.5 Bharhut Pillar Railing (IM, Kolkatta)
- Fig. 2.6 Bodhgayā Pillar Railing (BG Museum)
- Fig. 2.7 Bodhi Tree, being worshipped by Nāga and other mythical Creatures (BG Museum)
- Fig. 2.8 Jewelled-walk, Bodhgayā
- Fig. 2.9 Excavated Ruins of Taradih Monastery, Bodhgayā
- Fig. 2.10 Gayāśrīṣa Hill, Gayā
- Fig. 2.11 Dungeshwari Cave, Mora Hill, Bodhgayā
- Fig. 2.12 *Stūpa*, Mora Hill Bodhgayā
- Fig. 2.13 Remains of a Monastery, Mora Hill, Bodhgayā
- Fig. 2.14 Cunningham's drawing of Bodhgayā based on Xuanzang (BM, Asia, Cunningham-Bodhgayā Archive)
- Fig. 2.15 Miniature Stone *Stūpa*, Bodhgayā

CHAPTER THREE

- Fig. 3.1 The Bodhgayā Region (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)
- Fig. 3.2 Miniature Stone *Stūpas*
- Fig. 3.3 Temples
- Fig. 3.4 Neolithic Pottery (Red ware and diagnostic sherds)
- Fig. 3.6 Early Historic –I Pottery

- Fig. 3.7 Early Historic-I Pottery (NBP associated Red ware- pots)
- Fig. 3.8 Early Historic-II Pottery (NBP associated Red ware)
- Fig. 3.9 Early Historic-II Pottery (NBP associated Red ware)
- Fig. 3.10 Gupta Period (Red ware)
- Fig. 3.11 Early Medieval Period (Slipped red ware)
- Fig. 3.12 Site-distribution in the Northern Quadrant (Based on the Survey of India
Topographical Maps)
- Fig.3.13 Suppi-gadh Settlement Mound
- Fig. 3.14 Sumera Settlement Mound
- Fig. 3.15 Avalokiteśvara, Sumera.
- Fig.3.16 Ring-well, Dharawat, EH-I
- Fig. 3.17 Terracotta figurines, Dharawat, EH-I
- Fig. 3.18 Monastic-wall, Kunwa hill Slope, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.19 Monastic wall, Kunwa hill-top, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.20 Remains of the Temple-wall, Kunwa-hill, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.21 Remains of a Masonary wall, Kunwa-hill, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.22 *Stūpa* at Kunwa hill, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.23 Terracotta Buddha, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.24 Terracotta Sealings, Dharawat
- Fig. 3.25 Buddha, Kauwa-dol
- Fig.3.26 Rock-carvings of Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical Gods, Kauwa-dol
- Fig. 3.26 Pārvatī, Siddheśvar-sthan
- Fig. 3.27 Yakṣi, Mira-bigha
- Fig. 3.28 Chāmuṇḍā, Mira-bigha
- Fig. 3.29 Viṣṇu, Kendua
- Fig.3.30 Site-distribution in the Southern Quadrant (Based on the Survey of India
Topographical Maps)
- Fig. 3.31 Sūrya, Binda
- Fig. 3.32 Avalokiteśvara, Dema

- Fig. 3.33 Viṣṇu, Wari
- Fig. 3.34 Inscribed Foot-print, Gurpa
- Fig. 3.35 Buddha, Badki-Babhni
- Fig. 3.36 Site-distribution in the Eastern Quadrant (Based on the Survey of India
Topographical Maps)
- Fig. 3.37 Exposed wall of a Monastery, Kurkihar
- Fig.3.38 Standing Buddha, Kurkihar
- Fig. 3.39 Buddhist Images, Kurkihar temple
- Fig.3.40 Remains of miniature stone *stūpas*, Kurkihar
- Fig. 3.41 Remains of a *stūpa*, Hasra-kol
- Fig. 3.42 Sculptural Remains, Hasra-kol
- Fig. 3.43 Durga, Harahi-sthan
- Fig. 3.44 Sūrya, Harahi-sthan
- Fig. 3.45 Inscribed Fragment, Harahi-sthan
- Fig. 3.46 Remains of a temple at hill-site, Jethian
- Fig. 3.47 Buddha, Jethian
- Fig. 3.48 Amoghapāśa, Amethi
- Fig. 3.49 Tara, Amethi
- Fig. 3.50 Manjuśrī, Amethi
- Fig. 3.51 Site-distribution in the Western Quadrant (Based on the Survey of India
Topographical Maps)
- Fig. 3.52 Viṣṇu, Mangrawan
- Fig. 3.53 Bhairav, Mangrawan
- Fig. 3.54 Buddha, Liṅga and Navagraha-panel, Nasher
- Fig. 3.55 Avalokiteśvara, Nagwa-gadh
- Fig. 3.56 Remains of a temple, Kabar
- Fig. 3.57 Śiva-liṅga, Kabar
- Fig. 3.58 Viṣṇu, Kespa
- Fig. 3.59 Viṣṇu, Kespa

- Fig. 3.60 Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Kespa
- Fig. 3.61 (Lakṣmi ?), Kespa
- Fig. 3.62 Cuṇḍa, Kespa
- Fig. 3.63 Buddha, Kespa
- Fig. 3.64 Viṣṇu-Varāha, Makhpa
- Fig. 3.65 Gaṇeśa, Utren
- Fig. 3.66 Sculpted-pillar, Pali
- Fig. 3.67 Viṣṇu-daśāvātāra, Konch
- Fig. 3.68 Ekamukhi liṅga, Konch
- Fig. 3.69 Lakuliśa, Konch
- Fig. 3.70 Shell-inscription, Baiju-bigha hillock temple
- Fig. 3.71 Inscribed hillock temple, Baiju-bigha
- Fig. 3.72 *Stūpa* Remains, Dubba
- Fig. 3.73 Buddha, Dubba
- Fig. 3.74 Inscribed Pillar, Dubba
- Fig. 3.75 Remains of Miniature stone *stūpas*, Dubba
- Fig. 3.76 Monastic sites of the Bodhgayā Region (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

CHAPTER FOUR

- Fig. 4.1 *Āhar*, northeastern embankment, Gothu
- Fig. 4.2 Google-earth image of *āhar*, Gothu
- Fig. 4.3 Pyne, Dharawat
- Fig. 4.4 BuddhokarTank (*tāl*), Dharawat
- Fig. 4.5 Tank Distribution in the Bodhgayā Region (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)
- Fig. 4.6 Embankments along the Mora hill, Dungeshwari (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)
- Fig. 4.7 Tank and *Āhar - Pyne* at Dharawat, Kauwa-dol and Barabar Hills (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

Fig. 4.8 Irrigation system at Kurkihar (Based on the Survey of India
Topographical Maps)

Fig. 4.9 Pyne near Murali Hill, Kurkihar

Fig. 4.10 Embankment at the base of Murali Hill, Kurkihar

Fig. 4.11 *Stūpa* Remains, Jethain-hill

Fig. 4.12 Dam at the base of *Stūpa*-hill, Jethian

Fig. 4.13 Tank, Nasher

Fig. 4.14 Sculpture along Tank, Nasher

Fig. 4.15 Twin tanks, Jethian

Fig. 4.16 Buddha statue at tank Shrine, Jethain

Fig. 4.17 Tank-shrine, Sumera

Fig. 4.18 Temple-tank, Amethi

Fig. 4.19 Tank northeast of Temple, Amethi

Fig. 4.20 Tanks along Monastic, and Sculptural Sites (Based on the Survey of
India Topographical Maps)

CHAPTER FIVE

Fig. 5.1 Distribution of Buddhist Monastic and Sculptural Sites (Based on the
Survey of India Topographical Maps)

Fig. 5.2 Distribution of Vaiṣṇava-Śaiva Sculpture in the Bodhgayā Region (Based on
the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

Fig. 5.3 Distribution of Buddhist Sites with Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava
Sculptures in the Bodhgayā Region (Based on the Survey of India
Topographical Maps)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I welcome the opportunity to acknowledge several people who have contributed to this work in many ways.

My sincere thanks go to my 'GURU', Research Supervisor, Dr. Daud Ali, for teaching me the basic nuances of history, and history-writing, and for always asking difficult questions. My discussions with him on uncountable occasions have shaped the questions that this thesis attempts to address. I am extremely grateful to him for enthusiastically listening to my 'half-baked' ideas and painstakingly going through various drafts. Without his persistent support, patience (reading and dealing with pottery), constant prodding (and scolding), this thesis wouldn't have been possible. His support over the last few years has ensured that this academic journey has been enjoyable and a great learning experience.

This thesis would not have been possible without the financial support provided by the Felix Scholarship Trust. I am grateful to the trustees for their generous support and for enabling me to undertake doctoral research at SOAS, London. I would also like to express my deep-felt gratitude for the extraordinary support that the Trust provided in September 2008 when I went through a serious crisis. My thanks also to the trustees of the Charles Wallace India Trust; the Leche Trust; the Northbrook Society; and the Hammond Trust; and Yusuf Ali Fund for timely and valuable help in the final stage of dissertation writing.

I am also grateful to Dr. Michael Willis for his guidance, support and exposure to the materials in the British Museum, London. He has patiently listened and answered all my queries in the last five years. Moreover, my discussions with him have proved invaluable for this work. He also visited me during my fieldwork in 2005-06 and provided many useful insights. I am also grateful to Dr. Avril Powell, Dr. Crispin Branfoot and other faculty members of the Department of History, SOAS for their advice and valuable suggestions from time to time. I would also like to thank Dr. Robert Harding for facilitating access to the Institute of Archaeology, UCL and its resources in my first year of research.

A number of scholars in India have provided valuable support during the course of this work. I would like to thank Dr. U. S. Moorti, Deputy-Director, Research, AIIS, Gurgaon for his guidance and enthusiastic responses to my queries

over a range of issues and Dr. B. K. Chaudhari, Director, KPJRI, Patna for providing useful insights over last few years. I am also grateful to Dr. Ajit Kumar Prasad, former Director, Directorate of Archaeology, Bihar for patiently looking at every piece of collected pottery, field photographs and providing valuable references. His experience and insights have been of tremendous help to this work. I am also thankful to Amol Ray, Supt. Archaeologist, Directorate of West Bengal Archaeology and Dr. Gautam Sengupta, Director, CASTEI, Kolkata for facilitating access to Jagjibbanpur excavation material and records. I have also benefitted from my interactions with a number of other scholars, Prof. Kunal Chakrabarti, Dr. Kumkum Roy, Prof. H. P. Ray, and Dr. Rohan D'Souza at the JNU, New Delhi, Dr. Vishwa Mohan Jha and Dr. D. Manjit at the Delhi University, Dr. A.Q. Ansari (at Magadh University), S. Dhammika (Singapore) and Dr. Arvind Mahajan (Patna Museum).

I am also thankful to the Archaeological Survey of India for permission to photograph materials at five site Museums - Bodhgayā, Nalanda, Vaishali, Kumrahar, and Sarnath. I also thank authorities at the National Museum at New Delhi, the Indian Museum at Kolkata, and Patna Museum and District museum at Gayā. I am also thankful to the Survey of India for providing access to topographical maps and Shekhar Mishra for procuring maps from Ranchi. I owe special thanks to Ishwar Singh, a friend from JNU, for introducing me to ARC-GIS and helping me in making the map database, Rajat Sanyal for patiently going through (and deciphering) inscriptions of the Bodhgayā region, and Pradeep Kumar (Munna bhai), Bhola Prasad (Bhola ka) and Yogendra kumar for assisting me in conducting archaeological survey during my fieldwork. I am also indebted to the residents of the surveyed villagers for providing access to accidental discoveries and warm welcome (and innumerable cups of *chai*).

I owe special thanks Dr. Akira Shimada for his valuable suggestions over last five years, Dr. G.V. Vaidyanatha (for reading parts) and Hemanth Kadambi (for discussions on archaeological method and reading parts), Dr. Matthew Sayers for sharing material and reading chapter five, Nina Dutra for reading chapter four, Prabhat Krishna for reading parts of this work, (and always raising controversial questions and being a great support in the hour of need) and Dr. Jason Neelis for going through parts of the draft.

A number of friends have contributed to my social well being in the last four and half years of stay in London. I would like to thank Saurabh and Saloni Gupta, Emma Flatt, Iqbal Singh Sevea, Prabhat Krishna, Pupul Dutta Prasad, George Kunnath, Shweta Sachdeva, Nitin Sinha, Paolo Novak, Prashant Sharma, Jayraj S. and Sripriya S., Jay Huwieler, Nina Dutra, Christian Wachsmuth, Sarai King, Ritesh Sarna, Maria Teresa, J. Pattenden, Lekshmi Nair, Alezzandra Mezzadri, Dharmendra K. Thakur, and Andrea Filipova for their camaraderie and friendship. I also take this opportunity to thank my friends from Delhi and Bihar, especially Amit Mishra, Pradeep Kumar, Kumar Sarvesh, Abhay Kumar, Samarendra and Shanta Singh, Gunjan Srivastava, Sudhir Sharma, Sanjay Kumar, Sandeep Mahapatra, and Sanjeev Mishra, for their companionship and throughout the period of this PhD and before.

Lastly, I am thankful to my family members for their constant support and encouragement. Anamika and Sushil Kumar, and Anupama and Kumar Jyoti have been great support during the course of this work and have extended all kinds of help. I would also like to thank R.K. Pandey for organising my visit to Karle and his support on numerous other occasions. They have seen me go through the ups and downs of the writing of this thesis.

I cannot complete this note of acknowledgement without expressing my heart-felt gratitude towards my parents, who have constantly supported my endeavours and decisions, even when I did not follow their plans and dreams. They have encouraged me and provided all that they could to help me in countless ways....

ABBREVIATIONS

ARASI	Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India
AV	Aśokāvadāna
BCt	Buddhacarita
BL	The British Library
BM	The British Museum
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum
CV	Cullavagga
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DN	Dīghā Nikāya
DV	Divyāvadāna
EI	Epigraphia Indica
GM	Gayā - Māhātmya
IA	Indian Antiquary
IAR	Indian Archaeology: A Review
IESHR	Indian Economic and Social History Review
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History
JAOS	Journal of the American oriental Society
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
JBORS	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society
JBPP	Journal of Bihar Puravid Parishad
JBRS	Journal of Bihar Research Society
JIABS	Journal of the International Association of the Buddhist Studies
JRAS	Journal of Royal Asiatic Society
LV	Lalitavistāra
MBh	Mahābhārata

MVt	Mahāvastu
MV	Mahāvagga
NBP Ware	Northern Black Polished ware
OUP	Oxford University Press
SAS	South Asian Studies

NOTES ON TRANSCRIPTIONS

The transliteration employed for words in Indic and other languages follow, as far as possible, the standard modern scholarly system. Diacritic marks have not been used for place names and other names. They have only been used for Sanskrit words, early Indian names (like Aśoka or Pāla) and for writing Bodhgayā and Gayā. For technical terms mentioned in historical texts or inscriptions, I use spelling in original documents. I have consistently tried to use the most common spelling for words and terms from inscriptions.

PART I: TEXT

Chapter-1 Introduction

The emergence of *śramaṇa* orders, particularly Buddhism, in the early historic Magadha region has been attested by the textual, epigraphic and archaeological evidence. In fact, scholars such as Romila Thapar have categorically suggested that Buddhism, which emerged in the sixth-fifth centuries BCE, was probably the dominant religious order in the early historic Magadha.¹ This contention of Thapar is based on the reporting of a number of Buddhist *stūpas*, and monastic sites from the early historic Magadha. Of all the Buddhist monastic and sacred sites of the Magadha region, Bodhgayā has been the preeminent site, being the life-event site of the Gotama Buddha. In fact, the ritual centre of Bodhgayā, which constitutes the subject of this study, was and still is considered the centre of the universe for Buddhists around the world.

Bodhgayā (Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 85° 0' E), a world heritage site, has been one of the most important and sacred Buddhist destinations in the contemporary world and is revered by Buddhists from every part of the world. Located in the Gayā district of the south Bihar region in India, Bodhgayā is the place where the Buddha attained enlightenment and is, in many ways, the *de facto* birthplace of the Buddhist religion. A number of early historic and early medieval remains such as the Bodhi seat, the railing-pillars and the Mahābodhi temple, more than two hundred sculptures, innumerable miniature stone *stūpas* and some fifty-six inscriptions, testify to the emergence of sacrality and ritual importance of Bodhgayā from the third century BCE and twelfth century CE.

The first inscriptional reference to the site of enlightenment comes from the Eighth Rock Edict from Girnar of Mauryan king Aśoka. This inscription states that Aśoka went to Saṃbodhi, the place of enlightenment, after he had been consecrated

¹ R. Thapar, 'Aśoka and Buddhism as Reflected in the Aśokan Edicts', in R. Thapar, ed., *Cultural Past: Essays in Early Indian History* (New Delhi, 2000), p. 423. A number of other scholars have also attested to the supremacy of Buddhism in south Bihar region. See also J. Bronkhorst, *Greater Magadha* (Leiden, 2007).

for ten years.² Though the Pāli canon places the site of enlightenment, under the Bodhi Tree, near Uruvela, Saṃbodhi is the term used to denote the site in the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta* of the *Dīghā Nikāya*. In the *Mahāparinibbāna sutta*, the place of enlightenment, along with the other three important life event sites – Lumbini (the place of birth), Sarnath (the place of first sermon), and Kusinagar (the place of *nirvāṇa*) are recommended as sacred pilgrimage sites.³ The archaeological and epigraphic records suggest the emergence of all four life-event sites as important pilgrimage locations from the time of the king Aśoka (c. 272-230 BCE). Aśoka's visit to Lumbini is recorded in the Rummindei Pillar inscription whereas a schism edict has been found from Sarnath. No inscriptional record has been found from Kusinagar.

From among this list of these four life-events sacred sites, Bodhgayā, somehow, began to emerge as the paradigmatic Buddhist centre from the early centuries of the Common Era. This new paradigmatic position was firstly reflected in the *Buddhacaritam*, a biography of the Buddha written between the first and second centuries CE, where the term used for the place of enlightenment is 'nabhirvasudhatala'.⁴ The term literally means 'the navel of the earth's surface' thereby meaning 'the centre of the Buddhist universe'. This new conception of the place is developed further in the later Buddhist accounts, when the place of enlightenment is termed and referred to as the '*Vajrāsana*', meaning the 'diamond-seat', which is placed at the centre of the earth core. This centrality of Bodhgayā has been attested also in the sculptural descriptions of '*vajra*' in a number of *bhūmisparśa mudrā* (earth-touching posture) Buddha sculptures. Visiting pilgrim monks from various Buddhist countries including Sri Lanka, China and Tibet, have testified to this centrality of Bodhgayā in their religious actions and travel accounts.⁵ The question then is: When and how did Bodhgayā emerge as the centre of Buddhist world? This question lead us to the basic (and a key) question about the emergence of Buddhism itself at Bodhgayā.

² D. C. Sircar, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* vol. I (Calcutta, 1965), p. 27.

³ Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīghā-Nikāya* (Boston, 1987), p. 263.

⁴ E. H. Johnston, trs., *The Buddhacaritam or Acts of the Buddha* (New Delhi, 1972, rpt.), pp. 200-201, verses 67-68.

⁵ Xuanzang and Dharmasvāmin attest to the centrality of Bodhgayā by providing a detailed description of the '*Vajrāsana*'. For details, see ch-1, section IV.2.

As noted earlier, Bodhgayā derives its importance being the place of enlightenment of the Buddha in the fifth-fourth centuries BCE. Previous scholarship has emphasised this fact about Bodhgayā and how this shaped the history of the place and Buddhism. But what also needs to be examined is the choice of this place by the Buddha for his enlightenment. Why did the Buddha decide to go to Bodhgayā? This question has been raised recently by two scholars in their respective works.

Bodhgayā is located 10 Kilometres south of the Gayā town (district headquarter) of south Bihar. The Gayā town is and has been an important Hindu pilgrimage centre – known primarily for the *śrāddha* (funerary/ancestor worship) ritual from the early centuries of the Common Era. This has led Robert DeCaroli to argue that the ancient Gayā area including Bodhgayā was a sacred centre because of its important links to spirit deities and the dead.⁶ By examining three Buddhist texts *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara* and *Nidānakathā*, all dated between the first and fifth centuries CE, DeCaroli attempts to link the biographical account of Sujāta's donation of milk-rice to the funerary ritual of *śrāddha*. Through this reading of the biographical narrative, he further emphasises the importance of Bodhgayā in terms of its associations with *śrāddha*, spirit deities and ancestor worship, which may have led the Buddha to Bodhgayā for his enlightenment.

Questioning this argument of DeCaroli, Matthew Sayers has analysed the ritual of *śrāddha* as explained in the early Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist texts. Sayers argues that there is no evidence to suggest that Gayā had any connection with *śrāddha* at the time of the Buddha and in fact Gayā begins to emerge as a place of *śrāddha* only from the early centuries of the Common Era.⁷ However, he does suggest that Gayā is mentioned eleven times in the Sutta literature and a few times in the Vinaya literature. And the analysis of these literary references suggests that Gayā was a sacred place – a place probably known for purificatory bath which attracted ascetics. This suggests that the Buddha may have been attracted to Gayā because of its general sanctity and its importance as a place frequented by ascetics.

⁶ Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 117-119.

⁷ Matthew R. Sayers, 'Lets Meet at Akṣayaṇa: Conjunction of Hindu and Buddhist Traditions at Bodhgayā', Paper presented at the 15th International Association of the Buddhist Studies Conference, Emory University, June 2008. I am thankful to Matthew R. Sayers for sharing a copy of his paper.

The Vinaya literature, *Mahāvagga*, also supports this argument by providing references to the fire-worshipping ascetics, Kaśyapa brothers, who lived in this region.⁸ The other biographical accounts of the Buddha also suggest that the first five disciples of the Buddha preceded him to Gayā, which may also be considered as supporting evidence. All the above suggested evidence are drawn from texts, most of which were composed at least four centuries later. Therefore, they may not provide a certain and complete explanation. Considering the fact that the area surrounding Bodhgayā temple complex has been excavated, it will be apt to examine the available archaeological evidence to include them within this discussion over the Buddha's choice of Bodhgayā for his enlightenment.

Taradih mound, located 20 metres west of the Mahābodhi temple complex, has been excavated for eleven seasons between 1980 and 1999 and contains the remains of a settlement site dated as early as the Neolithic period.⁹ The excavations have shown that Taradih may have been located on the bank of the river Niranjana, which since has moved 200 metres east. The excavations have revealed a Neolithic settlement (c. 1500 BCE) which continued through the Pāla period (c. 1200 CE).¹⁰ Though the mound has not been excavated completely, the partial excavation has suggested that the settlers of Neolithic (c. 1500-1000 BCE), Chalcolithic (c. 1000-650 BCE) and Iron age period were involved in farming and craft production. Apart from growing a number of crops such as rice (wild and domesticated), barley, wheat, lentils (grass-peas, horse gram, *masur*, and other), they also relied on hunting and fishing (proved by findings of fish-hook and other implements). The fishing also showed the reliance of the settlers on the Niranjana river, at least in the rainy season. The above details, drawn from the Taradih excavations, suggest a number of possibilities - which may have played a role in the decision of the Buddha to choose Bodhgayā as the place of enlightenment.

⁸ I. B. Horner, trs., *The Book of Discipline* vol. IV (Oxford, 193, rpt.), pp. 32-46. Though the Vinaya literature was probably composed in the last centuries BCE, the first few chapters of the *Mahāvagga*, dealing with the biographical account after enlightenment, may have existed in some form in the second-first centuries BCE. For a detailed description of the Buddha's meeting with the Kaśyapa brothers and their conversions, see MV.I. 15-20.

⁹ A. K. Prasad, 'Excavations at Taradih', *IAR* (1987-88), pp. 9-11.

¹⁰ Though A.K. Prasad pushes the date of Neolithic Taradih to the third millennium BCE, it is difficult to accept these dates. So far, no radiocarbon dates have been obtained for the site. See, Prasad, 'Taradih', p. 9. For a detailed discussion of the chronological issues, see also chapter-Three, section - III.2.

The first and foremost of this may have been the proximate location of the site of the enlightenment to the settlement for ensuring supply of food and other resources for his own sustenance. Secondly, the settlement, though located at a distance from Gayā, was located on a trade route and definitely connected to other settlements. The intra-settlement connection has been proved by the findings of copper-slag and iron-slag from pre-sixth century BCE as none of these metals are available locally.¹¹ This is further supported by the findings of beads of agate, jasper, carnelian and steatite. The fact that the Buddha spent six years in the area may have provided him an opportunity to interact with the settlement on a regular basis and develop a social following. With regards the sacrality of the place, several fire-pits were revealed in excavation, which has cited by A. K. Prasad to argue for the presence of fire-worshippers at the site. Simultaneously, the excavations have also revealed *nāga* figurines, suggesting that there may have been *nāga*-worship in the region.¹² Though it is difficult to attribute any specific reason for the Buddha's decision to choose Bodhgayā for his enlightenment; the above cited factors definitely suggest that a combination of these factors may have been played a role in his decision.

The Buddha's enlightenment at Bodhgayā in the fifth century BCE led to the emergence of the place as an important Buddhist shrine in the early historic period, and its subsequent growth as a major Buddhist monastic centre in the early India. This dissertation will, therefore, attempt to examine the processes that led to the emergence of Buddhism at Bodhgayā and its subsequent growth in the early India. However, before taking up this study, it is necessary to provide a brief background to the researches on Bodhgayā.

The nineteenth century discovery of Bodhgayā as the paradigmatic Buddhist site led to the production of a number of research works on the history of the site. But the studies have been far from straightforward due to subsequent historical developments. Firstly, there were serious disputes between the Buddhists, as represented by the Mahābodhi Society of India, and the Śaiva Giri abbots (*Mahanth*), who controlled the Mahābodhi temple and surrounding area of Bodhgayā from the

¹¹ Prasad, 'Taradih', p. 10.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 10. Considering that the various versions of the biography of the Buddha suggest a strong link between the Buddha and *Nāga* Mucalinda, the region may have had a strong *nagā*-cult. This *nāga* cult was appropriated and reformulated within the early Buddhism, as represented by the pillar railings at Bodhgayā and several other Buddhist sites.

seventeenth century CE onwards.¹³ Secondly, the discovery of the site and its sacred importance motivated the Burmese Buddhists to undertake restoration, which unfortunately led to the extensive destruction of archaeological evidence. However, this restoration was stopped later and an archaeological survey team was given the responsibility of clearing and excavating the site. The new restoration that followed was also based on the account of the Chinese pilgrims, which continues to be '*the framework*' for modern visitors. Unfortunately, it also led to further destruction of evidence. All of this damage may be attributed to the nature of early archaeology, the focus of which was on establishing historical chronology and validating textual accounts. These early studies established a particular way of studying Buddhist sites and structures, which has a continuing effect on the study of Buddhism in contemporary scholarship.

Before commencing this study, I will examine the early surveys and the subsequent historiography to demonstrate the limitations of existing studies on Bodhgayā. Toward this aim, the introductory chapter is divided into three parts. First, I will trace the process of discovery and the early excavations of the site in order to clarify how these early works affected subsequent studies. Secondly, I will examine the former historiography of the site and outline its methodological problems. And lastly, I will propose possible approaches to overcome these problems.

I. Discovery of Bodhgayā and Early Works

Though William Daniell visited the area and painted the ruins of the Mahābodhi temple in 1790, Francis Hamilton Buchanan was the first British civil servant to write a detailed account of the ruins of Bodhgayā.¹⁴ Buchanan, while on a mission to Burma in 1795, had learnt about Buddhism and used this knowledge extensively in his report on Bodhgayā.¹⁵ He described it as the place where the Buddha was born and lived in

¹³ For a detailed study of the contestation over the site, see Alan Trevithick, *The Revival of Buddhist Pilgrimage at Bodh Gayā (1811-1949): Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahābodhi Temple* (New Delhi, 2006); also see Tara N. Doyle, 'Bodh Gayā: Journeys to the Diamond Throne and the Feet of Gayāsur', (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997).

¹⁴ For Daniell's tour of the area and painting, see Mildred Archer, *Early Views of India* (London, 1980). For Buchanan's report, see F. H. Buchanan, *An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 1811-12*, ed. by John F. W. James (Patna, 1934).

¹⁵ For details on Buchanan's visit to Burma and his interest in Buddhism, see Doyle, *Bodh Gayā*, pp. 62-82. See also, Charles Allen, *The Buddha and the Sahibs* (London, 2002), pp. 79-80. Buchanan also

the sixth century BCE and mentioned the construction of the Mahābodhi temple by the king Aśoka and also that Buddhism was a flourishing religion in India until the time of the Pāla kings.¹⁶ Buchanan's report was followed by two more reports – the first by one of the pundits under Colonel Mackenzie, Sri Nivasia, in 1822, and the second by Markham Kittoe, who was appointed an Archaeological surveyor in 1846.¹⁷ Sri Nivasia briefly mentioned the performance of Hindu rituals at Bodhgayā whereas Kittoe reported a few sculptures and their dates from the site.

The most important phase for the study of Bodhgayā began in 1861, when Sir Alexander Cunningham was appointed as the surveyor-general of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI, hereafter). Cunningham, realising the importance and potential of the site for the study of early Indian Buddhism, visited it several times (1861, 1871, 1875-78 and 1880-81) in the next two decades. Cunningham intended to focus on early Buddhism, which according to him, dominated the early history of India but was hardly known in the nineteenth century. This had propelled him to excavate Sarnath (1833-34), survey Sankisa (1843), explore Sanchi and Bharhut (1850s), and write a book on the *stūpa* of Bharhut (1854) which also covered the general history of Buddhism in early India. His knowledge of Buddhism and subsequent researches were further aided by the English translations of the travel accounts of Faxian (1836) and Xuanzang (1858) as he extensively relied on these two texts to explore and examine Buddhist sites.¹⁸ In fact, he attempted to link actual findings with the textual accounts to identify a number of sites in the south Bihar region, such as the site of Dharawat as Guṇamati vihāra and Kauwa-dol as Śīlabhadra-vihāra.¹⁹

Based on these two Chinese travel accounts, Cunningham explored further parts of north and central India including the south Bihar region, where he reported a

reports about the visit of two Burmese pilgrims who were sent by the Burmese king to offer worship to Bodhgayā. This seems to suggest that the site was visited from time to time by Burmese and other pilgrims. However, we have no other evidence to substantiate this.

¹⁶ Buchanan, *Bihar*, p. 149.

¹⁷ For Sri Nivasia's report, see 'Extracts from the Journal of Colonel Colin Mackenzie's Pandit of his route from Calcutta to Gayā', *IA*, vol. 31 (1902), pp. 62-75. For Kittoe's report, see M. Kittoe, 'Notes on the Sculptures of Bodh Gayā', *JASB*, vol. 16, part 1 (1847), pp. 334-339.

¹⁸ For Faxian's account, see A. M. Remusat, Kalproth, and Landresse, *Foe Koue Ki or Relation Des Royaumes Bouddhiques* (Paris, 1836). For Xuanzang's account, see S. Julien, *Memoires sur Les Contrees Occidentales* (Paris, 1858). Subsequently, these works were also translated into English by James Legge and Samuel Beal.

¹⁹ For details on the link between the Chinese travel accounts and Cunningham's route, see Janice Leoshko, *Sacred Traces: British Exploration of Buddhism in India* (Aldershot, 2003).

number of Buddhist sites. And indeed his survey of Bodhgayā heralded further research. In 1863-64, the first excavation was carried out at the site by Major Mead, but no report of his excavations was published. R. L. Mitra also visited Bodhgayā during Mead's excavation in 1863 to examine the architecture of the temple. Other scholars who examined the temple included T. F. Peppe (of the Opium Department) and C. H. Horne. Peppe prepared a photographic documentation of the temple, and sent copies to the Asiatic society in 1865.²⁰ Horne was more interested in the architectural study of the temple and he also made a few drawings of it, which have not been traced yet.²¹

In 1876, the king of Burma deputed three of his officers to superintend repairs to the temple complex. 'These officers, with the permission of the local Śaiva *Mahanth*, cleared away a large space around the temple, built an enclosing wall, renewed the retaining walls of the terrace of the temple, re-plastered its interiors, and took some steps for preserving the sacred Bodhi tree.'²² In the course of their clearance of the place, they excavated a number of structures which revealed a multitude of loose sculptures, miniature stone *stūpas*, friezes, and impressions of sacred feet. They built these remains into new walls. This clearance entailed massive destruction at the site. When this destructive modernisation was brought to the notice of the then secretary of the Government of Bengal, Sir Stuart Bayley, he appointed R. L. Mitra as a consultant to oversee the repairs without causing any damage to the temple and the site.²³ Mitra guided the Burmese reconstruction and used his visit to examine the site. Subsequently, he published the first book on the history of Bodhgayā in 1878.

The Burmese clearance prompted Cunningham to revisit the site to examine recently exposed remains in 1879. He was quite dissatisfied by the work and wrote, 'that the Burmese clearance had not been carried deep enough to expose the more

²⁰ 'Extracts of letter from Mr. T. F. Peppe, *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*', *JRAS*, vol. 34, part 1 (1865), p. 80. And *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, *JRAS*, vol. 40, part 1 (1871), pp. 251-276, photo numbers 32-39.

²¹ C. H. Horne, 'Notes on the Buddha Gayā Temple', *JASB*, vol. 34, part 1 (1865), pp. 132-139.

²² R. L. Mitra, *Buddha Gayā: The Great Buddhist Temple* (Calcutta, 1878, rpt. 1972), preface, p. iii.

²³ Mitra has described the instructions given regarding his role, which was to prevent any injury to the existing temple and preserve the antiquities, which were being stuck to the walls by the Burmese. Cunningham, later in his drawings, rubbishes the plastering of the temple chamber undertaken by the Burmese officials. See Mitra, *Budha Gayā*, p. iii-iv.

ancient monuments which still existed on or near the original level of the ground on which the Temple was built. The clearances had not been made with any discrimination. Everything was removed as it became exposed'.²⁴ Cunningham's critical report prompted Sir Ashley Eden, the Lt. Governor of Bengal, to appoint Mr. J. D. Beglar (one of Cunningham's assistants in the ASI) to undertake a clearance and thorough repair of the whole building in 1880, which continued until 1885. Both these rounds of clearance and restoration work resulted in the destruction of the archaeological context and stratigraphic layers of all the remains, and led to the loss of the archaeological context of the site forever. As a consequence of the loss of archaeological evidence, scholars over the last 150 years have had to study the development of the site primarily on the basis of art-historical remains.

II. Historiography of the site

Since the early restoration was carried out under the supervision of Cunningham, his research of the site and later publication of a book on Bodhgayā dominated the way in which the site was studied in subsequent works. Therefore, I will briefly examine the framework adopted by Cunningham. Cunningham made a detailed map of the site relying entirely on the description of Xuanzang, which he attempted to confirm through his excavation (Fig. 1.1).²⁵ This restoration, therefore, was based on the assumption that Xuanzang (and Faxian) provided an accurate account of the site during their respective visits. However, a careful analysis of both the accounts suggests a strong element of textual borrowing by both the pilgrims. For example, Xuanzang's account seems to borrow many legends from the Sanskrit biographical text, *Lalitavistara*.²⁶ Secondly, the legendary description and the proclaimed 100 feet height of every *stūpa* being erected by Aśoka also suggest the religious colouring of Xuanzang's account. Indeed, in Xuanzang's account, the construction of every big

²⁴ A. Cunningham, *Mahābodhi: The Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gayā* (London, 1892), preface, p. v. Cunningham specifically mentions that many of the hemispherical domes of the row of early votive *stūpas* were thrown down during the Burmese clearance. However, many of these stone hemispheres were restored to their original *stūpas*, the remains of which had not been disturbed during the repair work at Bodhgayā.

²⁵ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, plate XVIII. Before Cunningham, Mitra also attempted a similar map of Bodhgayā based on Xuanzang's description. See Mitra, *Buddha Gayā*, plate II.

²⁶ As the *Lalitavistāra* was translated in Chinese in c. 308 CE, the text must have travelled to China in the second or third centuries CE.

stūpa has been attributed to King Aśoka, as he was represented in Buddhist literature (*Aśokāvadāna*) as the most celebrated Buddhist king. Therefore, Xuanzang's perception, being a Buddhist monk, must have been guided by his Buddhist faith and training. Cunningham, by accepting the travel account at face value, actually replicated the vision of the Xuanzang, which was in turn based on Buddhist texts. This filtered vision, combined with the prevalent textual framework of studies on Buddhism, became the dominant paradigm within which the archaeological data from Bodhgayā continued to be interpreted in later research.

The most glaring example of this legacy is that apart from the first monumentalisation of the site, the origin of three Buddhist *stūpas* at Bodhgayā has been attributed to king Aśoka. Cunningham also credits him for constructing the Bodhi seat, the jewelled walk, railings and a Buddhist shrine at the site. The Bodhi seat was the platform at the base of the Bodhi tree whereas the jewelled walk, made of red sandstone, is located to the north of the Mahābodhi temple within the complex. Cunningham's understandings of the paradigmatic role of king Aśoka in the construction of a Buddhist shrine at Bodhgayā and a number of other Buddhist monuments in early historic India seems to stem from the textual accounts, particularly the ones provided in the *Aśokāvadāna* (a text dated to the first-second centuries CE) and the account of Xuanzang. The legacy of this understanding is also visible in the dating of almost all the Buddhist *stūpas* in the Magadha region, including the Bakror *stūpa*, to Aśoka. Another major legacy of Cunningham has been the emphasis on the royal patronage in the development of Bodhgayā.

In fact, the Aśokan dates of Bodhi seat, the jewelled-walk and pillars suggested by Cunningham have been subsequently studied, and most of the scholars have generally agreed to the Aśokan dating of the Bodhi seat and the jewelled-walk in last hundred years. The dates suggested for the Bodhi seat and the jewelled-walk need to be re-examined in the light of new research on the early historic period as many of the objects found from the seat have been dated to a much later period in recent research.²⁷

²⁷ This point is substantiated by the established dates for the Kuṣāṇa kings as a copy of the gold coin of the Kuṣāṇa king Huiṣka (c. 150-190 CE) was found from excavated layers of the seat. For details, see Hary Falk, 'The yuga of Sphujiddhvaja and the era of the Kuṣāṇas', *Silk Route Art and Archaeology*, vol. 7 (2001), pp. 32-68.

The railing pillars have been critically examined by a number of scholars, such as T. Block (1908-09), J. Marshall (1922), L. Bachofer (1929), B. M. Barua (1931-34), A. Coomaraswamy (1935), P. Stern (1954), R. P. Chandra (1971) and K. K. Chakravarty (1994).²⁸ The most recent work on the pillar railings has been by K. K. Chakravarty, who has questioned the Aśokan dating of the railing-pillars and jewelled walk.²⁹ Chakravarty has compared the sculptures on the railing pillars from the site to that of the Bharhut and Sanchi and suggested that the Bodhgayā style closely resembled the ones at Sanchi. By analysing formal elements such as plasticity, contours, undercutting, representations of the different parts of body, the drapery or ornament and method of narration including details within a panel, he has suggested that the Bodhgayā railings were constructed much later than the Bharhut ones and were probably contemporary to the Sanchi ones. Since the dates for the Bharhut has been mid-second century BCE, he has proposed a new date (c. 75-25 BCE) for the Bodhgayā railing-pillars.

Another major structure to draw attention from the nineteenth century has been the Mahābodhi temple itself (Fig. 1.2). Cunningham first suggested its date around c. 500 CE based on three factors – the first was the non-existence of any temple at the time of Faxian's visit in c. 400 CE, the second, a record of the erection of a large temple by Amarasimha in c. 500 CE, and the third was the exact agreement of the existing complex with Xuanzang's description.³⁰ Subsequently, basing their information on a study of the architectural pattern of the temple, especially arches and the design of the inner chamber and plaster, a number of scholars such as Mr. T. F. Peppe, Mr. C. H. Horne, James Ferguson and Rajendralala Mitra attempted to date the temple.³¹ Fergusson argued for a fourteenth-century date, whereas Mitra, Horne and Peppe concurred with Cunningham's date which they substantiated by their respective studies of arches and other architectural features. Mitra emphatically argued for the

²⁸ For a detailed historiography of the railings and jeweled-walk, see K. K. Chakravarty, *Early Buddhist Art of Bodh-Gayā* (New Delhi, 1997), pp. 10-29. See also B. M. Barua, *Gayā and Buddha Gayā* vol. II (Calcutta, 1931), pp. 66-67. Barua, based on the study of inscriptions and stylistic analysis, was the first scholar to suggest the first century BCE date for the railing pillars at the site. However, the issue was never settled as reflected in the historiography section of Chakravarty's monograph.

²⁹ Chakravarty, *Buddhist Art*, p. 58.

³⁰ A. Cunningham, *Four Reports Made During the Years 1862-63-64-65* (New Delhi, 2000 rpt.), pp. 9-10.

³¹ For a detailed historiography of the site, see Mitra, *Buddha Gayā*, p. V.

construction of the temple in the sixth century CE.³² However, Cunningham later revised his date for the construction of the temple to c. 140 CE in his later work on Bodhgayā.³³ This new date was based on an updated reading of Faxian's account and the finding of relics, including a copy of a coin of the reign of Kuṣāṇa king Huiṣka and silver punch-marked coins from the Bodhi seat. However, Cunningham's argument was challenged by Barua, Prudence Myers and G. H. Malendra, who have made a case for a much later date.³⁴ This issue about the construction of the Mahābodhi temple remains unresolved as of now.³⁵

The constructions of the Bodhi seat in the third century BCE, railing pillars in the first century BCE, and the Mahābodhi temple in the sixth century CE have been considered, in early research, as representing three major phases of the emergence and growth of Bodhgayā. Because of the focus on early Buddhism, scholars continued to focus on these three phases whereas the post-sixth century development of the site did not receive adequate attention. However, this bias has been questioned by a number of scholars including Janice Leoshko.³⁶ She has shown how early medieval Bodhgayā witnessed tremendous growth and religious action, as represented by hundreds of sculptures, miniature stone *stūpas*, and inscriptions. Her assertion is further supported by the considerable presence of Sri Lankan monks as well as visits by Chinese and Burmese monks, as attested by the reference to the construction of a Sri Lankan monastery and the availability of three Burmese and five Chinese inscriptions.³⁷ The presence of monks from these countries affirms the centrality of Bodhgayā in this period. The increased importance of the site, as apparent in the massive growth during the early medieval period, has led Leoshko to argue that this phase was as important as the early historic period. Indeed the early medieval period becomes all the more

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 101-115. See also A. Cunningham, *Reports for the Years 1871-72* (New Delhi, 2000, rpt.), p. 100.

³³ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, preface, p. vii.

³⁴ P. R. Myer, 'The Great Buddhist Temple at Bodhgayā', *Art Bulletin*, vol. 40, no. 4 (1958), pp. 277-298; also see G. H. Malandra, 'The Mahābodhi Temple', in J. Leoshko, ed., *Bodh Gayā: The Site of Enlightenment* (Bombay, 1988), pp. 10-28.

³⁵ For a detailed discussion on this issue, see Janice Leoshko, 'On the Construction of a Buddhist Pilgrimage Site', *Art History*, vol. 19, no. 4 (1996), pp. 573-596. Leoshko has provided a detailed account of the debate over the date of the temple and how Cunningham's legacy has played an important role in the previous attempts to settle for a date.

³⁶ J. Leoshko, 'The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures of the Pāla and Sena periods from Bodhgayā', (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1987).

³⁷ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 67-77.

significant because of the impressive growth of Buddhism in the Magadha as represented by the emergence and growth of a number of new monastic centres there like Nalanda, Odantpuri, and Vikramśilā as well as the growth of a local school of sculpture, which has resulted in voluminous production of imagery in almost every part of the Magadha.³⁸ Simultaneously, the period also witnessed the emergence of Brāhmaṇical orders like Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in neighbouring Gayā, the impact of which is yet to be examined.

The availability of sculptural remains from early medieval Bodhgayā and its surrounding region has been studied by Fredrick Asher and Susan Huntington in the 1970s and 80s.³⁹ Their survey of sculptural (and architectural) material from Bodhgayā and other monastic and sculptural sites from the region has been a valuable contribution. Asher focuses on sculptures between the c. 300-800 CE whereas Huntington has examined the Pāla and Sena periods. Both these works, based on the comparative stylistic analysis of the sculptures, have helped trace the iconographic development and have provided the benchmarks for dating the sculptures from the region. I have relied extensively on both these works to date the sculptures from the region. Subsequently, Leoshko's study of the Bodhgayā sculptures has also helped study the iconographic developments as well as the evolving religious practices at the site. The most recent work, in this field, is a study of the art-historical remains, housed in the Museum of Indian Art at Berlin by Claudine Bautze-Picron.⁴⁰ Her study includes the examination of iconography and other features of Buddhist, Hindu and Jain images apart from the stela, votive *stūpas* and architectural materials to suggest their dates. Her work adds new information to the existing material and provides new frame work to probably examine materials kept in various museums of the world. Almost all the above mentioned works have focused primarily on sculpture, architecture, and the other archaeological residues within the main temple-complex at Bodhgayā.

³⁸ Sculptural remains have been reported from the site from the Gupta period onwards. The study of sculptures has provided much information on the emergence of local style and the flourishing sculptural phase at the site and its neighboring region between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE.

³⁹ For a study of sculpture at Bodhgayā and in the south Bihar region, see F. M. Asher, *The Art of Eastern India*, (Minneapolis, 1980); S. L. Huntington, *The 'Pāla-Sena' Schools of Sculpture* (Leiden, 1984).

⁴⁰ Claudine Bautze-Picron, *The Art of eastern India in the Collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin* (Berlin, 1998).

III. Methodological Problems

In short, we may say that former studies approached Bodhgayā in two ways. Firstly, the site has been considered as consisting of numerous art-historical and a few inscriptional remains. Despite the loss of the archaeological contexts of these remains, many scholars have attempted to reconstruct the different phases of development of Bodhgayā, mostly from the discipline of art history. They have analysed the materials according to their discipline, chiefly by the employment of formalistic and stylistic comparisons against the backdrop of epigraphic analysis and textual evidence. They have also identified the themes of narratives for understanding the detailed meaning of sculptures. Secondly, the emergence and growth of the site has often been attributed to royalty, an interpretation that continues to dominate the study of sacred sites more generally in the middle - Ganga valley.

There are three methodological problems with these approaches. Firstly, though scholars have made attempts to document the chronological growth of the site, they have failed to examine the development of other sacred structures in and around Bodhgayā such as the Bakror *stūpa* or DUNGESHWARI *stūpas*. Further, no attempt has been made to link these developments with the growth of the Bodhi tree shrine at Bodhgayā. Similarly, the larger ideological framework which guided the emergence and growth of the sacred shrine at and around Bodhgayā has not been examined at all. The scholars have used a number of texts to prepare the chronology and analyse art narratives. In doing so, they have employed anachronistic methodology by using much later texts like the *Lalitavistara* or *Aśokāvadāna*, to study the historical and archaeological development of the site in an earlier period.

The second problem is that Bodhgayā has been treated in geographical isolation from the surrounding area due to the site/monument-centric approach. Previous works have failed to take into account the surrounding area of the sacred site, and the site's wider social and religious milieu has not been investigated. The interpretation of a site detached from its immediate socio-political context ignores the interaction between the Buddhist monks, who controlled the site, and the local populace. For example, a discussion of settlement of Taradih and its relation to Bodhgayā may help in exploring the local links between a settlement and a Buddhist monastery. It can also help uncover the spatial linkages between a settlement and a

monastic/sacred site. Unfortunately, the excavation of Taradih has not been completed despite being under process for more than 29 years and a complete report of the partial excavation of Taradih is yet to be published.

The third problem relates to the spread of Buddhism to the larger region. Cunningham and many other scholars have reported a number of settlement and Buddhist monastic sites in the Gayā district. Except Taradih and Sonepur, none of these settlements have been excavated or examined. As the excavation of these two sites have shown their Neolithic and Chalcolithic origins respectively, an examination of the other settlement sites of the region may help us develop a spatial and temporal understanding of settlement history of the region. A similar examination of monastic centres may help us develop a spatial-temporal matrix of their emergence and development. This is also necessary to undo the biased understanding of Buddhism as an urban religion based on the patronage of urban classes. This understanding has emerged due to the textual emphasis as well as major focus on the excavation of monastic sites in proximity of an urban or major sacred centre. Smaller monastic centres, though reported, have hardly been studied. The examination of smaller monastic centres may help elucidate their linkages with the settlements and subsequently map the process of the spread of Buddhism in the settlements of the region surrounding Bodhgayā.

The works of Asher, Huntington and Leoshko have helped examine the early medieval linkages by studying the images and sculptural tradition. However, these links may have emerged much earlier, given the frequent movement of Buddhist monks within the south Bihar region. Therefore, an analysis of the monastic and shrine centres can also provide insights into the evolving nature of Buddhism as well as its impact on the larger area over a long span of time.

The second and third problems underline the neglect of the larger socio-economic and political contexts. Despite the availability of substantial evidence, nothing is known about the social or political background of Bodhgayā or other sites in the region. Nor do we know anything about the economic status of the settlements or the monasteries. This is further illustrated by the fact that Bodhgayā, which continued for almost fifteen hundred years as one of the most sacred sites of Buddhism, has only fifty-six surviving inscriptions. These inscriptions hardly explain

the process that helped the monks sustain themselves. Therefore, the historical context of Bodhgayā remains unclear and unexamined.

IV. Possible Approaches

The above historiography of Bodhgayā indicates a complete lack of understanding of its archaeological context as well as the larger historical context, a problem that pervades the study of all the major early historic archaeological sites. A few studies, undertaken in recent years at early historic sites like Sanchi, Thotlakonda, Amaravati and Udayagiri have addressed these issues.⁴¹ These studies have employed a number of strategies to examine the emergence and growth of these sacred sites. Most crucially, these scholars have adopted an inter-disciplinary method to bring together the existing knowledge about the site and its material remains. This is best demonstrated in the study of Udayagiri by Michael Willis, who has drawn from a number of fields - epigraphy, iconology, ethnography, textual study and landscape archaeology - to develop a dynamic model to study the historical growth of Udayagiri. Using this methodology, the following approaches may be considered to study the emergence and sustenance of Bodhgayā.

IV.1 Reconstruction of the Sacred Landscape

With regards to the question of the emergence of the sacred landscape of Buddhist sites, a number of studies have been undertaken in recent years. As mentioned earlier, most of the early sites have art-historical remains and very short/fragmentary inscriptions. Previously, scholars have used later texts to analyse these remains and have interpreted inscriptions in light of the texts. Schopen has successfully pointed to the limitations of such an approach and made a distinction between 'ideal Buddhism'

⁴¹ For Udayagiri, see Michael D. Willis, *The Archaeology of Early Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of Gods* (Cambridge, 2009); for Thotlakonda, see Lars Fogelin, *Archaeology of Early Buddhism* (Altamira, 2006); for Sanchi, see Julia Shaw, 'The Sacred Geography of Sanchi Hill: the Archaeological Setting of Buddhist Monasteries in Central India', (PhD disst., University of Cambridge, 2002); for Amaravati, see Akira Shimada, 'A Study of the Amaravati *Stūpa* The Chronology and Social Context of an Early historic Buddhist Site in the Lower Krishna Valley', (PhD disst., University of London, 2005).

as reflected in the texts and the 'practices' of Buddhism.⁴² On the contrary, he has successfully given a new direction to the study of Buddhism by interpreting textual descriptions in the light of inscriptional remains. Taking this framework further, Walters has suggested a methodology to bring together the textual, archaeological and epigraphic remains of any particular period to study the prevalent ideological frame or 'discourse'.⁴³ This discourse was the product of the simultaneous growth of texts, structures and inscriptions at any early Buddhist site. Therefore, an analysis of the 'discourse' of a particular time may help in examining the ideological framework which guided the growth of a site. Also inspired by Schopen's work, Fogelin has brought the textual study of generalised perceptions of landscape in early Buddhism together with the specific archaeological landscape of Thotlakonda.⁴⁴ This approach has helped him in demonstrating a closer interaction between the monastic centre and its immediate surroundings in terms of ritual usage, thereby producing a more dynamic understanding of the emergence of the sacred landscape by identifying the social meanings and ritual usages of Thotlakonda.

As mentioned earlier, Bodhgayā has structural and epigraphic remains from the second-first centuries BCE to the twelfth century CE. It has also been discussed in a number of early Buddhist texts, being a life-event site of the Buddha. Therefore, the references of Bodhgayā and its immediate surroundings in Buddhist texts may be analysed in tandem with the contemporary art-historical and epigraphic remains. This may further be combined with archaeological fieldwork in the surrounding area of Bodhgayā to reconstruct the sacred landscape and its immediate context as it evolved over time. Moreover, we may also carefully examine the photographs and drawings of the site from the nineteenth century to extract any information about 'lost' archaeological context.

⁴² G. Schopen, 'Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism', in *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Hawaii, 1997), pp. 1-22.

⁴³ J. S. Walters, 'Stūpa, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India', in J. Schober, ed., *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 1997), pp. 160-192.

⁴⁴ Fogelin, *Archaeology*, p.79.

IV.2 Contextualisation of the Site

To understand the development of Buddhism as reflected in the growth of Bodhgayā and its relationship with the wider social context, it is necessary to examine the historical growth of a wider geographical area. For doing so, it is imperative to collect relevant contemporary archaeological and epigraphic data, and then locate the site within this larger picture. James Heitzman has attempted to study archaeological and epigraphic data from various Buddhist sites and their immediate surroundings in order to analyse the linkages between the monastic sites and their wider socio-economic contexts in the early historic period.⁴⁵ Similarly, H. P. Ray has also explored the historical contexts of Buddhist monastic sites in the Deccan region by examining the archaeological and epigraphical data in the wider region.⁴⁶

This attempt to contextualise a Buddhist site to study its linkages with the wider context has been taken further by two studies on two early historic Buddhist sites – Amaravati and Sanchi. In his study of the Amaravati *stūpa*, which is located next to an important early historic urban centre of Dharanikota, Shimada has attempted to contextualise the *stūpa* within its localised socio-economic and political frame and has argued for the growth and sustenance of *stūpa* through its local social support. He has demonstrated the role of Buddhist monasteries in promoting trade and other economic activities, which brought the monastic community in close contact with the local trading community, subsequently resulting in economic support for the Buddhist establishment.

In her study of Sanchi, Julia Shaw has attempted to place the monastic centre in its local and larger regional settings. By an extensive survey of 725 square kilometres around Sanchi, she has documented a number of monastic and settlement sites there dating to the late centuries BCE and early centuries CE.⁴⁷ She has filled in the gaps in the 'Buddhist landscape' of Sanchi by reporting a number of new monastic and *stūpa* sites as well as new settlements, rock shelters, water-resource structures and non-Buddhist ritual locations. Many of these newly reported monastic centres were

⁴⁵ James Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire', in K. A. R. Kennedy and G. L. Possehl, eds., *Studies in the Archaeology and Paleoanthropology of South Asia* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 121-132.

⁴⁶ H. P. Ray, *Monastery and Guilds: Commerce under the Sāvāhanas* (Delhi, 1986).

⁴⁷ Julia Shaw, *Buddhist Landscape in Central India: Sanchi Hill and Archaeologies of Religious and Social Change, c. Third Century BC to Fifth Century AD* (London, 2007), p. 19.

village and forest monastic communities, which have hardly been given any consideration in the study of early Buddhist monasticism in India.

The documentation of monasteries and settlements has also helped Shaw in positing the settlements and monastic sites as constituents of an early historic complex. Based on the study of temporal and spatial context of settlements and monastic sites, she has mapped the settlement patterns and the growth of monastic institutions in the larger geographical area. This has provided Shaw with empirical data to assess the nature of social and economic interaction between *saṅgha* and local lay population (beyond the framework of inscriptions and monastic chronologies).⁴⁸ Shaw in fact has also highlighted the role of the *saṅgha* in promoting the economic development of the region by introducing and spreading an irrigation mechanism to promote rice-cultivation, which subsequently helped *saṅgha* in developing a social base. This subsequently supported the *saṅgha* with adequate resources for the subsistence of a large monastic community as well as the monumentalisation of Buddhist structures at Sanchi. This model has challenged the existing understanding of the monks-laity relationship and emphasised a much closer symbiotic relationship between Buddhist monastic centres and their immediate social context.

Shaw and Shimada's works have challenged the text based understanding of linkages between the *saṅgha* and laity. Both these works, by demonstrating the growth of the *saṅgha* in two different regions through the *saṅgha*'s proactive role in promoting socio-economic activities, provide a new framework. Both these works have convincingly shown the processes through which the Buddhist *saṅgha* managed to develop a local social sustenance base in a new geographical setting. Methodologically, I have drawn from both these studies in an attempt to contextualise the Buddhist *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā within its wider setting, and examine their social sustenance base.

The major difference between these studies is that these two sites are far away from the middle - Ganga valley, unlike Bodhgayā. Bodhgayā is supposed to have a much earlier beginning as a sacred site. This assertion is largely based on the textual accounts, which needs to be critically examined. Moreover, being a life-event site, Bodhgayā is far more complex as it is often discussed and represented in a number of

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 259.

Buddhist texts and biographies. These accounts inform us about the perception of the site within the Buddhist texts and community. Therefore, it becomes pertinent to include Buddhist texts and biographies along with archaeological and epigraphic data in a study of Bodhgayā and its sacred landscape.

Shaw in her study has dealt with the interaction of Buddhism with other local and regional cults during the process of 'localisation' of the *saṅgha*. This issue of religious interaction between Buddhism, Jainism and other early historic local cults has been widely researched in the early historic Magadha. However, what remains unexplored is the emergence of Brāhmanical orders such as Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, and the challenges that these orders posed to Buddhism. This dissertation therefore will address the issue of inter-religious dynamics in the early medieval Bodhgayā to explain the processes that helped the Buddhist *saṅgha* to maintain its dominance in the region.

To address all the above raised questions, it will be useful to undertake an archaeological survey of the wider region around Bodhgayā. This will also help examine the socio-economic background within which Buddhism arose in Bodhgayā, and its subsequent relationship with the wider region. Therefore, this study will attempt to contextualise Bodhgayā by looking at the 'larger regional context', which for the purpose of this study, has been termed as 'the Bodhgayā region' (Fig.1.3, see also Fig. 3.1), a description of which is given below.

V. The Bodhgayā Region and Methodology

In order to contextualise Bodhgayā and carry out a systematic survey, the first and foremost step was to determine and define the geographical extent and boundary of the survey area (Bodhgayā region). While determining this area, I also had to take into account a number of factors such as the aims and goals of the project, the natural, topographical and cultural features, the current state of Bodhgayā and its neighbourhood, and existing knowledge of archaeological sites of the region. Based on these considerations, I devised the methodology for this study which included the survey plan, use of equipments, documentation of data (ceramics-collection and photographic documentation of sites, sculptural, epigraphic, structural and

architectural remains) and subsequent analysis of the data. I will briefly elaborate these now.

V.I The Survey Area

The key aim of the project was to develop an understanding of the emergence of Buddhism at Bodhgayā and its subsequent spread in the larger region, and how this spread helped the Buddhist *saṅgha* in developing a wider social base for its sustenance. In order to develop this understanding, it was necessary to examine a long term settlement history, and the distribution of other Buddhist monastic sites. This necessitated a survey of area around Bodhgayā as well as larger region beyond Bodhgayā. This decision was also influenced by a historiographical study of literature on the archaeological surveys of the region. D. R. Patil's compilation of all the archaeological reports until 1950's proved particularly useful in developing a sense of the wider region.⁴⁹ Before introducing the survey area, I will present a brief geographical introduction to the Gayā district.

The present district of Gayā is bounded on its north by Jehanabad district, on the east by Nawada, on the northeast by Nalanda, on the west by Aurangabad and on the southwestern, south and southeastern sides by the Palamu, Chatra and Koderma districts of Jharkhand state (see Fig. 1.3). The district of Gayā is broadly divided into two distinct geographical units. The southern part is a hilly region with a wide and thick belt of brushwood jungle at its base, while the northern part consists of mostly alluvial flat plains interspersed with sporadic hills. A number of rivers and rivulets originate in the Hazaribagh plateau and pass through the districts of Jharkhand to enter the southern part of Gayā district. Since the line of drainage in the district runs from south to north, these rivers divide the Gayā district into a number of parallel strips, separated by four wide rivers: the Phalgu (formed by Mohane and Niranjana), Morhar, Dhadhar, and Paimar. All of these rivers pass through the length of the Magadha region to meet the Ganga or its tributaries. Each of these parallel strips is higher in the centre and sloped down on each side of the rivers, so that each section of the district - from east to west - represents a series of undulations separated by a river.

⁴⁹ D. R. Patil, *Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* (Patna, 1962).

These rivers each have wide sandy beds, which are mostly dry except during the monsoon season of the year.

Taking Bodhgayā roughly as the centre, I decided to extend the research area on all four sides. The Grand Trunk road (National Highway 2, hereafter NH2), runs through Gayā district in the east-west direction, and divides the district into North and South Gayā. Most of the area south of the NH2 is still under forest cover and not densely populated. No archaeological site has been reported south of NH2 in the Gayā district. Additionally, the area is under naxal threat (extremist Maoist movement), I decided to demarcate NH2 as the southern boundary for the Bodhgayā region.

The northern and eastern part of the district consists of flat flood plains interspersed with low-rise hills and the elevation of this area varies between 300 to 225 feet. The notable hills on these two sides were Maher, Hasra range, Jethian, Barabar range. Taking these topographical features into consideration, I chose the area surrounding Hasra and Jethian hills (falling under Wazirganj subdivision) as the eastern and northeastern boundary of the region. Similarly, the Barabar range of hills (falling under Makhdumpur block) formed the northern border of the research area. The decision of choosing these hills as boundaries was also influenced by the previous archaeological surveys along these hills which had led to reporting of sculptural and architectural remains. For example, Kurkihar, a famous monastic site, is located a few kilometres southwest of Jethian, and the Barabar hill range, located west of the river Phalgu and on the route from Patna to Bodhgayā, has a concentration of sites from the third century BCE to the early medieval period, such as Barabar and the Nagarjuni caves with inscriptions from the Mauryan and Maukhari kings.

Unlike three other sides where boundaries were based on topographical features, deciding the boundary on the western side was very difficult. The area consists mostly of flat plain with a few low-rise hills, and parts of this area are under forest cover. Due to lack of a clear topographical demarcation, I chose the current district boundary on the west side (leaving out the area south of NH2). Amas Block (a lower administrative division) forms the western boundary of the Gaya district, and therefore, the western edge of the block eventually became the south-western boundary of the Bodhgayā region. The Konch and Tekari blocks formed the boundary on the west and north-western side. This decision was also influenced by the previous

reporting of a few monastic and temple sites such as Konch Śaiva temple, Guneri, Kespa and Ghenjan. Largely, the western area is densely populated which has led to the occupation and subsequent destruction of many of the archaeological sites in this part of the Bodhgayā region. Another difficulty in covering western parts of the region was the threat of naxals (Maoist extremist groups), and therefore, parts of the region have not been extensively surveyed.

The above details provide a clear description of the Bodhgayā region. Though the area falling under this region was surveyed and has been used to address the aims of this project, this boundary does not signify any historical or geographical boundary. Buddhism spread far beyond the boundary of the Bodhgayā region and the influence of Bodhgayā may have been much wider than the extent of the Bodhgayā region as defined above. This qualification must be noted here to avoid any misconception about the spread of Buddhism or influence of Bodhgayā.

V.II Methodology:

An archaeological survey was conducted in the above-demarcated Bodhgayā region, falling mostly under the Gayā district and partly in the Makhdumpur block of the Jehanabad districts. The purpose of the survey was to provide a detailed analytical record of all the sites to develop an understanding of the settlements of the region. The intention was to survey and record every archaeological component in detail, examine their spatial relationships and attempt an understanding of how the area developed through time. The research involved surveying both new and previously reported sites (archaeological as well as sculptural find-spots). The purpose of re-surveying previously reported sites was twofold: firstly, to collect pottery samples to prepare a new chronological framework; and secondly, to examine critically the reported antiquities and newly discovered sculptures and architectural remains from these sites. Additionally, it would also lead to an updated data-base of archaeological sites of the region by including new sites as well as the existing state of previously reported features from known sites. I decided a two-pronged approach: firstly to conduct an intensive survey over a radius of five kilometres, taking the Mahābodhi temple as its centre; and secondly to conduct a less intensive village-to-village survey

within the Bodhgayā region. I also had to keep in mind the time-frame as well as resources available to carry out this survey.

The intensive survey of Bodhgayā and its five-km radius aimed at accurate recording of every archaeological feature. The method adopted for this first phase involved extensive walking through the Bodhgayā town, neighbouring villages, river banks, agricultural fields and settlements within the stipulated radius (roughly 78 kilometres total area). I was assisted by three assistants (students from the Magadha University archaeology department), who were involved in field-walking and documenting the features. However, a major problem in this phase of the research was the unorganised, sprawling growth of the town. Hotels and tourist infrastructure, for example, have led to the partial destruction and re-occupation of the area west of the temple complex known as the Taradih mound. Moreover, the construction of modern monasteries and hotels within neighbouring villages, such as Bakror, Tika Bigha and others, meant that a number of archaeological features have been obscured. It was impossible to cover the area occupied in villages. Instead, my team had to focus on surveying the open areas including streets, roads, water bodies, religious shrines (often in open areas near tree or water tanks) and agricultural fields.

The survey of this area resulted in very few archaeological sites as the high population density in the overall area surrounding Bodhgayā has led to the large scale denudation of archaeological remains. All the archaeological as well as geographical features were photographed and their geographical position was noted with the help of a hand-help Global Positioning System (Garmin-make). The survey did not lead to ceramic-collection from any site except Taradih as almost all of these sites are under occupation. I noticed a number of religious shrines, mostly of recent origin with sculptural and architectural fragments from earlier period. A few older shrines with remains of Śiva-liṅga (such as Shivrajpur village, located 4 kilometres south of Bodhgayā) were also documented which were constructed probably in the last two or three centuries. This dating was based on the fact that they were owned by the chief abbot of Śaiva monastery of Bodhgayā. However, such shrines were not included in the analysis and discussion. Similarly, modern shrines with sculptural fragments were excluded as their original context was not known. Moreover, their fragmentary nature made it difficult to either date them to a specific time-frame. However, whenever an inscribed sculptural fragment or a full sculptural piece was found, for example at

Badki Bhabhni or Aamwa, they were included in the discussion. Overall, the intensive survey helped in developing a grasp of the wider archaeological and topographical context of the region. The noteworthy features were higher number of water tanks and the high population density, which suggested higher agricultural production in the neighbouring villages. Some of the villages were known for growing vegetables on an industrial scale, which required substantial amount of water.

The second phase of the survey included village-to-village survey and catalogued some sixty villages in the wider Bodhgayā region. The method involved field-walking in the villages to identify sites and then subsequently examine them. Once a site was identified in a village, the first step was to identify the archaeological significance (by looking at ceramic scatter or sculptural remains) and extent of a site. The second step was to undertake a reconnaissance (a reeve) of the site by circumambulating the surrounding area of the site to have a fair idea of the site's topography and other geographical features to make observations about landscape context, modern landscape, land use and physical form of the earthworks or monuments. The next stage was to survey the site to record archaeological feature so that their morphology and relationship can be noticed. Time spent on surveying a site was proportionate to the size and extent of the site. There were no hard and fast rules for this as higher time was spent on a larger site to examine its archaeological features as well as the landscape context. Subsequently, this was followed by a collection of ceramics from the different layers and levels of a mound (if disturbed or cut through or ploughed for agriculture). Otherwise, ceramic was collected from any one specific part of the mound. Lastly, the sculptural and architectural remains from a site were documented. Most of the sculptures were generally found within the village temples or shrine beneath a tree. The sculpture generally did not seem to have a connection with the mound. However, enquiries made with the local residents of villages provided the link as they were generally aware of the find-spots. Often, they were found next to the mound or a water tank.

The first phase survey and knowledge of local environmental conditions provided valuable inputs for the second phase. I made a preliminary exploration of the villages by walking along the rivers' before embarking on the village to village survey. Particular focus was given to villages along the banks of the main rivers - Phalgu (formed by joining of the Niranjana and Mohane rivers), Morhar (joined by

the Buddh river), Paimar and Jamuna and along the hills of Gayā district north of NH2. This decision was also influenced by other factors such as reports of previous explorations in the region by scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following this, I also decided to survey the sites along major hills such as Barabar, Maher, Hasra, Jethian, Kauwa-dol, Kunwa and Manda within the region. While surveying the hills, slopes, their forms and patterns, their relationships to other earthen and water bodies were examined. These results were subsequently compared with other examples to develop an overall perspective.

The reason for surveying some of the hill-sites was influenced by their previous reporting as many of them were known for sculptural and other remains. Similarly, monastic sites such as Kurkihar had been known for more than a century but their larger landscape and social context were not properly documented. The survey of previously reported sites enhanced the quality and level of available information on many of these sites and identified gaps and weaknesses in the previous records. This led to the first identification of previously unrecognized earthworks and the re-interpretation of known features or confirmation of existing knowledge apart from new alteration made on the landscape. All this added valuable information and new knowledge to the existing sites. Overall, the survey of previously reported sites proved that the landscape context of archaeological sites often revealed as much evidence for the interpretation of a site as the site itself. The above defined methodology helped answer specific and necessary questions about the historical and archaeological growth of the region over a longer time span. The analysis of the ceramic and other material remains proved particularly useful for preparing a chronological growth over this spatial entity and how the spatial dynamics was reconfigured from time to time in the region.

Overall, the survey resulted in the discovery of twenty new archaeological sites, seventeen new inscriptions and the documentation of a large number of sculptural and architectural remains. However, this excluded a number of surveyed villages, which did not have any visible archaeological remains. A few villages did have a few fragmentary sculptural or architectural remains, but their fragmentary nature (and lack of information) made it difficult to include them in analysis. Simultaneously, their original contexts were not clear, as they were found lying around a street or a road shrine. Here it must be noted that I relied on the information

provided by local people for the original context of sculptures. Therefore, the finding of a single sculptural fragment or pillar-remains was not included in the study as it did not necessarily indicated a local shrine because of portable nature of these objects. An interesting phenomenon I noticed during the survey was village temples, what may perhaps be called village level 'museums'. For example, I noticed a huge sculptural collection in the village temple at Kurkihar, Dharawat, Amethi, Kespa and other. People in these villages are aware of their historical heritage and very conscious about protecting these sculptures from smugglers and frequent thefts. The same cannot be said about mounds which are increasingly being destroyed for various reasons.

VI. Chapterisation: The Scheme of this Study

Following the above suggested approaches, this project attempts to study the emergence, development and sustenance of Buddhist Bodhgayā between the third century BCE and twelfth century CE. In so doing, this study is divided into four chapters.

Chapter Two will examine the emergence of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā and its subsequent development. This chapter will attempt to chronologically correlate textual, epigraphic, art-historical and archaeological remains in order to examine the emergence of the sacred landscape and its subsequent growth. While developing an integrated view of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā, the chapter will also articulate the evolving nature (in terms of ritual and social meanings) of the sacred Bodhgayā for its wider social context.

In order to recover the wider social context, chapter Three will attempt to study the contemporary settlements and the spread of Buddhism in these settlements from the early historic period onwards. Based on an archaeological survey, this chapter will also analyse the chronological growth of the settlements and Buddhist monastic and shrine sites in the region to develop an understanding of the spread of Buddhism and its linkages with the settlements in this wider area. Lastly, the chapter will also map the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sites of the region.

Based on the above chapter, Chapter Four will examine the role of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in the material development of the region and how this interaction between the *saṅgha* and settlements led to the economic growth of this region.

Furthermore, the chapter will also analyse how this involvement of the *saṅgha* helped them in developing networks of patronage and a localised social support base for its own sustenance in the region.

Chapter Five will enumerate the challenges that the Buddhist *saṅgha* faced in the region from the early centuries of the Common Era. This chapter will trace the emergence and growth of the Brāhmaṇical traditions of *śrāddha*, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in the region and subsequently, examine the inter-religious dynamics. The chapter will specifically focus on the response of the Buddhist *saṅgha* to the presence of these Brāhmaṇical orders, and the mechanism through which the *saṅgha* managed to negotiate its pre-dominant position in the region.

As emphasised earlier, this study will adopt an interdisciplinary approach to study the history of Bodhgayā, drawing from Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical texts as well as others like *Arthaśāstra*. It will also draw upon archaeological, epigraphic and art-historical sources. Lastly, it will adopt a *longue duree* approach in order to provide the history of *Buddhism* and the Buddhist *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā and in the larger region. The diacritic marks have not been used in modern places – names, rivers and people except in the names of Bodhgayā and Gayā.

Chapter-2 The *Buddhakṣetra* of Gotama: The Sacred Landscape of Bodhgayā

As mentioned in the Introduction, a fundamental problem for the study of Bodhgayā has been the exclusive focus on the Mahābodhi temple complex and art-historical remains because of the nineteenth century reconstruction of the site. Similarly, scholars have argued that the site emerged in the third century BCE as a sacred place due to the royal patronage of the Mauryan king, Aśoka. However, the subsequent growth of the site and the later addition of other features within the temple complex have not been examined rigorously. The nature of the shrine at different times, and remains that constituted 'sacred Bodhgayā' also remains unexamined. Therefore, this chapter will trace the emergence of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā, and the processes that facilitated its growth and subsequent paradigmatic position as the centre of the larger Buddhist universe.

Bodhgayā draws its sacrality from being a life-event site of the Buddha. This has meant that the construction of sacred features in and around Bodhgayā has been represented as markers of various events of the Buddha's life that happened at Bodhgayā. This is illustrated by the example of Bakror *stūpa*, which has been presented as marking the donation of the milk rice to the Buddha. Similarly, the Buddha supposedly stayed for seven weeks at seven places in the near vicinity of the Bodhi Tree after his enlightenment, which led to the construction of seven sacred structures there (Fig. 2.1).¹ This chapter therefore attempts to demonstrate this link between the life of the Buddha and the sacred sites and structures within Bodhgayā by tracing the archaeological growth of the sacred landscape and the ideological discourse that guided its development.

While tracing the development of the sacred landscape, the chapter argues that the growth of the sacred structures and the perception of the stories of the life of the Buddha in the Pāli and Sanskrit narratives were coterminous and guided each other. Both the processes - the additions of new details and layers to the biographical accounts, and the

¹ Faxian's and Xuanzang's accounts discuss the details of the seven-week conception of Bodhgayā. For Faxian, see S. Beal, trs., *Travels of Faxian and Sung-Yun* (New Delhi, 2003, rpt.). For Xuanzang, see S. Beal, trs., *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (Calcutta, 1958, rpt.).

emergence and development of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā - were reflective of the current Buddhist discourse. The development of both these processes (and associated religious practices) may be traced in three phases: early phase (between the third and first centuries BCE), second phase (between the first and sixth centuries CE) and third phase (between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE). In doing so, the chapter is divided into five sections. The first section deals with historiography and methodology to bring forth the problems and the possible approaches apart from introducing the textual sources. Drawing from the methodology and sources, the second, third and fourth sections trace the development of 'discourse' as well as the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā in three distinct phases. The last section will conclude the findings.

1.1 Historiography

A modern visitor / pilgrim visualises the Mahābodhi temple complex as per the nineteenth century reconstruction of Sir Alexander Cunningham, which was based exclusively on the account of Xuanzang (see Fig. 1.2).² A number of questions arise regarding this reconstruction of Bodhgayā. Firstly, it was based on the seventh-century description of the complex, whereas Bodhgayā emerged sometime in the last three centuries before the Common Era. Cunningham did trace the history of the site from the time of King Aśoka Maurya, based primarily on the textual accounts of *Mahāvamsa* and *Lalitavistāra* and the remarks of Xuanzang, but, these sources date to a much later period and therefore may not be adequate to provide an account of the historical growth of the site itself. Secondly, Cunningham's dating of the Bodhi-seat shrine and possibility of an Aśokan shrine at Bodhgayā was based on the Bharhut railing depictions, dated now to the second-first centuries BCE. Therefore, Cunningham's dating of the Bodhi-seat shrine to the time of Aśoka needs a critical examination.

Thirdly, Cunningham's legacy is also visible in the continuation of research on the temple complex by later scholars in their study, who have not included other reported archaeological features in and around Bodhgayā. Cunningham himself reported other archaeological features in and around Bodhgayā, such as the Bakror *stūpa* which is

² A. Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, plate XVIII. Also see Fig 1.2.

located on the eastern bank of Niranjana river just across Bodhgayā and seven *stūpas* and a cave at the Mora hills which is located approximately six kilometres northeast of the Mahābodhi complex. But the emergence and growth of these sacred features have not been studied at all in relation to the temple complex. In recent studies, various scholars have argued that sacred landscapes need to be understood as a total set rather than simply a mere collection of discrete sites. A holistic perspective also helps analyse the interrelationships among people and sacred features throughout history.³ This chapter will analyse, in considering their physical proximity, the Bakror *stūpa*, Mora hills and Mahābodhi temple complex as an integral part of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā, and furthermore will examine this landscape as a product of a series of layers that were added to the site after its emergence in the third-second centuries BCE (see Fig. 2.1).

While studying the emergence and growth of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā, this study will draw from J. S. Walters' study of the *stūpa*.⁴ Walters argues that the ideology and practice presuppose each other and that a study of the ideology (in the biographical texts) and the structures (constructed as a result of religious practices) can help reconstruct the historical situation(s) in which they were, simultaneously, produced, used and considered. Walter's argument provides a framework to examine the textual growth of the biography in relation to the archaeological/epigraphical evidence, which could further help to comprehend the emergence of the sacred landscape and the additions of subsequent layers over a span of time. Drawing from his argument, I will attempt to examine the combination of textual and archaeological sources in the following section.

I.2 Texts and Bodhgayā

The details of the life of the historical Buddha have been narrated in the Pāli canon as well as a number of Sanskrit biographies within the Buddhist literary tradition. According to these textual accounts, the Buddha stayed at Bodhgayā for six years before his

³ W. Ashmore and B. A. Knapp, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives* (Malden, 1999), p. 6.

⁴ J. S. Walters, 'Stūpa, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India', in J. Schobert, ed., *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia* (Honolulu, 1997), pp. 160-192, 169.

enlightenment and a short time afterwards. He later returned to Bodhgayā after the first sermon and convinced the Kaśyapa brothers to join Buddhism. This stay of the Buddha at Bodhgayā is mentioned in the Pāli canon and later Sanskrit biographical texts, though the description of the stay differs.

The early Pāli texts provide a simple account of the Buddha's stay at Bodhgayā whereas later Sanskrit biographical texts give a more detailed description. A comparative study of these descriptions may help in locating the evolution of the earlier accounts into a paradigmatic event, with several layers and new details added to the story of the Buddha's stay at Bodhgayā. This comparative analysis will also help recover the specific historical contexts, and provide the different frames of reference for the emergence of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā. Simultaneously, it will also question the anachronistic analysis of the sacred landscape from later biographies, often considered more useful because of their intricate details. An examination of the description of the events of the life of the Buddha that occurred at Bodhgayā in the Pāli and Sanskrit texts will be taken up now.

The Pāli texts used for this study include *Mahāvagga*, (a book of the *Khandaka* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*), *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* (hereafter, *MPS*) of the *Dīghā Nikāya*, and *Buddhavaṃsa* (hereafter, *BV*).⁵ Whereas the Sanskrit biographical texts used for this study include the *Buddhacarita* (written by Aśvaghōṣa and dated to the early centuries of the Common Era), the *Mahāvastu*, (the *Vinaya* of the Lokottarvādins, a branch of the Mahāsaṅghikas, and dated to the second century CE), and the *Lalitavistāra* (dated to the first-second centuries CE), the *Aśokāvadāna*, (dated to the first-second centuries CE).

The Pāli texts used for this study contain biographical stories of the Buddha's life in varying contexts; the *Mahāvagga* discusses the Bodhgayā segment of the Buddha's life, whereas *MPS* also twice refers to events at Bodhgayā. The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* provides an account of the last seven lives of the Buddha, including that of the present

⁵ For *Mahāvagga*, see I. B. Horner, trs., *Mahāvagga: The Book of the Discipline*, vol. IV (Oxford, 1993, rpt.). For *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, see Maurice Walshe, trs., *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of Dīghā Nikāya* (Boston, 1987); and for *Buddhavaṃsa*, see I. B. Horner, trs., *Chronicle of Buddhas, Buddhavaṃsa: and Basket of Conduct, Cariyapitaka* (London, 1975).

Gotama Buddha, briefly referring to the place and tree of enlightenment.⁶ *BV* discusses the Buddha's journey from a Bodhisatta to a Buddha during the reign of the previous twenty-four Buddhas and provides biographical accounts of these as well as Gotama Buddha.⁷ *BV* appropriates sections from *Cariyāpiṭaka* and *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and reworks them into a cosmic-scale biography, including the interaction of Gotama Buddha with the previous twenty-four Buddhas.⁸ Therefore, the *BV* account becomes a paradigmatic biography within the contemporary Buddhist tradition. With regards to the date of these texts, the *MPS* and *Mahāpadāna Sutta* may have existed in some form in the pre-Aśokan period, but they were compiled probably around (or after) the first century BCE. Similarly, the *Mahāvagga* may have been compiled much later but the first section, containing biographical account of the Buddha after his enlightenment, may have existed in the second-first centuries BCE. The *CP* and *BV* are dated to the second-first centuries BCE.⁹ All these texts may have existed in some form in the Aśokan and post-Aśokan period and therefore can inform us about the historical context and religious ideology of the time, and their role in shaping the emergence of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā.

The Sanskrit texts used for this study are the *Buddhacarita*, *Mahāvastu*, *Lalitavistara*, and *Aśokāvadāna*. Of these texts, the *Buddhacarita* (hereafter, *BCt*), and *Lalitavistara* (hereafter, *LV*), are complete biographies and discuss the life story of the Buddha elaborately and exclusively, whereas the *Mahāvastu* (hereafter, *MVt*) also discusses the life events of previous Buddhas. It also draws heavily on secondary and derived legends from the *Jātakas*, which narrate previous life-stories of Buddha. These three texts, composed in the early centuries of the Common Era, can inform us about the

⁶ Walshe, *Dīghā Nikāya*, pp. 199-222. The Buddha recalls the last seven Buddhas, including himself and identifies the cosmic eon in which the particular Buddha was born, his social status (Brāhmaṇa or Kṣtriya), his family group (*gotra*), the normal life span during the period in question, the kind of tree under which he was enlightened, the names of his two chief disciples, the number of fully accomplished saints (*arhats*), the name of his attendant monk, his father's name, his mother's name, and his place of birth. In the second segment, he provides a detailed description of the life of the first Buddha, Vipassi.

⁷ *BV*, in one sense, is a biography of the Gotama Buddha. It details the process of his self-perfection, during which he became Buddha and set forth the monastic 'disciplinary rules' (*Vinaya*) and 'teachings' (*dhamma*) for the enlightenment of his followers. But the *BV* is also a 'biography' of the other Buddhas (Bodhisatta/Bodhisattva). Twenty-four of these preceded Gotama in time, six of whom lived in present world age (*kappa / kalpa*), whereas the remainder lived before this world - in previous Buddha-eras. The last seven Buddhas are also mentioned in *Mahāpadāna Sutta* and *Ājānāṭiya Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*.

⁸ *Cariyāpiṭaka* focuses upon the actions of the Buddha in his last thirty-five lives. For details on the nature of the text, see Walters, 'Stūpa, Story and Empire', p. 165.

⁹ Walters, 'Stūpa, Story and Empire', pp. 163-166.

developments/new changes that were introduced in the biography of the Buddha and how these new developments were result of the evolving conceptions of the Buddha and the current religious discourses. The *Aśokavadāna* (hereafter, *AV*) also belongs to the first-second centuries CE and discusses the life and good deeds of Aśoka.¹⁰ This text also shows the linkages between ideology and practices by narrating the importance of sacred places (through their connection with the life-stories of the Buddha) and the religious practices of pilgrimage, veneration, donation and the construction of sacred structures.

Overall, the first set of Pāli texts and the second set of Sanskrit texts are useful in locating the ideology through a study of the stories and their subsequent transformation over time, whereas the *AV* discusses the sacred places in the context of religious practices and biographical content. The following sections will analyse the Bodhgayā segment of the Buddha biography and other related details in these three sets of texts along with the archaeological and architectural remains in order to examine the evolution of sacred landscape.

II. The Pāli Texts and Sacred Landscape of Bodhgayā

The early importance of Bodhgayā as a sacred place for Buddhist followers is reflected in the *MPS*.¹¹ While responding to the question of the monk Ananda regarding his *nirvāṇa*, the Buddha seems to be ambiguous. At one level, his answer emphasises the importance of the concept of taking *darśana* of the Bodhi Tree in lieu of the Buddha. But at another level, his answer also suggests that by going to the place of the Bodhi Tree (and the other three places of his life-events), Buddhist followers and monks would have the chance to interact and see senior revered monks. The Buddha's answer also seems to suggest that if one wants the benefit of interacting with these revered monks, one must visit these four places connected with the life-events of the Buddha. Moreover, in this case the Buddha is interacting with a monk (Ananda), thereby also instructing the monks to base themselves at these four places. It is therefore implied for the monastic community to base

¹⁰ J. S. Strong, *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna* (Princeton, 1983). See also, Kalpana Upreti, *India as Reflected in the Divyavadāna* (New Delhi, 1995). I have used the *Divyavadāna* very selectively because of the lack of any English translation. It has been used only in the context of the acts of Aśoka and the nomenclature of the Bodhi Tree.

¹¹ Walshe, *Digha-Nikāya*, p. 263.

themselves at the places of life-events, including Bodhgayā, where the laity will come to interact with them and take *darśana*.¹² The above discussion of the *MPS* passage, often cited as first textual reference for the beginning of the pilgrimage within Buddhism, provides the background for the development of the life-event places including Bodhgayā into sacred sites.

II.1 First Phase: The Early Development

As mentioned in section I.2, there are two segments of the Buddha's stay in the Bodhgayā in the Pāli texts: pre-enlightenment and post-enlightenment. It is important to point out here that the name used in all the texts for the place of enlightenment is Uruvelā, not Bodhgayā. The only text that mentions pre-enlightenment events at the Uruvelā is the *BV*. The second chapter narrates the story of the first Buddha Dipankara, who introduces Sumedha Bodhisatta and predicts the future enlightenment of Sumedha as the Gotama Buddha. It specifically mentions that 'having departed from the delightful city of Kapila, the Tathāgata will strive the striving and perform austerities, and after sitting at the root of the Ajapāla tree and accepting milk rice there, the Tathāgata will go to the Niranjana'.¹³ This is the first instance of a text recording the Buddha's acceptance of milk rice before proceeding to the Bodhi Tree. It does not tell us either about the place of the Ajpāla tree where this milk rice was accepted nor the person who offered it to the Buddha. However, the text mentions that the Buddha consumes the milk rice at the bank of river Niranjana before crossing the river and proceeding to the Bodhi Tree. Since the earliest version of this story comes from the *BV*, we may consider that this account becomes an important component of the biography at the time of the composition of the *BV* in the second-first centuries BCE. However, why and how does this story arise in the second-first centuries BCE is difficult to answer due to the dearth of sources.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the story subsequently solidifies into a key component of the biography.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 263.

¹³ Horner, *BV* II. 62-63.

¹⁴ A speculative answer would be to link the emergence of the story to the spurt in the construction of Buddhist landscape in various parts of South Asia. As new Buddhist centres were emerging due to the spread of Buddhist *saṅgha* and construction activities in the second-first centuries BCE, a similar process

According to Xuanzang's account, the Bakror *stūpa* was constructed to mark Sujātā's (daughter of the village chief) donation of milk rice to the Buddha. Sujātā was the daughter of the chief of the village, which was located on the eastern bank of the river Niranjana (Fig. 2.2). This site has been identified as the modern Bakror village. The origins and earliest occupation of the *stūpa* at Bakror may be placed in the second century BCE on the basis of fragments of dark Grey polished ware, which was found in a partially exposed monastery like structure towards the northeast of the *stūpa*.¹⁵ The important finds of the excavation included a punch-marked coin which also indicated the second century BCE origins of the Bakror village site.¹⁶ The description of the location of the place of milk rice donation matches with the location of Bakror village. Though the text does not mention Sujātā at all, still the fact remains that the origin of this *stūpa* is coterminous with the first reference of this story. This suggests a clear link between the simultaneous development of biographical elements and development of sacred landscape. In fact, it may be postulated here that the Sujātā *stūpa* – the sacred marker of the landscape - preceded the first recording of the textual accounts. The origin of the *stūpa* has been conclusively dated to the second century BCE whereas the *BV* dates are not as precise (second-first centuries BCE).

The enlightenment of the Buddha is followed by the Buddha's stay at Uruvelā. The post-enlightenment segment is provided in almost all the texts in varying contexts. *Mahāvagga* mentions that the Buddha stayed at Uruvelā for four weeks after his enlightenment, including the first week stay at the Bodhi Tree, the second week at the Goatherd banyan tree, the third week at the *Mucalinda* tree, experiencing the bliss of freedom and being served by *Mucalinda*, the serpent king, and the fourth week at the foot of the *Rājayatana* tree where *Bhallika* and *Trapusa* offered food in a crystal bowl

may have been taking place at Bodhgayā. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the construction of the *stūpa* left a permanent marker of the story on the landscape of Bodhgayā.

¹⁵ K. M. Srivastava, 'Excavations at Bakror *Stūpa*', *IAR* (1972-73), pp. 5-8.

¹⁶ No other archaeological data has been recovered from the village which can be used to conclusively date the village to an earlier period. But the possibility of the existence of this village before the second century BCE may not be ruled out. The high population density and continuing construction activities may have led to the destruction of vital archaeological clues.

presented by four great kings, and become the first lay disciples.¹⁷ Then he returns to the goatherd's banyan tree, and is indecisive about preaching, when he is approached by the *Brahma Sahampati* and persuaded to preach. The Buddha by his miraculous powers learns of the deaths of his previous teachers and the location of five mendicants, and then decides to go to *Isipatana* at Kasi to preach to them.¹⁸

In contrast to this rather detailed account of the *Mahāvagga*, all the other texts provide a very simple account. In the *BV*, the biographies of twenty-four previous Buddhas parallel the "this-life" biography of Gotama precisely; they differ only in detail.¹⁹ The typologies of the stories, however, remain the same. Along with other details, the text mentions the Bodhi Tree or the tree of enlightenment of all the twenty-five Buddhas. Specifically, the text mentions: 'When he has taken the milk rice on the bank of the Niranjana, that conqueror will go to the root of the tree of awakening. Then having circumambulated the platform (*Bodhimaṇḍa*) of the tree of awakening, the unsurpassed one of the great renown will be enlightened at the root of an *Assattha* tree'.²⁰ The lord's tree of Awakening is said to be the *Assattha* and the term used for the area around the Bodhi Tree is *Bodhimaṇḍa* (Fig. 2.3 and 2.4).²¹

The *BV* mentions the Ajapala tree, the acceptance of milk-rice (*pāyasam*) there and eating that at the river bank, then walking on the way prepared by the gods (*devas*) to the tree and circumambulating it, and then finally sitting on it. It places emphasis on the Bodhi Tree and the event of enlightenment, apart from the jewelled-walk (*ratanaçaṃkama*), and his subsequent veneration by the *devas*, and *Nāgas* in the introductory chapter (on Buddha-Brahma dialogue). This emphasis on the Bodhi Tree is

¹⁷ The legend of Goatherd banyan tree is discussed above. In *Mahāvagga*, it is a simple tree where as in later Sanskrit texts like *Mahāvastu* it is a donated tree by a goatherd who after this life is reborn as a *deva* in *trayastrīṃsa* heaven.

¹⁸ Horner, *Mahāvagga*, pp. 1-7.

¹⁹ Horner, *Buddhavaṃsa*. The text mentions the place of residence/birth, the names of his father, mother, his three palaces, and his wife and son. It includes the four signs they saw, the departure and the vehicle of departure, the place of the Buddha's first sermon (*dhammacakkapavartana*), the chief disciples, attendant, chief women disciples, the Bodhi Tree or the tree of enlightenment, chief attendants and chief women attendants, physical description of sage, age, help in attaining *nibbāna*, extraordinary qualities, reverence by *nāgas* and lastly, place of death/*nibbāna*. Terms used for *nibbāna* are *nibbuto* and *tīthimano*.

²⁰ Horner, *BV* II. 64-65, 69. The verse reads: 'Tato padikkhiṇaṃ kaṭvā bodhimaṇḍaṃ anuttaro/ assattharukkhamūlamhi bujjhissati mahāyaso.' The Sanskrit phrase used is 'Bodhimulam hi ehiti'. See also, N. A. Jayawickrama, *Buddhavaṃsa and Cariyapitaka* (London, 1974), p. 12, verses 63-64.

²¹ The meaning of this term is discussed in the section IV.1.

also discerned in the *MPS* and *Mahāpadāna Sutta*. These accounts also suggest the importance of the Bodhi Tree in the Aśokan times, which was reworked in the *BV*. The *BV*, being the first cosmic-scale biography, expands the account on a cosmic scale by inserting the episode of the jewelled-walk (*ratanacaṃkama*), and Gotama's subsequent veneration through a magnificent festival (Fig. 2.5). These details in the *BV* are also substantiated by the archaeological material at the site.

There is a general agreement that the earliest remains at the site were the Bodhi seat and a red sandstone pillar, erected by the king Aśoka Maurya. This dating, by Cunningham and largely accepted by other scholars, has been based on much later textual accounts, and Xuanzang's description, which portray Aśoka as the paradigmatic Buddhist king.²² Cunningham also relied on the depiction of the Bodhgayā shrine at Bharhut, approximately dated to *circa* 150-100 BCE. The Bharhut railing was inscribed and specifically mentions 'Bhagvato Sāka Munino Bodhi' (Bodhi tree of the Lord Śākyamuni) (Fig. 2.5).²³ This dating of the seat has been accepted by scholars and many art-historians have subsequently argued for the Aśokan date of the Bodhi seat on stylistic grounds as it depicts pecking geese and palmettes (see Fig. 2.4). Similarly, the sandstone pillar was also attributed to Aśoka. However, this dating is problematic for a number of reasons: firstly, the site does not have any Aśokan inscription (rather surprising as he mentions his pilgrimage to the site in the Girnar VIII rock edict as well as his donation to the Ājīvikas at the Barabar caves in the Bodhgayā region). Though the Girnar VIII rock edict mentions Aśoka's visit (*dhamma-yātra*) to Saṃbodhi, there is no evidence at the site to substantiate this claim.²⁴ Secondly, almost all the evidence for the Aśokan date of the Bodhi seat and pillar come from a later period. The form depicted in the Bharhut

²² Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 4-7 and 17-23.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁴ 'Saṃbodhi' is the term commonly used for the enlightenment of the Buddha and is generally accepted as the place of the Bodhi Tree. This meaning has been challenged by A. L. Basham. However, Basham claims that the term does not refer to Buddhism at all but Aśoka's righteous *dhamma*. This explanation hardly seems plausible. The use of the same term for Bodhgayā in the *MPS* suggests that the term in the Girnar VIII edict did refer to Bodhgayā. For Basham. See A. L. Bahsam, 'Saṃbodhi in Aśoka's 8th Rock Edict', *JIAS*, vol. 2 (1979), pp. 81-83. Schopen also discusses the term. See G. Schopen, *Monks, Stones, and Buddhist Monks Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu, 1997), pp. 135-136, footnote 3.

railing is elaborate whereas the depictions of the Bodhi seat and shrine in the railing pillars of Bodhgayā, erected in the first century BCE, are rather simple.²⁵

There are eight depictions of the Bodhi seat and Tree in the railings found at the site. One of these railings depicts the Bodhi seat and Tree within railings, two *Chhatras* (royal canopy) and two garlands on both sides (Fig. 2.6). Another one depicts a tree/garland, surrounded on both sides by two small hemispherical structures and railings. Yet another one, commonly accepted as a shrine, is broken on top and depicts Suryā on the bottom panel.²⁶ Two of the railing pillars depict the seat and tree being worshipped by mythical creatures, *Nāga* and elephants (Fig. 2.7). All the others simply depict a seat, a tree and kneeling worshippers. None of the above mentioned depictions on the Bodhgayā railing pillars match the depiction of the Bodhi Tree shrine on the Bharhut railing pillars. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the depiction of the Bodhi Tree shrine on the Bharhut pillar railing as an authentic representation of the Bodhi Tree shrine in the second century BCE. Lastly, the pecking geese and palmette style on the Bodhi seat cannot be accepted as a ground for valid dating. Scholars have generally failed to notice that these designs were not erected on the sandstone seat but on the granite facing, which was added to the Bodhi seat at a much later date. Therefore, there is no concrete evidence to date the origin of the Bodhi Tree site in the Mauryan period with a certainty. The lack of stratigraphy and actual archaeological context complicates it further. The existence of an Aśokan shrine at the Bodhi Tree therefore is hardly conclusive. However, Aśoka's pilgrimage to the Buddhist sacred sites including Bodhgayā is attested by his inscriptions.²⁷ And since he did erect inscribed pillars at Rummindei and Nigali Sagar recording his pilgrimage

²⁵ The depiction of the Bodhi seat and shrine on Bharhut railing pillar has been widely discussed. In 1990's, there has been a debate between S. L. Huntington and Vidya Dehejia whether these railing pillars depicted the site or the event or had multivalent meanings (and included representations of the life-events as well). It is beyond the scope of this work to engage in this discussion. Moreover, this work intends to compare the railing pillars from Bharhut and Bodhgayā and argue that probably the Bharhut railings did not depict the actual shrine at Bodhgayā. For details of the discussion between Huntington and Dehejia, see S. L. Huntington, 'Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism', *Art Journal*, Vol. 49, no. 4 (1990), pp. 401-408; Vidya Dehejia, 'Aniconism and The Multivalence of Emblems', *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 21 (1991), pp. 45-66; S. L. Huntington, 'Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems: Another Look', *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 22 (1992), pp. 111-156.

²⁶ See Janice Leoshko, 'The Implications of Bodhgayā's Sūrya as a Symbol of Enlightenment', in G. Bhattacharya, ed., *Akṣaynīvi: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Administration of her Scholarly Contributions* (Delhi, 1991), pp. 231-234.

²⁷ Sircar, *Select Inscriptions*, pp. 32-33.

and constructions at life event sites, there is a distinct possibility that he may have venerated the Bodhi Tree by erecting some structures – possibly a red-sandstone pillar and a seat. Moreover, the *darśan* and veneration of the Bodhi Tree is also emphasised in the *MPS* text, which did exist in some form at the time of the king Aśoka.²⁸

This Bodhi seat and Tree were converted into a Buddhist shrine in the first century BCE. A plaster facing was added to the Bodhi seat. This is attested by Cunningham's excavation as he found a shattered and broken plaster facing on the previous sandstone seat.²⁹ The major additions to the site in this period were the *ratanacaṃkama* (jewelled walk) and sixty-four railing pillars, which were erected around the Bodhi seat shrine. The first reference to the concept of *Ratanacaṃkama* comes from the first chapter of the *BV*. In a response to the Brahmā's request to teach his *dharma*, the Buddha magically creates an enormous jewelled walk that spans all of space, and he walks on it without the passing of time. Later, the Buddha explains the importance of the jewelled walk to Sāriputta: it symbolises the cosmic biography of the Buddha and his participation in the previous twenty-four incarnations before starting his own. This jewelled walk, which showed the transmigration of the Buddha through different periods and connections between his past lives, was given a physical shape at Bodhgayā and erected north of the Bodhi Tree. Sometime later, a new meaning was attached to this structure, as later texts mention that the Buddha spent the week after his enlightenment walking and meditating on his past lives. This walk is a simple brick wall and measures 53 feet long, 3 feet 6 inches tall and a little more than 3 feet in height (Fig. 2.8). On each side of this wall, there is a row of eleven Persopolitan pillar-bases decorated with the well-known pattern of a vase placed above three or four steps and surmounted by a parabolic moulding with an octagonal top for the reception of an octagonal shaft.³⁰ The sandstone polish and letters inscribed on these steps suggest a first century BCE date for the structure. This dating also corrects Cunningham's placement of this structure to the Aśokan period.

²⁸ Schopen, *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks*, pp. 115-117. Schopen has convincingly argued that the text was current at the time of the Aśoka. His assertion is based on the similarity in context and wording between the *MPS* text and Aśokan inscriptions at Rummindei and Nigali Sagar.

²⁹ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 5.

³⁰ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 8-9.

The railing-pillars, critically examined and studied over the last century, have been conclusively dated to the first century BCE.³¹ Based on the identification of sections of the two-foot high plinth beneath the foundations of the present temple, Cunningham suggested that the railing originally consisted of sixty-four pillars with a circuit of 255 feet, and a single eight-foot wide eastern entrance. The pillars are approximately six feet eight inches high and are topped with a twelve-inch coping. The short inscriptions on these railings also suggest the role of collective patronage in the construction of this shrine as these railings are donations by patrons with the name Kuramgi, Sirīma, and Nāgadevī. Though these patrons have been commonly identified as members of Śunga dynast, the dearth of reliable information makes it difficult to establish their identity convincingly.

The *BV* also mentions the story of the veneration of the Buddha by the Mucalinda *Nāga* and other *devas*. Though there is a depiction of mythical water animals, *nāga*, and *devas* offering garlands and paying respect to the Bodhi Tree on the railings, there is no depiction that can be identified as Mucalinda. The analysis of the railings also suggests a Buddhist attempt to speak to the larger socio-religious context. The depictions of a Sūrya, a Lakṣmi, Indra, *nāga* and *yakṣhi* are sculpted on the railings.³²

To sum up, the sacred landscape of the first century BCE at Bodhgayā consisted of a *stūpa* at Bakror, an Aśokan pillar, a *ratanaṅkama* and a Bodhi seat at the base of the Tree, all surrounded by sixty-four railing pillars. The depiction of a tree in a shrine and other depictions, as discussed above, suggests quite a simple shrine at the Bodhi Tree, unlike the depiction at Bharhut. The partial excavations at Taradih, fifty metres southwest of the temple complex, revealed a small-sized contemporary monastery, suggesting the presence of monks at the site (Fig. 2.9).³³ Another monastery-like structure was also exposed towards the northeast of the Bakror *stūpa*, likewise dated to the second-first centuries BCE. The presence of the monastic community meant that the site was regulated and maintained by monks. These monks were inspired by the current 'discourse' which constituted of the combination of textual perception of the biographical

³¹ See, K. K. Chakravarty, *Early Buddhist Art of Bodh-Gayā* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 58; see also Vidya Dehejia, *Discourse in Early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India* (New Delhi, 1997), pp. 135-139.

³² Chakravarty, *Buddhist Art*, pp. 52-53.

³³ A. K. Prasad, 'Excavations at Taradih', *IAR*, (1991-92), p. 11.

elements of the life of the Buddha, religious practices of monastic and lay community, and material remains. They all overlapped to formulate an 'episteme', within which the monastic community picked up an element from a biographical account and reformulated them to attach significance to newly erected structures. The intersection between the two was often visible in the case of Bodhgayā. This process of the physical marking of the story and the process of solidification of an account into a legendary account also involved laity which patronised such constructions worshipped them and provided them a social context. The 'episteme' therefore explained the historical (monastic and social) context and religious practices of the time. However, the textual frameworks and religious practices evolved with the growth of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in the early centuries of the Common Era. To understand the 'episteme' of this later period, we have to analyse the texts and archaeological remains.

III. Second Phase: The Sanskrit Texts and Sacred Landscape

In the first centuries of the Common Era, the biography of the Buddha evolved tremendously. The Sanskrit biographies of the Buddha, composed in the early centuries of the Common Era, provide a detailed account unlike the Pāli canonical texts. They seem to have developed the existing accounts within the cosmic framework (first noticed in the *BV*) to present a detailed biography of the Buddha. This reworking had more to do with the ideological framework which guided these biographies and the composition of these texts. The three textual biographies taken for this study, the *BCI*, *MVI* and *LV*, provide a detailed account of the Buddha's pre and post-enlightenment stay at Bodhgayā. The narratives provide a detailed account of the Buddha's arrival and subsequent stay at Uruvelā, in contrast to the account of the Pāli canon. The availability of such details in these texts helps us understand the stages in the development of the story and its subsequent evolution. Since the earlier texts provide no details of the pre-enlightenment period, I will now analyse this as represented in these three texts.

III.1 Pre-Enlightenment Stay

The *BCI* account begins with the Buddha leaving Rājagrha (Rajgir). The *BCI* mentions that the Buddha took himself to the hermitage Nāgari of the royal seer at the Gayā.³⁴ Looking for a lonely habitation, he went to the bank of the river Nirañjana from there. The *MVI* specifically mentions that the Buddha left for Gayā, stayed and meditated at Gayāśiṛṣa hill and from there he moved to the Nirañjana.³⁵ A similar account is provided in the *LV*.³⁶ Both these accounts not only provide a detailed description of the Buddha's movement to Uruvelā but also explain the reason behind choosing Uruvelā. The area beside the river Nirañjana was secluded, ideal for meditation and practicing austerities. At the same time, it was not far from a settlement where he could get alms and sustain himself. These accounts also demonstrate a familiarity with the geography of the region by providing the name of the hills and settlements around Uruvelā. They also suggest that the village Senāpati was located on the eastern bank of the river Nirañjana. It was a village of cowherds, and provided alms and milk rice to the Buddha. Similarly, the accounts indicate the distance between Gayā and Uruvelā. The Buddha's visit to Gayāśiṛṣa mountain at Gayā is included within the pre-enlightenment narrative, which is a new development from the *Mahāvagga* account.

The Buddha's arrival at Uruvelā is followed by six years of austerity. The story is largely similar in all three accounts, of the Buddha's austerity practices though doctrinal

³⁴ E. H. Johnston, trs., *The Buddhacaritam or Acts of the Buddha*, (New Delhi, 1972, rpt.), p. 182, verse 89.

³⁵ For *Mahāvastu*, see J. J. Jones, trs., *Mahāvastu* vol.2 (London, 1949), pp. 117-120. The Buddha explains his reason for moving to Uruvelā: 'I set out for the city of Gayā, reached it and stayed there. While staying at the Mount Gayāśiṛṣa, three similitudes were revealed to me which I had not heard of in former lives and which indeed, had never been heard of... I withdrew towards Uruvelā, the village of Senāpati, and reached it. There I saw woods that were most delightful, lovely, secluded, abounding, remote from men and growing in seclusion amid charming lakes. Located in close proximity were herdsmen villages, not too far, not too near, but accessible; a level tract and the river Nirañjana with its pure water flowing still and clear between beautiful banks. When I saw all this, my mind became exceedingly calm, and I said to myself, 'I have had enough of faith, as I am a young noble who has wandered forth to strive. Let me then, here and now, do some striving/exertion of my own'.

³⁶ B. Goswami, *Lalitavistāra* (Kolkata, 2001), pp. 232, 244. The *LV* account states that the Bodhisattva, after sojourning at will in Gayā, roaming on foot on the Gayāśiṛṣa Mountain, went towards the village Senāpati near Uruvelā and reached it. There he saw the river Nirañjana with its clear water, which had crossing paths, beautiful trees and shrubs, and a village in the vicinity. Then Bodhisattva's mind was much delighted: 'This place is level, pretty and suitable for private meditation. It is enough for the son of a good family who desires religious exertion. I desire religious exertion. So I will stay here... The forests were beautiful, with the wild shrubs and vines, in ancient Uruvelā, where there was the river Nirañjana.

points and yogic practices vary in details.³⁷ However after the decision of the Buddha to take food, and the departure of the five mendicants in disgust, the texts differ in their respective accounts. The *BCI* mentions a brief account of the six activities of the Buddha in order – his decision to go to the Bodhi Tree, a bath in the Niranjana, the acceptance of a gift of milk rice by Nandabala (daughter of cowherd chief), the praise by Nāga Kāla on Buddha's way, and then taking some grass from a grass cutter and finally taking his seat at the root of the Bodhi Tree (*assatthamulam*). The descriptions given in the *MVI* and *LV* are drastically different from *BC*. Both these texts insert a miracle at every stage and possibly, the *LV* builds up, from the account of the *BC* and *MVI*.³⁸

The *LV* inserts a series of miracles involving the Buddha, for example the story of the donation of a dust-cloth to the Buddha by a *deva*, or the miraculous appearance of a pond called '*Panihata*' near the Bodhi Tree for Buddha to wash his clothes. The *LV* also inserts the story of a fight between Śakra (Indra) and the *nāga* king Sāgara for the relic of the golden bowl which ultimately is taken to *trayastrimsa* (heaven) for worship and a *Caityas* and formulation of a new festival called *Patriyatra*.³⁹ Similarly, the Buddha's journey from the Sujātā's village to the Bodhi Tree is described with great relish. During this journey, the Buddha and the Bodhi Tree are offered elaborate worship and veneration by all the celestial and mythical beings, *devas*, and Bodhisattvas, who are part of the *Buddhakṣetra* of Gotama Buddha. These descriptions portray an attempt to emphasise the importance of the place of the enlightenment, which is shown to receive veneration even

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 236. Only the *LV* mentions the legend of the Buddha's mother coming down from the *trayastrimsa* heaven after hearing of his impending death from the *devas* and the Buddha reassuring her that he was nearing his enlightenment.

³⁸ Jones, *MVI*, p. 122. In the *MVI*, the Buddha follows his decision to end his fast. Then towards daybreak he goes to the river, and has a bath after which he receives *Payasam* (milk rice) from Sujātā. He then goes to Svāstika Yavasikā, requests from him a handful of grass, and makes his way to the Bodhi Tree. In front of the Bodhi Tree, he prepares a couch with some straw on top, and then circumambulates around the Tree three times, keeping it to his right. He then takes the lotus position, sitting upright in a state of mindfulness, facing the east. For the *LV* account, see Goswami, *LV*, pp. 247-248. According to the *LV*, the Buddha first takes molasses and parboiled wheat. Then he, along with the five mendicants are served a meal by ten maiden girls from the nearby village, which is followed by a period of nourishment by collecting alms from the village. This is followed by the Sujātā's invitation to the Buddha and partaking of *payasam* in a golden bowl at her home, followed by his departure to the Bodhi Tree. In the meanwhile, Sujātā, from Nandikā village, knowing of Bodhisattva's austerities from the first, fed eight hundred Brāhmaṇas every day in order to tide over his penances and to satisfy his body. Feeding Brāhmaṇas for the health and *sambodhi* of the Buddha do not seem to make any sense, and we do not know why this story is inserted in the *LV*.

³⁹ Jones, *MVI*, p. 122.

from the *devas*. Their details emphasise the primacy and superiority of the Buddha and his Bodhi Tree at Uruvelā within a cosmic realm, incomparable in its splendour, decoration and miracles.

III.2 Post-Enlightenment

The enlightenment of the Buddha is followed by his stay at Uruvelā and around the Bodhi Tree for a span of time. This stay became the framework upon which the Bodhi Tree complex was conceptualised in the later period. Xuanzang mentions the seven-week conception of the temple complex, which was based on the idea that the Buddha spent seven weeks after his enlightenment at and around the Bodhi Tree (See Fig. 1.2). Though the *BV* does not mention this, the *Mahāvagga* mentions a four-week stay including his first week at the Bodhi Tree, the second week at the goatherd banyan tree, the third week at the *Mucalinda* tree, and a fourth week at the foot of the *Rājayatana* tree where Bhallika and Trapusa offer food in a crystal bowl presented by four great kings, and become the first lay disciples.⁴⁰ The *BCt* mentions the first week of stay at the Bodhi Tree and then briefly mentions Brahmā and Indra's reverence to the Buddha and his subsequent gaze at the tree. It also mentions the miracle of the begging bowls and the Buddha's own decision to preach to the world because of his former promise.⁴¹

The *MVt* and *LV* mention seven weeks of stay after the enlightenment but their descriptions vary. The first week, common to all accounts, is spent at the foot of the Bodhi Tree, the seat of enlightenment, with the Buddha being worshipped and venerated by the gods and all celestial beings. This is the time when the Buddha is contemplating his Bodhi. The second week is not mentioned clearly in the *MVt* whereas the *LV* clearly mentions that the Buddha takes a long walk through three thousand worlds.⁴² In the third week, the *MVt* mentions that the Buddha stayed at the abode of *nāga* king Kāla. The *MVt* provides a clear description of the *nāga* king Kāla's invitation to the Buddha, suggesting

⁴⁰ The legend of goatherd banyan tree is discussed above. In *Mahāvagga*, it is a simple tree where as in later Sanskrit texts like *MVt* it is a donated tree by a goatherd who after this life is reborn as a *deva* in *trayastrimsa* heaven.

⁴¹ Johnston, *BCt*, pp. 214-217.

⁴² The *BV* calls this walk the jewelled walk where a new walk is created by the Buddha's own power and during which he contemplates preaching.

the cosmic biographical frame in the process.⁴³ In the *LV*, the third week is spent by the Buddha gazing upon the *Bodhimaṇḍa* tree without a blink (*Animeṣlochana*) pondering the problems of preaching.

The fourth week in the *MVt* is spent at Mucalinda *naga*'s place. There was a sudden burst of rain and it rained heavily for the whole week. Therefore, the Mucalinda, the *nāga* king, threw his coils seven fold around the Buddha to form an envelope of half a *yojana* and covered him above his broad hood, so that the Buddha should not be assailed by any poisonous or offensive smell. This resulted in rich merit for Mucalinda. A similar act was performed by the *nāga* king Vinipata as the Buddha spent the fifth week at his abode. This repetition of acts by two *nāga* kings at the same place shows a lack of clarity in the account of the *MVt*. In contrast, the *BCt* and *LV* clearly mentioned that the *nāga* Kala/Kalika praised the Buddha when he was on his way to the Bodhi Tree from the river bank. The fourth week in the *LV* is spent in a short walk between the eastern and western seas when he meets *Māra* again and defeats him. The fifth week in the *LV* is spent with Mucalinda, the king of *nāgas*, who wrapped the Buddha's body in seven coils and saves him from the great tempest.

In the *MVt*, the Buddha spends the sixth week fasting with joy at the foot of the goatherd's Banyan tree. In the seventh week, he does the same at a shrine of the *devas* in a thicket of the *Kṣirika* tree (Tārāyana/ Rājayatana tree?). In the *LV*, on the other hand, the Buddha goes to the foot of the *Nyagrodha* tree (goatherd's Banyan tree) on the bank of the Niranjana river, meeting on his way *carakas*, *parivrājakas*, the old *Śrāvakas*, the *Nṛgrāṇṭhas* and *Ājīvikas*, and satisfying them with his discourse. There, in the seventh week, he stays under the Tārāyan/Rājayatana tree where he is offered alms and food by two traders - Trapusa and Bhallika. The *BCt* mentions that they were crossing the place when they saw the Lord and offered alms.⁴⁴ In contrast, the account given in the other three texts mentions that they were alerted by the *devas* about the presence of the Buddha nearby and exhorted to offer him food.

⁴³ Jones, *MVt*, pp. 287-288.

⁴⁴ Johnston, *BCt*, p. 216.

Texts/Stay	First Week	Second week	Third Week	Fourth week	Fifth Week	Sixth Week	Seventh Week
<i>Mahāvagga</i> 4 Weeks	Bodhi tree	Goatherd banyan tree	<i>Mucalinda</i> tree	<i>Rajayatana</i> tree	-	-	-
<i>Buddhavaṃsa</i> None	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Buddhacarita</i> 3 Weeks	Bodhi Tree	Animeśalochana	Worship by Brahmā and Indra	-	-	-	-
<i>Mahāvastu</i> 7 weeks	Bodhi tree	Not clear	Abode of Nāga king Kāla	Abode of nāga king Mucalinda	Abode of nāga king Vinipata	Goatherd banyan tree	Ksiri ka/Rajayatana Tree
<i>Lalitavistara</i> 7 weeks	Bodhi Tree	Long walk of the Buddha between 3000 worlds/ratanacampkama	<i>Animeślochana</i>	Short walk between the east and the west sea	Abode of nāga king Mucalinda	Goatherd Banyan tree /Nyayagrodhata tree	Rajayatana tree
Fa-Xian/ 7 weeks	Bodhi Tree	Walk under Pei-to tree from East to west	Ratanagar/worship by Indra and Brahmā	Place where Mucalinda encircled Buddha	Nyayagrodhata Tree	Lake of Mucalinda	Rajayatana Tree Place of Merchants gift
Xuanzang/ 7 weeks	Bodhi Tree	Walk from East to west	Animeśalochana-constant gaze at the tree	Ratanagar/worship by Indra and Brahmā	Ajpālata Nyayagrodhata Tree	Mucalinda	Rajayatana Tree

Table 2.1 Conception of Post-Enlightenment Stay

A comparative analysis of these details clearly brings out the fact that by the time of composition of the *LV*, a seven-week conception of the Buddha's stay at Bodhgayā had become the standard format for his post-enlightenment stay at Bodhgayā. A number of other legends and miracles were also added to his biography such as the bowl legend, the offering of food by the merchant travellers and the initiation of the Kaśyapa brothers into the order.⁴⁵

III.3 Discussion

The above review of the various accounts shows a development of the biography in Sanskrit biographical texts in comparison to the rather brief and simple account of the Pāli canon. The *LV* emphasises the primacy and impressive miraculous power of the Buddha by inserting miracles at every step throughout the account. This comparative analysis also demonstrates the stages in the development of the biographies of the Buddha. Furthermore it suggests two processes: firstly the reworking of the biographies

⁴⁵ Horner, *Mahāvagga*, p. 6. The *Mahāvagga* gives a simple account that four great kings from the four quarters each presented a bowl of rock-crystal to the Buddha, one of which he used. For the *BCI* account, see Johnston, *BCI*, p. 216. The *BCI* also mentions this story but adds a twist that the four bowls were converted into one after they were given to the Buddha by the gods of the four quarters. An elaborate account of this story is provided in the *MVī* and *LV*. The account of the *MVī* is quite similar to the one given in the *LV* except that that it is more elaborate and dramatic. For example on being offered food, the Buddha thinks of how the previous Buddhas took the food and what sort of vessel they used. Finally, as did previous Buddhas, he accepts four stone vessels from the four guardian kings and magically transforms them into one vessel. For the *LV* account, see Goswami, *LV*, pp. 350-352. This is followed by another detailed account of special food being prepared and offered by the merchants. A Brāhmaṇa named Sikhandin reminds the traders of a prediction that the *Taṭhāgata* would turn the wheel of *Dharma* after eating their food. And they offer the Buddha specially prepared food in a jewelled vessel called *Candra* which Buddha threw in the sky after partaking of the food. This vessel was taken by the King of gods Subrahma and is now worshipped in *Brahmaloka*. In a similar vein, another reworking takes place within the story of the conversion of Uruvelā Kaśyapa and his two brothers Nadī and Gayā Kaśyapa. These three Brāhmaṇa brothers practiced fire-worship and are termed as *Jaṭilas* in the Pāli and later texts. The term *Jaṭila* was used, because the textual descriptions present them as ascetics with hair plaits. The hair-plaits were probably also an identification mark of this ascetic group, which were present in the Bodhgayā region. The account of their conversion is presented in the *Mahāvagga* and *BCI* where the Buddha performs miracles, including the controlling of a dangerous *nāga* in *Kaśyapa's* hermitage in order to convince them to join his order. This account is transformed in the *MVī* as the Buddha performs 500 miracles to convert the three *jaṭilas* with their 1250 followers. This later version presents an aggressive Buddha who uses his miracles to make the *Kaśyapa* brothers and their followers realise his power at every juncture, culminating in their conversion. They are joined by one of their *jaṭila* nephews named *Upasēna* who was living on the banks of the Niranjana. Finally there is a meeting at the Gayāśiṛṣa mountain for the fire sermon by the Buddha.

in adding numerous details, miracles and supernatural episodes to the existing accounts in accordance with the contemporary perception of the Buddha; and secondly, the emergence of a cosmic biography where the Gotama follows the acts of the previous Buddhas.

This notion of cosmic time was probably borrowed from the *BV* which presents the biography of Gotama Buddha by bringing out the link between his life and that of previous Buddhas. This is based on a conception of cosmic time as incalculable. The only way to understand is through the actions of the Buddha. This framework of cosmic biography became the paradigmatic model to explain the importance of the events and places linked to the life of the Buddha as well as that of the previous Buddhas.⁴⁶ This actually indicates how the incalculable overlaps with and informs the calculable and thereby indicates the succession of the Buddha's presence in the world.⁴⁷ The places associated with the Buddha, therefore, have already existed on a cosmic scale and are sacred from that incalculable time. The stories of other miracles are thus mere enactments of a pre-planned script. And these enactments merely confirm its sacred relevance from previous Buddha Eras.⁴⁸ The simple life story in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* and *Sutta Piṭaka* becomes embedded in the legends and miracles to represent the powerful and miraculous Buddha, who can provide soteriological solutions to the world and direct every conceivable walk of life towards the attainment of salvation. It is this framework which is evident in the later biographies. This Buddha commands worship from the *devas*, because they are part of his *Buddhakṣetra*. They have been doing this for previous Buddhas and therefore will continue to do the same for this Buddha as well.

⁴⁶ This is based on a two-dimensional conception of time. According to the one, a notion of "calculable" (*sankheyya*) time and causation that resembles modern notions, Buddhas lived, founded disciplines, and died during certain times and in certain places; their succession connects the past to the present. But the *BV* also charts another unfathomable (*acintiya*) dimension of time and place that cannot be conceived in terms of calculable time and causal connection alone. This incalculable time and space of previous world ages cannot be charted or mapped. The incorporation of these pre-primordial periods into history depends upon a conception of "incalculable" (*asankheyya*) time that overlaps with the calculable. The connectedness of the present to this incalculable past is meritorious (or deleterious) action and its consequences (*kamma/karman*). J.S. Walters, 'Buddhist History: The Sri Lankan Pāli Vaṇṣās and Their Community', in R. Inden, J.S. Walters and Daud Ali, eds., *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia* (New York, 2000), p. 106.

⁴⁷ Walters, 'Buddhist History', p. 103.

⁴⁸ Walters discusses the example of Mahinda's Buddhist mission to Sri Lanka, which became an ideal paradigm to illustrate the sacrality of Buddhist places in the country.

These biographical accounts represent not only the changing perception of the Buddha, but also the attempt to create a paradigmatic biography. The elements of his paradigmatic biography are also reflected in the gradual development of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā. This assertion is visible in the textual description of the *AV* and *DV* and the travel accounts of Faxian and Xuanzang.

This is indicated in the accounts of the *DV* and *AV* regarding Aśoka's pilgrimage. The *DV* mentions the places visited by Aśoka which include the place of milk rice donation by the two girls, the place of Kalika *nāga* praise, the Bodhi Tree, the place where Trapusa and Bhallika became the first lay disciples, and where he was honoured by the *Ājīvika* monk Upaga.⁴⁹ The *AV* adds to this list two more places: the place of six years of meditation (self mortification) and the place of the miracle of the single bowl.⁵⁰ Faxian also mentions that the Buddhist followers marked all the places of biographical events by erecting towers and placing images.⁵¹ Xuanzang also provides a detailed description of all the places of life-events, which were subsequently venerated through the construction of sacred structures. These sacred structures included *stūpas*, caves and hills, and shrines around Bodhgayā drawing on the legacy of the site as the place of use of the Buddha. And as their construction and maintenance was controlled by the *saṅgha*, it also meant the growth of the monastic landscape, also attested by the archaeological evidence. The following section will, therefore, briefly examine the archaeological evidence to chart the growth of this built landscape.

III.4 Archaeological Growth

The first place to be mentioned in the pre-enlightenment narratives is Gayāśrīṣa hill (Fig. 2.10). The hill-top has not revealed archaeological remains from the early historic period, perhaps due to its occupation by Brāhmaṇical groups from the fourth-fifth centuries CE. , From this time, the hill began to be claimed as the place of Sūrya and *śrāddha* worship. Though Xuanzang mentions a large *stūpa* on top of this hill and another two at its base, the destruction of archaeological evidence due to eighteenth-century and modern

⁴⁹ Kalpana Upreti, *India as Reflected in the Divyavadāna* (New Delhi, 1995), p. 106.

⁵⁰ Strong, *AV*, pp. 248-250.

⁵¹ S. Beal, *Travels of Faxian and Sungyun* (New Delhi, 2003, rpt.), pp. 124-125.

constructions makes it difficult to validate his claims or to trace the ways in which the hill was appropriated by the Brāhmanical tradition. Nevertheless, the historical importance of the hill within the Buddhist tradition has been emphasised at least from the second-first centuries BCE, as indicated in the *Mahāvagga* account.

Mora hill, located about three miles northeast of Bodhgayā, is the second hill to be considered sacred. The name of the hill in the Buddhist tradition, including Faxian and Xuanzang's accounts, is Prāgbodhi hill.⁵² Halfway up the western slope of the hill is a cave which contains a partially broken and inscribed image of a goddess. The image, datable to the ninth-tenth century, is worshipped as Dugeswari *devī* (Fig. 2.11). There is no evidence to date the cave, save its mention in Faxian and Xuanzang. We only know that the cave existed as a sacred place in the fourth-fifth centuries CE, at the time of Faxian's visit. At the top of the hill, there are remains of seven brick *stūpas* (Fig. 2.1). Two of them are rectangular *stūpas* (measurements are 6.5m x 9.5m and 4.2m x 4.2m) (Fig. 2.12) whereas the other five are circular brick *stūpas* (diameters varying between 3m and 5m). The smallest of these has a height of two metres, and the highest is ten metres. Again, the survey did not reveal any ceramic or other evidence which can be used to date these structures. However, Xuanzang's mention of the cave and the *stūpa*-structures on the hill-top suggests their existence in the mid-seventh century CE. Below the cave on the slope of the hill is a large, artificially levelled terrace, about 65 metres, with traces of the foundations of two buildings - a rectangular and a circular stone building (Fig. 2.13). Based on the account of Xuanzang on religious offerings at this site at the end of the rainy season every year, it is possible to infer that there was a small monastic community living next to this shrine which looked after it by performing religious duties.⁵³ Unlike Xuanzang, Faxian does not mention any *stūpa* at this site. Therefore, these *stūpas* may have been erected between the fifth and seventh centuries CE. A final date can only be arrived at from future excavations of these *stūpas*.

The next site of many of the stories during the course of six-year austerities is the modern village of Bakror. As mentioned in section II.1, a large *stūpa* was erected here in

⁵² D.R. Patil, *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* (Patna, 1963), pp. 289-290. For details of the site, see also A. Cunningham, *ASI Reports for the Years 1871-72* (New Delhi, 2000, rpt.), pp. 105-107

⁵³ Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, p. 344.

the second-first centuries BCE to mark the offering of milk-rice to the Buddha (see Fig. 2.2). The diameter and height of the *stūpa* was increased in the fourth-fifth centuries CE. New moulded bricks were added to the facing of the *stūpa*. The older *pradakṣiṇa paṭha* of baked bricks was covered to add new casing to the existing structure and a new five-metre *pradakṣiṇa paṭha* of thick lime plaster was laid for the ritual circumambulation of the structure.⁵⁴ The *stūpa* has been excavated recently and conserved. However, no new material has been reported or published from the excavation of this *stūpa* which may be used to confirm this reconstruction conclusively. There is another mound located southeast of the *stūpa*. Though claimed by the Buddhist monk pilgrims as the place of the Buddha's meeting with Sujātā, it is currently occupied by Hindu temples. The survey did not reveal any archaeological remains except early medieval sculpture and fragments of some miniature stone *stūpas* within the precincts of the Hindu temple. The nature of the mound may not be confirmed due to lack of any concrete evidence. The modern construction of the existing Hindu temple on the mound indicates later occupation of the site. The survey of the village revealed no other archaeological remains. This may be attributed to the high population density of the village and new buildings.

The next place to be mentioned in the biography is the Bodhi Tree and its immediate surrounding area. Cunningham's excavation of the temple-complex revealed numerous structural and other remains, which suggest additions between the first and sixth centuries CE. It is important to point out that the seven-week conception of the complex emerged only by the third-fourth centuries CE, as noted by the textual discussion above. Faxian and Xuanzang's accounts confirm this model of a seven-week stay. However, the structural marking of these seven places and other stories needs to be examined archaeologically to locate the new additions.

As pointed out earlier, the Bodhi seat, jewelled walk and railing-pillars, erected in the second-first centuries BCE, constituted the sacred shrine at Bodhgayā initially. New red-sandstone railings were added to the existing ones in the first or second centuries CE which has been proved by the first century CE inscription of Bodhirakṣita on one of the pillars.⁵⁵ The Bodhi seat itself was enlarged at least twice in this period. Cunningham

⁵⁴ Srivastava, 'Excavations at Bakror *Stūpa*', p. 7.

⁵⁵ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 16.

mentions that the grey sandstone slab (2.16 m x 1.43m x .15m) carved with geometrical patterns and the depiction of geese and acanthus flowers on its sides formed the upper portion of the red sandstone seat and was built during the reign of Aśoka. However, remains found from the excavation of the seat suggest that it was a later addition to the seat. This grey sandstone slab rested on a 1.01m high brick platform, which was ornamented with boldly moulded figures of men and lions. These figures have been dated to the third-fourth centuries CE. Moreover, the removal of the plaster facing of the seat inside the temple sanctum just above the previous plastered floor revealed a ball of cliff earth or clay. This ball contained a number of relics – two gold copies of the impressions of the obverse face of a gold coin of Huvīṣka, joined together and held by a ring, five punch-marked silver coins, one crescent of thin gold, four flowers with a pale sapphire in the centre of each, three shells, four *Kamarak* fruits, five buttons or knobs, fifty-three large discs, forty-three small discs, pearls, coral, crystal, sapphires, rubies and emeralds.⁵⁶ The fact that a copy of a gold coin of the reign of Huvīṣka (late second century as *terminus post quem*) was found proves that the slab was definitely added after this period, possibly in the third or fourth century CE. This is also indicated by a partly defaced inscription at the edge of the seat.⁵⁷ Another addition to the seat was made in the latter part of the sixth century when the Mahābodhi temple was constructed. In order to place the Buddha image on the Bodhi seat in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, the seat was enlarged on its northern, southern and eastern sides.

Apart from the above mentioned structures, an inscribed sculpture was found near the remains of an old temple to the south of the Bodhi Tree, currently housed in the Indian Museum, Kolkata. This sculpture has been dated to the third-fourth centuries CE based on paleographical and stylistic grounds. The inscription mentions that a monk, with the help of a lay-woman (*upāsikā*), set up two lion-vehicle statues (*sīharaṭha patimā*) by his own strength during the reign of king Trikamala (in the *saṃvat* 64).⁵⁸ King Trikamāla remains unidentified in the early historic period whereas *saṃvat* 64 can be either the Śaka or Gupta period. Therefore, the exact date for the installation of the first sculpture at the

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵⁸ B. M. Barua, *Gayā and Buddha-Gayā* (Kolkata, 1931), p. 70. For the details of the inscription, see appendix table A.

site remains inconclusive. This sculpture belongs to the Mathura style and therefore may have been transported from Mathura to Bodhgayā. The second sculpture mentioned in the inscription remains unidentified.

Apart from these, no other remains within the temple complex up to the fifth century CE can be properly dated due to the excavations in the nineteenth century. Though Faxian mentions the erection of towers and images at all places linked to the life of the Buddha, including the places of the seven-week stay, and images, the lack of concrete archaeological evidence makes it difficult to validate his claims. He also mentions the existence of three monasteries at the site and the support of local people for their sustenance.⁵⁹ However, by the time of Xuanzang, the site had undergone a complete transformation.

IV. Third Phase: Archaeological Growth (c. 550-1200 CE)

The transformation of the site was most visible in the construction of the Mahābodhi temple and the subsequent donations of a large number of sculptural and votive remains from the sixth century CE onwards, which reflected the changing perception of the site and the evolution of new rituals. In order to examine this new perception, the following section will trace the evolving nature of the Bodhi Tree and its shrine from the early historic to the early medieval period.

IV.1 Bodhi Tree: Nomenclature and Perception

The importance of the Bodhi Tree underwent changes within the Buddhist world from the second-first centuries BCE. That the Bodhi Tree was the focus of worship from early times as a symbol of the Buddha's enlightenment is attested by the fact that the Buddha himself suggested to his followers that they visit the place of enlightenment and venerate the Bodhi Tree in the *MPS*.⁶⁰ Moreover, the re-planting of the Bodhi Tree saplings from the site to the different parts of the Buddhist world, as referred to in the Buddhist texts

⁵⁹ Beal, *Travels*, p. 126.

⁶⁰ Walshe, *Dīghā-Nikāya*, p. 263.

and scriptures, also demonstrates the Tree's symbolic importance. However, it is unclear whether the enlightenment in this period was represented by the Bodhi Tree or by the seat at the root of the Tree.

The earliest textual reference presents it as the tree under which the Buddha achieved his enlightenment. The term used in the *Mahāvagga* for the Bodhi seat is *Bodhirukkhamūlam*. Similarly, the *BV* uses the term *Assattharukkhamūlam* for the tree of enlightenment, but it also refers to the place as *Bodhimaṇḍa*, which needs to be examined. *Mūlam* means the root, whereas *rukka* (Pāli) and *drum* (Sanskrit) mean tree. Therefore, the use of the terms '*Bodhirukkhamūlam*' and '*Assattharukkhamūlam*' in the two above mentioned texts confirms the act of the Buddha to sit at the root of the tree.

However, the use of the term *Bodhimaṇḍa* in the *BV* for the first time suggests the emergence of a shrine at the seat of enlightenment (at the root of the Bodhi Tree itself) by the second-first centuries BCE. *Maṇḍa* means either to embellish or to deck with ornamentation.⁶¹ If we take the literal meaning of *Bodhimaṇḍa*, it suggests the decoration of the Bodhi Tree. How the tree was decorated is not mentioned in the *BV*. It is here that the archaeological data helps us deal with the inadequacy of the textual data. Archaeological data confirms that the area beneath the Bodhi Tree was decorated by constructing a seat whereas the area around the Bodhi Tree was surrounded by the railing pillars. Therefore, I suggest that the term '*Bodhimaṇḍa*' may have referred to the Bodhi Tree shrine (see Fig. 2.7). The specific terms used in the Sanskrit texts are *Bodhimaṇḍamahi*, *Bodhimaṇḍato*, and *Bodhimaṇḍapratisthita* and '*Bodhivrikśamūle sihāsano*' (translated as the Bodhi throne).⁶²

From the first century CE, a new conception of this seat is apparent in the cosmic biography of the Buddha. The first indication comes from the *BCI*, which mentions the importance of the seat and its evolving perception:

For today is the appointed time for the ripening of those deeds which he has done in the past for the sake of illumination. Thus he is seated in this place

⁶¹ M. Monier-Williams, *The Sanskrit English Dictionary* (Delhi, 1990, rpt.), p. 775.

⁶² P. L. Vaidya, *Lalita-Vistara* (Darbhanga, 1958), p. 257. See also Goswami, *LV*, pp. 270-277. The *LV* descriptions are at a supernatural level where *devas* and celestial beings in order to worship the Buddha decorate and worship the Bodhi tree and the area around it including the way from the river bank to the seat.

exactly like the previous sages (*muni*). For this is the 'navel of the earth's surface' (*nabhirvasudhatalasya*), entirely possessed of the highest power; for there is no other spot on earth which can bear the force of this concentrated thought.⁶³

Similarly the *MV* also describes that 'the Bodhi throne' (*Bodhimaṇḍa*) was surrounded by jewelled ground which the *devas* fashioned in the centre (*nābhi*) of the Buddha field. Thousands of *devas* stood on the ground, carrying sensors and worshipping the Lord of the world'.⁶⁴ These two passages clearly indicate the growing perception that the Bodhi seat was a component as sacred as the Bodhi Tree.

Two points may to be noted here. Firstly, the importance of the Bodhi Tree derived from its status as a relic. Within the Buddhist Theravada tradition, three types of relics have been identified - corporeal relics (*śarīrika dhātu*), relics of use (*paribhogika dhātu*) and relics of commemoration (*uddesika dhātu*).⁶⁵ The bodily remains of the Buddha were *śarīrika dhātu*, which were generally enshrined in a *stūpa*. A *paribhogika dhātu* was any object used by the Buddha. The third category of *uddesika dhātu* included objects which reminded one of or somehow points to or re-present, the Buddha and includes the Buddha images. Since Bodhi tree was used by the Buddha himself, it was a *paribhogika dhātu* and symbolised the Buddha himself.⁶⁶

In contrast, the emergence of the Bodhi seat was probably a result of the new *discourse* that began to emerge after the development of the cosmic Buddha biography. The *BV* and *MV* discuss the lives of other Buddhas in other *kṣetras* and mention specific Bodhi trees for each though the place of enlightenment remains the same. Within the cosmic biography, Gotama follows the footsteps of the previous Buddhas by replicating their acts, including enlightenment at the same place.⁶⁷ Indeed, the seat was the place of enlightenment for all the previous Buddhas and therefore, it symbolised the centre of the Buddhist world in the eons of all Buddhas including Gotama. Moreover, the emergence

⁶³ Johnston, *BCr*, pp. 200-201, verses 67-68.

⁶⁴ Jones, *MV*, vol. 3, p. 261.

⁶⁵ K. Trainor, *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 89. Also see, J. S. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton, 2004), p. 19.

⁶⁶ The symbolism of the Bodhi Tree as a marker of the event of the enlightenment led to the re-plantation of its branches or its replication in different parts of the Buddhist world and therefore people could see the *uddesika* relic and offer their worship to the Buddha.

⁶⁷ Some of the other acts will be discussed later as well.

of a permanent Bodhi seat shrine as a marker of the most important biographical event of the Buddha meant that the seat had to be worshipped and maintained. This subsequently led to the construction of a new shrine in accordance with the newly emergent religious practices and is duly reflected in the Mahānāman inscription from Bodhgayā, the dating of which has been hotly debated.

IV.2 The Emergence of Vajrāsana and the Mahābodhi Temple

Scholars have debated the actual date of this inscription on two grounds - the reading of numerical letters (200, 60 and 9) and whether to assign the date to the Kalacuri-Cedi (c. 248 CE) or the Gupta era (c. 319 CE).⁶⁸ It is further complicated by the date of the Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman. It is now accepted that the date on the inscription is the 269th year of the Gupta era, which suggests that it was installed in c. 588-589 CE. Written in the Siddhamātrkā script, it mentions that a new temple (*bhavanam*) at the *Bodhimaṇḍa* was constructed by Mahānāman.⁶⁹ Another inscription by Māhanāman from the site mentions his donation of a Buddha image, which may have been installed in the new temple.⁷⁰ This is also supported by a tenth-century Sri Lankan inscription from Ramkale near Sigiriya.⁷¹ This inscription mentions that one Mahānāman went to the *Bodhimaṇḍa vihāra* thrice in his life-time and on his last visit made the donations of constructing a new temple and installing a new sculpture in the shrine (*Buddhapratimālayam*). This inscription, though composed in the tenth century, provides an eulogy of the Mahānāman and also indicates to the construction of the Mahābodhi temple by the Sri Lankan monk.

The construction of the temple at the site of the *Bodhimaṇḍa* also meant that a new focus of ritual emerged at the site.⁷² Unlike earlier times, the Buddha seated on his seat of enlightenment within the temple became the predominant shrine of the sacred site.

⁶⁸ See, Fleet, *CII* 3 (1888), no. 71, pp. 274-278. Also see Richard Solomon, *Indian Epigraphy* (New Delhi, 1998), p. 39.

⁶⁹ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 71, pp. 274-278.

⁷⁰ *CII* 3, (1888), no. 72, pp. 278-279.

⁷¹ S.V. Sohoni, 'Epigraphia Miscellanea', *JBR*, vol. 61, no. 1-4 (1975-76), pp. 190-204. Mahānāman is also presented as the author of the famous Sri Lankan text *Mahāvamsā*.

⁷² F. Asher has noted that the construction of the temple led to the reconceptualisation of the site as its central focus was shifted from the Bodhi Tree to a shrine housing an image of the Buddha. See Asher, *Art of Eastern India*, pp. 27-28.

Also at this time, the conception of the Bodhi seat as the 'navel/centre of the Buddhist world' was given a new name *Vajrāsana*. The first reference to the term comes from the account of Xuanzang, who describes it like this:

In the middle of the enclosure surrounding the Bodhi Tree is the diamond throne (*Vajrāsana*). In former days, when the *Bhadra-kalpa* was arriving at the period of perfection, when the great earth arose, this throne appeared. It is in the middle of great universe (chilicosm); it goes down to the limits of the golden wheel (the gold circle), and upwards it is flush with the ground. It is composed of diamond. In circuit it is 100 paces or so. On this the thousand Buddhas of the *Bhadra-kalpa* have sat and entered the diamond (*vajra*) *samādhi*; hence the name of the diamond throne. It is the place where the Buddhas attain the holy path (the sacred way of Buddha-hood). It is also called the *Bodhimaṇḍa*.⁷³

The equation of the seat of enlightenment with the *Bodhimaṇḍa*, though he describes it predominantly as the place of 'diamond throne', is significant. The term *Vajrāsana* began to symbolise enlightenment as well as the predominant marker of the place of enlightenment, indicated by its depiction in the sculptures of the period. It is also attested by the repeated use of this term in local inscriptions such as the Ghosarawa inscription of Vīradeva (who mentions his pilgrimage and adoration to the *Vajrāsana* at Mahābodhi), and royal charters of the Pāla kings, such as the Khalimpur grant of the Dharmapāla.⁷⁴ Vīradeva's inscription also refers to another popular name of the place as the Mahābodhi, also proved by a Kesava's inscription, which records the donation of a four-faced Mahādeva and the construction of a tank for the residents of Mahābodhi.⁷⁵ The Tibetan monk-pilgrim Dharmasvāmin, who came to Bodhgayā in the third decade of the thirteenth century CE, also uses the terms *Vajrāsana* and Mahābodhi to refer to Bodhgayā. The foregoing discussion demonstrates how, from the emergence of the Bodhi Tree shrine in the second or first century BCE, the site gradually developed into a place where the Bodhi seat formed the centre of a newly conceived cosmic world permanently embedded in the Buddhist tradition.

⁷³ Beal, *Travels*, p. 345.

⁷⁴ For Vīradeva's inscription, see F. Kielhorn, 'A Buddhist Stone Inscription from Ghosrawa', *IA*, vol. 18 (1888), p. 310. For the Khalimpur Grant, see *EI* 4 (1896-97), no. 34, p. 249.

⁷⁵ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 54.

In addition to the main temple and the Bodhi Tree, Xuanzang also mentions a number of shrines and their links with the biography of the Buddha. As discussed earlier, his account shows a heavy influence of the textual tradition such as the marking of all the places of legends with large *stūpas* and structures. Cunningham drew a map of the places based on Xuanzang's depiction and attempted to find all the structures based on his account (Fig. 2.14). However, Cunningham's findings and identifications overlook the massive development of the site between the eighth and twelfth centuries when a number of sculptures and miniature stone *stūpas* were donated and installed within the complex. This changed situation is also suggested by the description of the place in the account of Dharmasvāmin. Therefore, the construction of the Mahābodhi temple in the sixth century was followed by the addition of numerous sculptures and miniature stone *stūpas* to the complex in later centuries, which suggests a substantial development of the sacred place between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE.

IV.3 Other Components

The site contained a huge number of Buddhist sculptures which were constructed and donated to the temple complex between the seventh and twelfth century CE. The sculptural additions to the temple have been discussed by Janice Leoshko.⁷⁶ The site also contained twenty donative inscriptions from this period, mentioning the donation of statues and miniature stone *stūpas* (Table A in Appendix). The inscribed sculptures were mostly gifts by the monks and pilgrims. At the same time, there are also a high number of uninscribed sculptures. Of all the sculptures, the most popular form seems to have been the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* Buddha which emerged in the sixth-seventh century CE.⁷⁷ This representation was clearly linked to the enduring importance of the event of the enlightenment and the *Vajrāsana*, which led to the large-scale production of this form and popular worship in the larger Bodhgayā region. Besides the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* Buddha, the site also contained the numerous images of Bodhisattvas, Padmapāṇi

⁷⁶ Janice Leoshko, 'Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures', (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1987), see also Janice Leoshko, 'Pilgrimage and the Evidence of Bodhgayā's Images' in Janice Leoshko, ed., *Bodhgayā: the Site of Enlightenment* (Bombay, 1988), pp. 43-56.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

Avalokiteśvara, Tārā, Mahākāla (Śiva) and Vajra-Varāhi, all dated between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE on stylistic grounds. The installation of these images and their regular worship show the growing complexity of the religious practices at that time.

Along with these sculptures, a large number of miniature stone *stūpas* were discovered within the Mahābodhi complex. During his exploration at the temple complex, Cunningham found four tiers of miniature stone *stūpas*, structural *stūpas*, built of stones and bricks, and thousands of monolith *stūpas* of all sizes. So great was the number of these monuments and so rapid was the accumulation of stones and earth that the general level of the courtyard was raised about six metres above the floor of the Mahābodhi temple. There is a great variety in the shapes of these 'miniature stone *stūpas*', from the low and almost bare hemisphere to the tall ornamented ones with elaborately carved bases.⁷⁸ They have also been found from the excavation of Taradih from the level associated with the Gupta period onwards.⁷⁹ However, most of those remaining within the temple complex can be dated between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE (Fig. 2.15).

In these miniature stone *stūpas*, the figures of the Buddha were placed in niches on each side of a square base, while the different tiers of mouldings were separated by rows of sculpted figures. These generally consisted of lines of small niches filled with the figures of the Buddha, or rows of small *stūpas*. The figures on the *stūpas* in the large niches depict different Buddhist deities, celestial Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Jāmbhala, Marīchī, Tārā and others. Most configurations show the four *mudrās* of the Buddha in a clockwise direction: *bhūmisparśa mudrā*, *dharmacakra mudrā*, *dhyāna mudrā* with a bowl, and a second Buddha in *dharmacakra mudrā*. The scenes represented on these *stūpas* include the Buddha's enlightenment, first sermon, and miracles of Vaishali and Sravastī. In some cases, the donors themselves were represented below, with their gifts arranged on each side. For these miniature *stūpas*, multiple tiers of identical Buddha figures were a major decorative theme and these illustrated the idea of the multitude of Buddhas found in Buddhist scriptures. The huge number of these votive *stūpas* in the

⁷⁸ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 46-49.

⁷⁹ A. K. Prasad, 'Taradih Excavations', *JAR* (1987-88), pp. 9-11.

temple complex requires some explanation. Why were they constructed and what was their function?

Based on the account of I-tsing, *dhāraṇī* texts, and contents and structure of these miniature *stūpas*, Schopen has convincingly argued that they had a funerary function.⁸⁰ I-tsing describes *kūla stūpas* as small *stūpas* without a cupola, constructed by the Buddhist monks, and containing the *śarīra* (or relics) of the dead.⁸¹ Almost all of these miniature *stūpas* within the Mahābodhi complex had no “pinnacle” or elaborate finial. Cunningham attributed this to the construction of new structures on top of the old.⁸² The large number of these *stūpas* around the Bodhi Tree and temple contain anonymous mortuary deposits of bone and ash. They also contain *dhāraṇī* sealings (ritual and magical formulae to ward off evil such as the Vimalośniṣa *dhāraṇī*). These *stūpas* are testament to the desire of followers to be always (even after death) in the presence of the Buddha or his relics. The mortuary deposits were clearly brought and placed at the site. The reason for this action is explained in the *MPS* where it is said that a death in the presence of the Buddha will result in rebirth in heaven.⁸³ The numbers, varieties and contents of these *stūpas* within the temple complex indicate the metamorphosis of ritual practices within the Buddhist tradition. It may also indicate an attempt to honour past and present monks at the site, as validated by the finding of inscribed votive *stūpas* from the site.

Cunningham also found many small clay *stūpas*, which were placed within a miniature stone or brick *stūpa*. Many of these *stūpas* also contained small clay seals and several burnt clay seals.⁸⁴ Most of these seals and plaques depict the event of the enlightenment. In the centre, the Buddha is seated in the *bhūmiśparśa mudrā*. Above Him is a straight-sided tower surmounted by an *amalaka*, depicting the Mahābodhi temple.

⁸⁰ Schopen, *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks*, pp. 114-147. According to Schopen, the *dhāraṇī* texts are preoccupied with the problem of death and with either the procurement of a means to avoid rebirth in hell and other unfortunate destinies, or with the release of those already born there. The *dhāraṇī* texts contained ritual formulae to ward off evil and were generally meant for the laity.

⁸¹ J. Tarakusu, trs., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago A.D. 671-69* (Oxford, 1896), p. 82.

⁸² Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, pp. 50-52.

⁸³ Walsche, *Dīghā-Nikāya*, p. 252.

⁸⁴ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 52.

Branches of the Bodhi Tree emanate from the top, and small *stūpas* surround the flank. Below is etched the *Pratītyasamutpāda* verse in the early medieval characters.⁸⁵

Many images, *stūpas* and other votive offerings at Bodhgayā contained the Buddhist creed, *Pratītyasamutpāda* which was used to consecrate images and *stūpas* instead of an actual relic. This creed was the summation of the teachings of the Buddha and has been taken as the very essence of 'His teaching'; indeed the very source of his Buddhahood.⁸⁶ This interchangeability of relics with this verse reflected the change in the conception of the body of the Buddha. Thus, the *pratītyasamutpāda* doctrine manifested the Buddha's 'true body', his *dharmakāya*. It effected in a sense a redefinition of what constituted the presence of the historical Buddha, and therefore how he was to be located and maintained at sacred places.⁸⁷ Recently, Leoshko has convincingly argued that the engraving of the *pratītyasamutpāda* verse on the images and other material remains imbues them with the presence of the Buddha.⁸⁸ This was another signifier of the evolving religious practices at the site.

Similar inscribed terracotta sealings and plaques were also found from the uppermost excavated sections of the Bakror *stūpa*, suggesting that it underwent a third phase of reconstruction between the eighth and tenth centuries CE. The maximum diameter of the *stūpa* in the last stage was extended approximately to 65.5 metres, which was encased in lime plaster. Mud mortar of varying thickness was used as a binding medium in the reconstruction of the *stūpa*. An enclosure wall of baked brick covered by lime plaster railings and gateways, probably in all the cardinal directions, was added to the existing *stūpa*. In front of the gateway of the *stūpa* and all around the enclosure wall, a *pradakṣiṇa paṭha* (circumambulatory path) of a poorer kind of lime plaster was also added. A baked brick platform was constructed on one side possibly for congregations. The railings and pillars were made of grey sandstone.⁸⁹ This reconstruction also

⁸⁵These seals, in effect, juxtapose both senses of the *Vajrāsana*, they depict the enlightenment as well as the essence of the experience at Bodhgayā.

⁸⁶Daniel Boucher, 'The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics', *JIAS*, vol. 14, no. 1 (1991), pp. 1-27.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁸⁸Janice Leoshko, 'About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India', *Archives of Asian Art*, vol. 52 (2000/2001), p. 78.

⁸⁹Srivastava, 'Excavations at Bakror *Stūpa*', p. 8.

suggested the addition of new layers to the existing structures and how new practices resulted in their redefinition.

IV.4 Summary

To summarise, there was a massive development of Bodhgayā between the sixth and twelfth centuries CE. By the time of Xuanzang's visit, the seven-week conception of the Bodhi Tree complex had emerged as the standard format for the place. His description also mentions other places around the Bodhi Tree which were linked to other events of the life of the Buddha in later biographies. However, the lack of proper excavation makes it difficult to substantiate the origins and proper chronology of these structures. Nevertheless, Xuanzang also notes Buddhist shrines at the Gayāśīrṣa hill, Mora hill cave and *stūpas*, and at Bakror Sujātā's *stūpa* – all of which were important components of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā. Though the lack of archaeological data at Gayāśīrṣa hill makes it difficult to substantiate his claim, the existence of *stūpas* at Mora hill and Bakror bears out his description.⁹⁰

In addition to the emergence and growth of these sites, the Bodhi Tree complex was also transformed by the new conception of the Bodhi seat, the construction of the Mahābodhi temple as well as by the multitude of Buddhist images and statues. All of these developments suggest the changing religious practices at the site. These changes were also reflective of the evolving nature of the site. The general perception has been that the site was dominated by the *Sthaviravāda* (*Theravadins*) monks since its emergence. This assumption has been based on the fact that Xuanzang mentions the presence of Sri Lankan *Sthavira* monks there.⁹¹ Furthermore, Dharmasvāmin, who visited Bodhgayā in c. 1234-36, also mentions the control of the Mahābodhi temple by the Sri Lankan Śrāvaka monks, who were antagonistic to the Mahāyāna principles. *Dharmasvāmin* also notes an instance of being questioned by a Śrāvaka monk for

⁹⁰Xuanzang mentions the Gayāśīrṣa mountain as a sacred Buddhist site and Kaśyapa *stūpas* around the Gayāśīrṣa mountain. But the earliest texts do not mention this mountain. It is only in the later accounts in *MVI* and *LF* that we see the Buddha meditating on the hill before going through the Prāgbodhi to Bodhgayā and later divulging the fire-sermon at the Gayāśīrṣa mountain.

⁹¹ Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, p. 3

carrying a Mahāyāna text. The two above noted accounts have been cited to argue for the conservative nature of the site, which will be examined critically now.

The depictions of *nāga*, Yakṣi, mythical creatures and numerous gods and goddesses such as Indra, Sūrya, and Śrī figures on the railing pillars from the early times suggests an ensemble of religious practices, which may have emerged due to the Buddhist interaction with the local practices.⁹² This set of evidence clearly indicates a much more dynamic religious practice at the site. The fact that three Viṣṇu sculptures were found along with an inscribed four-faced Mahādeva from the Mahābodhi complex also suggests a similar pattern in the early medieval period.⁹³

Additionally, the examination of the early medieval sculptural and epigraphic remains also suggests a heavy Mahāyāna presence at the site. The diverse sculptural assemblage - Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapaṇi, Khasarpaṇa, Tārā, Marīchī, Yamāntaka, and Jāmbhala – from the temple complex indicates their installation and worship.⁹⁴ Furthermore, there are two inscriptions from the site which contain Mahāyāna formula.⁹⁵ The first inscription, inscribed on a sculpture donated by Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman in c. 588-89 CE, clearly mentions the Mahāyāna formula: ‘*Yad-atra puṇyam tad-bhavatu sarvasattvānām-anuttara-jñān-āvāptayē-stu*’.⁹⁶ The formula can be translated as ‘whatever religious merit (*there is*) in this (*act*), let it be for the acquisition of supreme knowledge of all sentient beings’. This verse is also repeated in the second inscription, which was found on an image donated by *Sihavira* Viryendra from Somapura in the tenth century CE. In fact, Viryendra clearly presents himself as a follower of

⁹² Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism* (Oxford, 2004); see also K. K. Chakravarty, *Buddhist Art*, pp. 2-3.

⁹³ Huntington, *Pāla-Senā*, pp. 205-206. For a detailed discussion of these finding, see chapter-5, sections III.1 and III.2.

⁹⁴ Leoshko, ‘Pilgrimage and the Evidence of Bodhgayā’s Images’, p. 53.

⁹⁵ Gregory Schopen, ‘Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions’, in Gregory Schopen, ed., *Figments and Fragments of Mahayana Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 223-269. Schopen includes these two inscriptions from Bodhgayā in this study of the references to the Mahāyāna formulae and argues for their Mahāyāna nature. He also discusses the validity and emergence of the Mahāyāna formula and argues that these formulae began to be engraved on inscriptions from the fourth century CE onwards.

⁹⁶ CII 3(1963), no. 72, p. 279.

Mahāyāna (*Mahāyāna-yāyin*).⁹⁷ Even Dharmasvāmin attests to a Tārā temple there.⁹⁸ Similarly, the presence of innumerable miniature stone *stūpas* (or burial *ad sanctos*) with bodily remains suggests 'Mahāyāna' practices at the site, in contrast to previous held beliefs that these were absent. The above cited evidence indicates a mixed practice at the site and indicates a much broader outlook of the Buddhist *saṅgha*.

Secondly, the link between the presence of Sri Lankan monks and the Hinayāna nature of the site needs to be examined in relation to the history of Sri Lankan monastic traditions. The assertion, that the presence of Sri Lankan *Sthavira* monks from the fourth century CE onwards, is based on the assumption that the Sri Lankan monks were necessarily Hinayānists. The *Sthaviravādins* at the two main monasteries in Anuradhapura, the Abhayagiri and (after the third century CE) Jetavana, called themselves '*Theravāda*' but followed Mahāyāna ideals, and had clear Mahāyāna leanings, also attested by Xuanzang accounts.⁹⁹ It was only the third group of *Sthaviravādins* in Anuradhapura, designated Mahāvihāra *Sthaviras*, who clung to the Hinayāna. Until the 10th century, they were decidedly marginalised, and certainly not the recipients of royal favour (such as being sent to build and run complexes in Bodhgayā), nor the main type of '*Sthavira*' or 'Sri Lankan Buddhist monk' that Indians would think of when they heard those designations.¹⁰⁰ As known from the epigraphic evidence, the construction of the Mahābodhi temple was funded by a Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman

⁹⁷ D. C. Sircar, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* vol. II (New Delhi, 1983), p. 59. The inscription is called Bodhgayā Buddha image inscription of Viryendra and was first published by T. Bloch in the Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India- 1908-09.

⁹⁸ Roerich, *Biography*, p. 74. Tārānāth also attests the installation of a Heruka image within the main Mahābodhi shrine in his account.

⁹⁹ J.S. Walters, 'Mahāsenā at the Mahāvihāra', in Daud Ali, ed., *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 323-366. Walters clearly writes that 'abundant evidence in the form of inscriptions, archaeological ruins and even the Mahāvihāran sources confirm without doubt the indication given by the Chinese pilgrims that the Mahāyāna Theravadins were the residents of Abhayagirivihāra, and that they dominated Anuradhapura until about the tenth century CE'. See Walters, 'Mahāsenā', p. 328. See also Peter Skilling, 'A Citation From The *Buddhavaṃsa of the Abhayagiri School', *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, vol. 18 (1993): pp. 165-175. Skilling also refers to the broader outlook of the Abhayagirivihāravāsī and how they were accused of following Mahāyāna by the Mahāvihāravāsī (p. 168).

¹⁰⁰ J. S. Walters, Pers. Comm., 4 January 2009. See also, R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tuscon, 1979), p. 212. Gunawardana mentions that although there were many successful Abhayagirivihāravāsī and Jetavaniya graduates of Nalanda University, the only Mahāvihāravāsī students who attended, in the ninth century CE, were expelled for their belligerent refusal to accept Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna teachings. Of these two schools, Abhayagiri centre, possibly followers of Mahāyāna, continued to dominate the region until the tenth century CE.

and his Mahāyāna leanings are reflected in the donation of inscribed image (with Mahāyāna formula). This fact, when combined with the above description of dominance of the Abhayagirivihāra up to the tenth-eleventh centuries CE, seems to suggest that the Sri Lankan *Sthavira* presence at Bodhgayā was dominated by the Mahāyāna-following Abhayagirivihāravāsī or Jetavaniya Sthaviras. This may also provide an explanation for Dharmasvāmin's interaction with the Sri Lankan Śrāvaka monks, who probably belonged to the Mahāvihāra tradition after the end of the Abhayagirivihāra tradition. Lastly, Tārānāth also mentions the presence of forty Mahāyāna monks at Hīnayāna *Vajrāsana* in his account.¹⁰¹

Finally, Bodhgayā being the paradigmatic life-event site, was also being visited by numerous Mahāyāna pilgrims over the centuries, some of whom may have led to the appearance of Mahāyāna materials at the site. The above discussion indicates impressive Mahāyāna activity at the site in the early medieval period. Even if there was a local *Sthavira* group at the site, the material remains suggested borrowing and mixing of doctrines and religious practices between these two schools of Buddhism.¹⁰² This may have occurred because of the Bodhgayā's geographical proximity and interaction with the monastic centre at Nalanda, a prominent Mahāyāna centre since its emergence in the fifth century CE. Similarly, the *saṅgha* was also cognizant of the emergence and growth of the Brāhmaṇical orders - Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava – in the surrounding region. Their interactions with these two Brāhmaṇical orders had a lasting impact and in fact led to the transformation of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in numerous ways. This transformation process helps comprehend the ensemble of religious practices, which cannot be categorised as either 'Mahāyāna' or 'Hīnayāna'. Instead, the process suggest a much more dynamic and eclectic 'Buddhist tradition' at the early medieval Bodhgayā, which continued to evolve.

¹⁰¹ Lama Chimpa and A. Chattopdyaya, trs., *Tārānāth's History of Buddhism in India* (Delhi, 1970), p. 313.

¹⁰² For a detailed discussion on the interaction between various sects of Buddhism and the nature of Buddhism after the emergence of Mahāyāna, see D. S. Ruegg, 'Aspects of the Study of the (Earlier) Indian Mahāyāna,' *JIAS*, vol. 27, no.1 (2004), pp. 1-62. Ruegg has also discussed the distinction between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna Schools. In addition, he has also explored the terminology and how these different sects interacted and influenced the ever-evolving Buddhism.

V. CONCLUSION

The above study of Bodhgayā demonstrates the processes through which sacred biography interacts with sacred places and traces the synchronic development of the Buddha's legendary biography and the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā. The discussion shows the three-phase development of Bodhgayā's sacred landscape, which also indicates the gradual development and subsequent crystallisation of the Buddha's biography. Due to the lack of a clear chronological date for either the early textual or archaeological evidence, it is difficult to precisely determine whether the biographic accounts preceded and guided the Buddhist structures (constituting the sacred landscape) or the construction of the sacred landscape led to the growth of the legendary biography. Nevertheless, the chapter elucidates the concurrent growth of the sacred landscape and biographical accounts within a broad chronological frame.

The first phase was represented by the material remains and the Pāli accounts. The earliest archaeological marking of the site was represented by an uninscribed Aśokan pillar whereas the earliest seat at the base of the tree was only constructed in the second-first centuries BCE, and was called the *Bodhimāṇḍa*. Along with the Bodhi Tree, the Bodhi seat also emerged as a *paribhogika* relic in this period. The Pāli biographical account supports the archaeological evidence which indicated the emergence of the Bakror *stūpa*, the Bodhi Tree shrine (including the seat) and jewelled walk as the key components of the site.

The conception of the Buddha's biography on the 'cosmic scale' emerged in the first phase. The Sanskrit biographies, also conceptualised on the 'cosmic scale', represented the second phase. Within this phase, there emerged a new conception of the Buddha. In accordance with this perception, every aspect of his life acquired a legendary shape, leading to a detailed description of the Buddha's pre- and post-enlightenment stay. These details led to the refashioning of the Bodhi Tree shrine, which was then reconceptualised on the basis of the Buddha's seven-week stay in and around the Bodhi Tree. The foremost development of this period was the emergence of the concept of the Bodhi seat as the 'navel of the earth'. The sacred landscape in this phase also included Gayāśīrṣa hill, Mora hill, Bakror *stūpa* and the Bodhi Tree complex (including all the places of miracles). The biography of the Buddha was narrated through this landscape.

Archaeologically, this period led to the addition of more railing pillars, the reconstructions of the Bodhi seat and the Bakror *stūpa*, and the initiation of image worship at the site. By the end of this phase, the Buddha biography as represented in the *LV*, became the paradigmatic standard, which continued to be replicated in this form.

In the third phase, the concept of the Bodhi seat as the 'navel of the earth' and 'the centre of the Buddhist universe', was given a new name '*Vajrāsana*' or 'diamond throne'. A new temple was constructed at the *Bodhimaṇḍa/Vajrāsana*, leading to the replacement of the early historic *Bodhimaṇḍa* by the Mahābodhi temple at the *Vajrāsana*. This also had a major impact on the future development of the Mahābodhi complex, and the associated rituals, which is reflected in the numerous donations of sculptures and votive *stūpas*. The variety of imagery found from the site also illustrates the evolving nature of rituals and *their wider social appeal*.¹⁰³ The numerous miniature *stūpas* also indicated the emphasis on the funerary nature of the site in the early medieval period, which was a major development in this period.

The study of inscriptions from the site also indicates the changing nature of the donations – starting with railings, then images and image shrines, and finally votive *stūpas*. The construction of the Mahābodhi temple and a number of smaller shrines was followed by donations for their subsequent maintenance. For example, the Mahābodhi temple underwent construction and repair from time to time, Purṇavarman in the seventh century CE, donors in the eight-ninth centuries CE and by Burmese kings in the eleventh and the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries CE.¹⁰⁴ Two Burmese inscriptions of c. 1035 CE and c. 1086 CE record donations and repairs to the temple. Structural and epigraphic evidence also suggests the presence of a local monastic community, also attested by the excavation of an early historic monastery at Taradih, which may have played a crucial role in not just conceptualising and planning the sacred landscape but also in maintaining it over these fifteen centuries.

¹⁰³ Janice Leoshko has convincingly countered the earlier argument of the scholars about the conservative nature of early medieval Bodhgayā. Based on an analysis of sculptures from the site, she suggests a much more liberal Bodhgayā in the early medieval period. This liberal Bodhgayā accommodated practices from the Mahāyana and other Buddhist schools as well. See, Janice Leoshko, 'Pilgrimage and the Evidence of Bodhgayā's Images' in J. Leoshko, ed., *Bodhgayā: the Site of Enlightenment* (Bombay, 1986), pp. 43-56.

¹⁰⁴ Cunningham, *Mahābodhi*, p. 76.

Faxian mentions the existence of three monasteries in the fifth century whereas Xuanzang also attests the existence of a Sri Lankan monastery at the site.¹⁰⁵ Dharmasvāmin mentions that twelve monasteries existed at the site at the time of his visit in the third decade of the thirteenth century.¹⁰⁶ These three accounts suggest that the site was continually under the control of Buddhist monks, who lived in these monasteries. The fact that the Buddhist monasteries continued to exist and grow (in number) at the site from the third-second centuries BCE to the twelfth century CE meant that they managed to acquire adequate resources for the maintenance and development of the shrine as well as their own sustenance. The site contains only fifty-six donative inscriptions (mostly railings, images, and miniature *stūpas*), whereas the analysis of the structural, sculptural and votive remains shows a massive growth of the site. The question then is: how did the Buddhist *saṅgha* acquire resources for its sustenance as well as the maintenance and development of the Bodhgayā's sacred structures? This question leads us to examine the wider social context of Bodhgayā. Instructed by the Buddha himself to spread the order, did the *saṅgha* make any efforts to spread the order in the larger region? If they did, where did they spread the order and how did they interact with the local society? The following chapter will address these questions.

¹⁰⁵ Beal, *Travels*, p. 126; Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, p. 358.

¹⁰⁶ Roerich, *Biography*, p. 73.

Chapter-3 A Chronological Study of the Settlements and Religious sites

The objective of this chapter is to study the historical development of the Bodhgayā region in order to locate the monastic establishment at Bodhgayā within a broader regional context. The earliest archaeological evidence of a monumental nature at the site indicates that Bodhgayā emerged in the Mauryan period, almost two centuries after the time of the Buddha. There exists no evidence to study the developments that took place at the site in this gap of two centuries. This chapter will show that after the emergence of Bodhgayā as a Buddhist monastic centre from the third century BCE, archaeological evidence indicates that Buddhism began to spread in the wider region. This chapter will trace the settlement history of the Bodhgayā region and the spread of the Buddhist order from the third century BCE, tracing its development down to the twelfth century CE. It will also delineate the spatial linkages between the Buddhist *saṅgha* and the surrounding settlements of the region.

I. Historiography and Background

I.1 Buddhist sites and Settlement History of Bodhgayā: Background

The early Buddhist texts indicate a pre-existing settlement context for Bodhgayā. Interestingly, the textual sources refer to a number of villages and settlements where the Buddha stopped, preached, or passed through, in the course of his journeys. Numerous villages are mentioned by name in various textual accounts of the Magadha region, which according to the *Mahāvagga* comprised some 80,000 settlements.¹ A number of settlements in these textual accounts may be associated with the Bodhgayā region. These include Senanigrama, Uruvela, Gayā, Aparagaya, Vasala, Candadvilam Sarathipura, and Anala.² Such textual references suppose the existence of a variety of settlements in the region. The Pāli canon and Sanskrit biographies from which these references are taken, however, may not be dated before the first century BCE, and do

¹ For textual references to villages in Magadha, see K. R. Norman, *Sutta-Nipāta The group of Discourses* (Oxford, 2001), p. 9; Maurice Walshe, *Dīgha Nikāya: The Long Discourses of the Buddha* (Boston, 1987), p. 132. For mention of Magadha's 80,000 villages, see Uma Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi, 1996), p. 19. The quote is taken from the *Mahāvagga*.

² These places are mentioned in Sanskrit biographies of the Buddha. For details see, Bijoya Goswami, trs. *Lalitavistara* (Kolkata, 2001), p. 232; E. H. Johnston, trs., *The Buddhacaritam or Acts of the Buddha* (New Delhi, 1936, rpt. 1972), p. 182.

not necessarily provide evidence for conditions at the time of the Buddha. What *can* be said, based on textual data alone, is that various settlements existed in the region from at least the first century BCE onwards. Therefore, two questions will be posed in this section. First, is it possible to locate any of these settlements; and second, does the archaeological record support an older settlement context for the Bodhgayā region?

I.2 Historiography

Beginning with the survey of Buchanan Hamilton in 1811, several explorations of the South Bihar region over the last two hundred years have led to the reporting of various sites of historical importance, including sites with Buddhist remains. Hamilton's survey of Gayā district (1810-11) was later followed by Captain Markham Kittoe (1847), Alexander Cunningham (1861-65, 1871 and 1880-81), T. F. Peppe (1866) in the nineteenth century and Sir Aurel Stein (1902-05), T. Bloch (1906) and R. D. Banerjee (1910-11) in the twentieth. All these early scholars primarily focussed on correlating references to sites mentioned in the later Sanskrit and Pāli texts with the itineraries of the Chinese pilgrims.³ Later, more systematic studies of the textual materials were made with a view to identifying textual place names with modern villages. B. M. Barua's work (1931), with one of its main *foci* to identify settlements and sacred places, also relied extensively on textual material, though drawing mostly on the epics and different versions of *Gayā-Māhātmya*.⁴ M. S. Pandey's work on the historical geography of Bihar is a systematic attempt to glean geographic and topographical data from the textual as well as reported archaeological sources.⁵

Such works have in one fashion or another heavily relied on much later Pāli, Sanskrit or Chinese texts to construct the settlement history of a much earlier period in the region. Furthermore, the dearth of scientific geographical information in the texts makes it difficult to locate most of the settlements named. For example, there have been attempts by Barua and Mitra to identify the names of three places within the region where the three Kaśyapa brothers Gayā, Uruvelā, and Nadī lived at the time

³ R. L. Mitra, *Buddha-Gayā: The Great Buddhist temple, The Hermitage of Śākya-muni* (Calcutta, 1878).

⁴ B. M. Barua, *Gayā and Buddha-Gayā: Early History of the Holy Land* (Varanasi, 1931), p. 115.

⁵ M. S. Pandey, *The Historical Geography and Topography of Bihar* (Delhi, 1963).

of the Buddha.⁶ But their hypotheses have remained inconclusive due to the lack of any corroboratory evidence and proper geographical bearings.

In archaeological terms, the work of many of the early surveyors has been of limited value. The works of Kittoe, Cunningham, Stein and Bloch, for example, focused largely on monumental, sculptural or epigraphical remains. This tended to limit their interpretations, although they did broaden the horizons of historical research by reporting such finds in the region as a whole. Their categories of enquiry led them to define these early archaeological sites as either religious (Buddhist-*stūpa*) or urban sites. Most sites with Buddhist sculptures, for example, were reported as Buddhist monastic centres. Cities were the other sought after entity; Kittoe wrote that 'Whenever a mound is seen in a flat part of the country, depend upon it; it is the site of an ancient city'.⁷

These works clearly overlooked settlements of other types and failed to take into account the fact that monastic centres and their material culture, such as sculptures, were related to the settlements that surrounded them. This was further aggravated by two major lacunae in the later archaeological research in the region. Firstly, the explorations and surveys conducted by Kittoe and Cunningham in the nineteenth century were not followed up by systematic surveys; later works simply continued to rely on earlier reports and consequently no new, more comprehensive data collection was undertaken in the region. Secondly, the methodological biases of the early surveys also continued, with later works simply recording the discoveries of new mounds and pottery on the assumption that they somehow fitted into the older categories. Indeed, they failed to provide any information on the nature of the sites or their immediate geographical contexts.

While these early works together do provide valuable information about the emergence of Buddhist and non-Buddhist religious centres (monasteries, temples and shrines) and the existence of settlements in the region, they have also hindered our understanding. This is due to the fact that they failed to develop a composite approach

⁶ Barua, *Gayā and Buddha-Gayā*, pp. 84-85. Barua categorically identified these three places. He mentioned that Gayā Kaśyapa finds its name and identity in the present city of Gayā, while the names of Nadi and Uruvelā are at present confined respectively to two small villages, namely, Nadi situated in the north on the edge of an old channel of the river Son, and Urel situated in the south at a distance of about a kilometre to the south of the temple at Bodhgayā. The ancient name and identity of Urel was Senānigāma and it was located on the bank of the river Niranjana.

⁷ M. Kittoe, 'Instructions How to Take Correct Facsimiles of Inscriptions', in *JASB*, vol.16, part 1 (1847), p. 368.

either to explain the patterns of the growth of settlements or religious centres.⁸ This chapter will attempt to remedy this failing by correlating the growth of settlements with that of religious centres (monastic and sculptural), and their wider landscapes. Questions arise concerning the locations and spatial contexts of the religious centres and settlements, their geographical and landscape bearings, their evolution over time, and the linkages between different types of sites.

II. Archaeological-Survey and Field-Method

II.1 Survey-Objectives

An archaeological field-survey of the Gayā and Makhdumpur block of the Jehanabad districts of Bihar was conducted in order to locate settlements sites, monastic remains, and other features (Fig. 3.1). The aim was to generate a new database by adding new information about previously reported sites apart from reporting new archaeological sites and their material remains. Further, this new database was analysed in order to address the questions raised above. The approach adopted took two phases: first I conducted an intensive survey over a radius of five kilometres, taking the Mahābodhi temple core-area as its centre; and secondly I carried out a village-to-village survey over a much wider area surrounding Bodhgayā.

The research involved surveying both new and previously reported sites. The purpose of re-surveying previously reported sites was threefold: firstly, to examine the extent of a site and its landscape context by recording all visible archaeological features; secondly, to collect pottery samples in order to prepare a new chronological framework; and lastly, to examine critically newly discovered sculptures and architectural remains to add to the existing knowledge from these sites. Overall, the survey resulted in the discovery of twenty new archaeological sites, seventeen new inscriptions and the documentation of a large number of sculptural and architectural remains.

⁸A. K. Singh, *History of Magadha* (Delhi, 1991); see also Navin Kumar, *Archaeological Excavations in Bihar since Independence* (Patna, 1999). These books report all the recent archaeological excavations and explorations in the Magadha and Bihar regions, respectively. A few notices of excavations and explorations have also been published in the *IAR*.

II.1.1 Intensive Five Square Kilometres Survey

The method adopted for the intensive survey involved extensive walking through the Bodhgayā town, neighbouring villages, river banks, agricultural fields and settlements within the stipulated radius (roughly 78 kilometres total area). I was assisted by three assistants (students from the Magadha University archaeology department), who were involved in field-walking and documenting the features.

However a major problem in this phase of the research was the unorganised, sprawling growth of the town. Hotels and tourist infrastructure, for example, have led to the partial destruction and re-occupation of the area west of the temple complex known as the Taradih mound. Moreover, the construction of modern monasteries and hotels within neighbouring villages along with the high population density in the overall area has led to the gradual denudation of archaeological remains. Nevertheless, the survey led to the documentation of several sculptural remains and a few unexplored mounds, which will be discussed in the sites section below.

The survey of this area resulted in very few archaeological sites as the high population density in the overall area surrounding Bodhgayā has led to the large scale denudation of archaeological remains. All the archaeological as well as geographical features were photographed and their geographical position was noted with the help of a hand-help Global Positioning System (Garmin-make). The survey did not lead to ceramic-collection from any site except Taradih as almost all of these sites are under occupation. I noticed a number of religious shrines, mostly of recent origin with sculptural and architectural fragments from earlier period. A few older shrines with remains of Śiva-liṅga (such as Shivrajpur village, located 4 kilometres south of Bodhgayā) were also documented which were constructed probably in the last two or three centuries. This dating was based on the fact that they were owned by the chief abbot of Śaiva monastery of Bodhgayā. However, such shrines were not included in the analysis and discussion. Similarly, modern shrines with sculptural fragments were excluded as their original context was not known. Moreover, their fragmentary nature made it difficult to either date them to a specific time-frame. However, whenever an inscribed sculptural fragment or a full sculptural piece was found, for example at Badki Bhabhni or Aamwa, they were included in the discussion. Overall, the intensive survey helped in developing a grasp of the wider archaeological and topographical context of the region. The noteworthy features were higher number of water tanks and

the high population density, which suggested higher agricultural production in the neighbouring villages. Some of the villages were known for growing vegetables on an industrial scale, which required substantial amount of water.

II.1.2 Village to Village Survey along Rivers, Hills and Old Routes

The second phase of the survey included village-to-village survey and catalogued some sixty villages in the wider Bodhgayā region. The method involved field-walking in the villages to identify sites and then subsequently examine them. Once a site was identified in a village, the first step was to identify the archaeological significance (by looking at ceramic scatter or sculptural remains) and extent of a site. The second step was to undertake a reconnaissance (a *recee*) of the site by circumambulating the surrounding area of the site to have a fair idea of the site's topography and other geographical features to make observations about landscape context, modern landscape, land use and physical form of the earthworks or monuments. The next stage was to survey the site to record archaeological feature so that their morphology and relationship can be noticed. Time spent on surveying a site was proportionate to the size and extent of the site. There were no hard and fast rules for this as higher time was spent on a larger site to examine its archaeological features as well as the landscape context. Subsequently, this was followed by a collection of ceramics from the different layers and levels of a mound (if disturbed or cut through or ploughed for agriculture). Otherwise, ceramic was collected from any one specific part of the mound. Lastly, the sculptural and architectural remains from a site were documented. Most of the sculptures were generally found within the village temples or shrine beneath a tree and generally sculptural shrines did not seem to have a connection with the mounds. However, enquiries made with the local residents of villages provided the link as they were generally aware of the find-spots. Often, they were found next to the mound or a water tank within those villages.

The first phase survey and knowledge of local environmental conditions provided valuable inputs for developing a plan for the second phase. I made a preliminary exploration of the villages by walking along the rivers' before embarking on the village to village survey. Particular focus was given to villages along the banks of the main rivers - Phalgu (formed by joining of the Niranjana and Mohane rivers), Morhar (joined by the Buddh river), Paimar and Jamuna and along the hills of Gayā

district north of NH2. This decision was also influenced by other factors such as reports of previous explorations in the region by scholars in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Following this, I also decided to survey the sites along major hills such as Barabar, Maher, Hasra, Jethian, Kauwa-dol, Kunwa and Manda within the region. While surveying the hills, slopes, their forms and patterns, their relationships to other earthen and water bodies were examined. These results were subsequently compared with other examples to develop an overall perspective.

The reason for surveying some of the hill-sites was influenced by their previous reporting as many of them were known for sculptural and other remains. Similarly, monastic sites such as Kurkihar had been known for more than a century but their larger landscape and social context were not properly documented. The survey of previously reported sites enhanced the quality and level of available information on many of these sites and identified gaps and weaknesses in the previous records. This led to the first identification of previously unrecognized earthworks and the re-interpretation of known features or confirmation of existing knowledge apart from new alteration made on the landscape. All this added valuable information and new knowledge to the existing sites. Overall, the survey of previously reported sites proved that the landscape context of archaeological sites often revealed as much evidence for the interpretation of a site as the site itself. The above defined methodology helped answer specific and necessary questions about the historical and archaeological growth of the region over a large time span. The analysis of the ceramic and other material remains proved particularly useful for preparing a chronological growth over this spatial entity and how the spatial dynamics was reconfigured from time to time in the region.

II.2 Organising and Presenting the Data into Quadrants

By breaking the region into four quadrants, I attempt to show the significance of the distribution of the data in all four quadrants. These quadrants, in no way, mark any geographical or topographical boundaries; however, they do reflect a pattern as represented in the maps of site-distribution. Every quadrant is marked by rivers and hills and therefore, does reflect the settlement as well as monastic and sculptural sites. An overall analysis of the four quadrants provides an idea of topographical features

and how these were used by the local populace in the ancient India. It also informs about man-land relationship and their spatial and temporal transformations. Lastly, presenting the surveyed data in four quadrants also helps in enquiring the larger patterns, for example the availability of settlements in all four cardinal directions show the spread of settlements on all four sides. Similarly, the presence of monastic and sculptural sites shows the spread of Buddhism in all directions. It also helps develop a grasp of inter-connectivity by examining the material remains (for instance, sculptures in this region) and nature of exchange between settlements.⁹

The survey of each quadrant was defined chiefly by the course of local rivers and other natural and geographical landmarks. In the southern quadrant, the eastern and western banks of the Niranjana, and Mohane rivers from NH-2 to their confluence at Phalgu were surveyed extensively. The survey along the river Niranjana and the two seasonal streams, Gulshakri and Chajya, which join it in the south at Pirasin and Dema respectively, revealed three sites. As for the survey along the Mohane river, as well as two previously reported sites, Dharmaranya and Lakhaipur, two new sites emerged - Silaunja and a temple site at the eastern edge of Lakhaipur village in Mohanpur block.¹⁰ A further eastward survey of the Paimar River led to the discovery of a mound and sculptural remains at Jagannathpur.

In the western quadrant, the river Morhar intersects NH-2 at Sherghati and flows northwards through Gurua, Panchanepur, Koch and Tekari to join the Punpun river in Patna district. The area west of this river has a major concentration of sites, most of which are located within the villages along or within a few kilometres west of the river Morhar. The survey of the three hills Pahara, Manda and Chalho also led to the discovery of structural and sculptural remains. Two sites were found on the eastern bank of Morhar river - remains of a huge mound and a fourteenth century temple along with a shell inscription at Baiju-bigha. In the area west of the river, several reported sites were surveyed whereas five new sites were found. In the north-western sector, another seasonal river, the Jamuna, flows northwards through Bela to

⁹ We see settlements along rivers, and hills initially, probably because of the dependence of the early settlers on these natural features for food and daily necessities. Reason may be attributed to the availability of water-bodies along the hills. They may have been dependent on the rivers for food and agriculture.

¹⁰ The term block refers to a middle level administrative unit in the districts of India. A block consists of many village-*panchayats*. Many blocks together form a circle whereas a number of circles together form a sub-division. And generally two to five sub-divisions form a district. The division of a district into sub-divisions, circles, and blocks are dependent on the local population figures.

the Makhdumpur block and joins the Dardha river at Jehanabad. A major early historic site, Sonpur, was reported and later excavated along this river.¹¹

In the eastern quadrant of the Bodhgayā region the major focus was to survey the villages along the foothills of the Rajgir range, and the Kurkihar, Hasra and Dhongra and Mora hills. These villages fell on an old route between Rajgir and Gayā. The Buddhist texts name a few places and settlements on this route such as Tapoban and Jethian.¹² I travelled on this old route and surveyed already reported sites apart from documenting a few new ones. The survey of the Maher hill in this quadrant led to the discovery of a site at its western foot and another one kilometre north of the hill. The route from Rajgir to Bodhgayā further extends westward to the Amas block at the western edge of the Bodhgayā region, which was also surveyed.

The northern quadrant of the Bodhgayā region included Gayā town and a number of villages falling under the Bodhgayā, Gayā, Bela, and Makhdumpur blocks. Most of the sites in this quadrant have been previously reported. However, the survey still revealed new data from these sites. Overall, the survey of the four quadrants in the region revealed a number of new sites apart from documenting new data from many that have already been reported. This new data base also highlighted a pattern of settlement distribution and its linkages to topographical features. It also showed a pattern of distribution of monastic and sculptural sites, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

III. Identification, Nature and Chronology of the sites

The post-survey plan was to analyse the data in order to develop an understanding of the nature of different sites and their chronology. However, a major handicap in ascertaining the nature of the sites in the region is the lack of excavations in the survey area, further aggravated by the dense spread of modern settlements. Also, many sites have been destroyed due to agrarian intensification or encroachment. Many of the mounds reported by Kittoe and Cunningham have since been levelled by repeated digging for bricks. In fact, the survey has revealed a few sites where mounds were cut through for agricultural purposes. The regular ploughing of fields or cutting

¹¹ B. P. Sinha and B. S. Verma, *Sonpur Excavations* (Patna, 1977).

¹² For detailed textual references on Jethian, see Pandey, *Historical Geography*, p. 127.

of mounds has turned up both structural and artefactual remains, including ceramics, all of which were documented. In order to process this data it was essential to build a set of criteria, which could be used to classify each site. In order to process this data it was essential to build a set of criteria, which could be used to classify each site. Existing site typologies were helpful but not adequate, necessitating a re-evaluation of existing methodology.

III.1 Methodological Discussion: Non-Monastic and Monastic Sites

III.1.1 Non-Monastic Sites

James Heitzman attempted to create a typology of the Buddhist monastic and non-monastic sites.¹³ The latter is easier to define in comparison to a monastic site. Heitzman defines a non-monastic site as a place other than a monastic site where archaeological excavations indicate long-term occupation during the early historic period and indicated by any structural remains or mounds with scatters of pottery and artefacts of general use. He divides them into two categories. The first and most widely represented type is the village-farming community. Its distinguishing features are habitational structures showing evidence of occupancy over many generations, associated with artefacts and implements suggesting that the occupants were engaged in economic activity requiring stable settlement. Structures in the village farming community show no features of size or style that indicate public or monumental functions. Artefacts may include pottery, beads, stone or metal tools, coins, and the organic remains of domesticated plants and animals. The second type of non-monastic site, according to Heitzman, is characterised by urban features. It may exhibit the attributes of the village farming community, but with some of the surviving structures being on a larger scale. Public buildings may exist in the form of defensive walls, paved roads, moats or canals. Great difference in the size or style of the structures may indicate public use or class and status difference. The larger extent of surviving remains may be contrasted to the smaller scale of the farming village.¹⁴

Heitzman's definition of a non-monastic site, based on archaeological excavation-reports, is definitive only for excavated sites. However, some of the

¹³ James Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire', in K. A. R. Kennedy and G. L. Possehl, eds., *Studies in the Archaeology and Paleoanthropology of South Asia* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 121-132.

¹⁴ Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade', pp. 122-123.

features of the Heitzman's definition can be used to identify unexcavated (and surveyed) sites as well. For example, artefactual remains from the surface-survey of a site, such as pottery, can indicate the historic antiquity of a site. The smaller size of such a site may also indicate a village or farming settlement. Similarly, some of the features that Heitzman mentions for defining urban centres can be gauged from unexcavated sites as well. For example, the overall size of a site can be judged by the size of the particular mounds and the spread of similar artefactual remains. A site may suggest a town and, in turn, large and compact mound within it may also indicate significant features such as public buildings, fortification, easily identifiable through a surface-survey. Therefore, Heitzman's definition of a non-monastic site, though confined in his study to excavated sites, has been used in this study to identify the nature of sites surveyed in the region.

III.1.2 Monastic Sites

There are two major scholarly arguments for identifying monastic sites.¹⁵ The first argument, proposed by Heitzman, has called for the analysis of the artefactual remains in association with the structural remains to identify a Buddhist monastic site. The second argument, proposed by Robin Coningham, has questioned the nature and validity of the structural remains as 'prime indicators' in light of more recent research and has argued for the analysis of the artefactual remains as an independent and equally important indicator for identifying a monastic site. These two arguments and their utility for this chapter will be briefly examined now.

Heitzman has proposed a two-tiered division of artefactual and structural remains.¹⁶ The availability of artefactual remains in the context of structural remains is key to his definition of a monastic site. He includes *stūpas*, *caitya* halls, monasteries, buildings or caves (often quadrilateral in shape, containing cells or dwelling places for monks), and temples, (buildings or caves housing a Buddha image

¹⁵ Previously, scholars such as H. Sarkar and Debala Mitra have suggested the existence of structural and architectural remains as 'prime indicators' of a monastic site. These structures include *stūpas*, *vikṣa-caityas*, *Bodhi-ghara* or *Bodhi-grha*, *ārāmas* (parks with some type of residence), *vihāra* and temples. Sarkar explains the evolving nature of all these structures and their respective terminologies. See H. Sarkar, *Studies in Early Buddhist Architecture of India* (Delhi, 1966); Debala Mitra, *Buddhist Monuments* (Calcutta, 1971).

¹⁶ Heitzman includes in his discussion only those places which have been established as monastic sites in archaeological descriptions and reports, where specifically Buddhist artefacts are associated directly with structural remains that include a monastic site.

in a central position for devotion) as structural remains. The artefactual remains include Buddha statuary, donative inscriptions, artistic motifs, relics, or any other finds that indicate the former presence of persons concerned particularly with Buddhist devotion.¹⁷ Heitzman's definition is acceptable for excavated monastic sites with a clearly defined context and some sort of stratigraphy. But in the case of unexcavated sites, Heitzman's definition is clearly of little use.

Robin Coningham has questioned the use of structural remains like *stūpas*, sanctuary or monastery to designate an archaeological site as Buddhist, and thrown doubt on their utility as markers of 'Buddhist' structures.¹⁸ He argues that some of these structures were also constructed by other religious orders such as Jains and Ājīvikas. Therefore, the blind reliance on structural remains needs to be questioned.

Taking a different position from earlier attempts where a Buddhist monastic site was identified through a combination of architectural and artefactual evidence, Coningham has suggested broadening the category of evidence by examining the artefactual remains as a separate category. This approach provides a much more effective framework for identifying a monastic site through a surface survey. I have documented several sites in my survey which contained artefactual remains such as religious images, pillars or miniature stone *stūpas*. These sites did not have a defined archaeological context due to the lack of any excavations. Coningham's definition helps overcome this major lacuna in the survey area. Therefore, I have used his methodology to analyse the artefactual remains to identify a monastic site. While doing so, I have attempted to establish some kind of historical context for the surveyed sites by drawing on availability of similar artefacts from excavated sites in the region. Three types of artefactual remains were found widely in the survey, hence I will discuss their importance in marking a monastic site as well as changing religious practices in the region.

¹⁷ Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade', p. 122.

¹⁸ Robin Coningham, 'The Archaeology of Buddhism', in Timothy Insoll, ed., *Archaeology, and World Religion* (London, 2001), pp. 61-95. As for the monastic agrarian lands, it is very difficult to identify them due to a number of reasons. First of all, a dense concentration of settlement surrounds almost all the monastic sites of the region. These settlements may have led to the destruction of much valuable data. Secondly, the lack of any epigraphic data from the sites of the Bodhgayā region complicates the issue further. So far, no monastic agrarian land has been identified even for an excavated site like Nalanda, which indicates the complexities involved.

III. 1. 2.1 Miniature Stone *Stūpas*

The large number of miniature stone *stūpas* at Bodhgayā and their widespread distribution throughout the region has been attested by previous works, and my survey also confirmed this distribution. They were found mostly in and around modern shrines/temples in the surveyed villages and were mostly made up of granite which is available locally (Fig 3.2). They are also found within the excavated monastic site of Taradih from the Gupta level. Benisti's work has been quite helpful in the study of miniature stone *stūpas* from Bodhgayā and this has provided a much needed framework.¹⁹ Bautze-Picron has also discussed a number of these *stūpas*, housed currently in the Berlin Museum and has provided dates for them.²⁰ These two researches have made it easier to consider them as a significant marker for the existence of a monastic site.

It is widely accepted now that the tradition of raising miniature *stūpas* began in the early centuries of the Common Era. Schopen, who has recently examined the reason for their construction and donation, is of the opinion that they were of funerary nature and contained anonymous mortuary deposits – bones or ashes - and were predominantly constructed by the monks and nuns at several Buddhist monastic sites including Bodhgayā. The purpose of a *stūpa* was for a person's remains to be buried in the presence of the Buddha, which was indicated either by the relics or imagery within a monastic complex. It meant that one could continue to worship the Buddha even after one's death and thus ensure a rebirth in Heaven.²¹ Schopen's argument has been confirmed by the reporting of such *stūpas* from numerous monastic complexes such as Vaishali, Nalanda and several others. Moreover, the fact that the miniature stone and brick *stūpas* are invariably found at monastic complexes means that they can be used as one of the indices to identify a monastic site in the survey-area.

¹⁹ M. Benisti, *Contribution à l'étude du Stupa Bouddhique Indien : les Stupa Mineurs de Bodh-Gaya et de Ratnagiri*. (Paris, 1981). I haven't been able to look at this book properly as the book is available only in French. I do intend to explore this book in detail in order to include its argument in this work later.

²⁰ Caludin Bautze-Picron, *The Art of Eastern India: In the collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst* (Berlin, 1998), p. 14.

²¹ Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks* (Honolulu, 1997), pp. 114-147.

III.1.2.2 Temples

Many of the early historic monasteries began to contain images within their central halls and develop other image-shrines or chapels from the second century CE. These image shrines evolved later into temples within the monastic complexes. The presence of such image shrines or temples may be used as an index in identifying a monastic site (Fig. 3.3). Generally, early Buddhist monasteries or *stūpas* in the early historic period were located outside cities and settlements and contained Buddhist temples within their precincts.²² However, temples and shrines began to be constructed within settlements by the fourth-fifth centuries CE. Therefore, one must distinguish between settlement and monastic temples from the Gupta period onwards. This distinction can be made on the basis of the locational context and availability of other artefactual or inscriptional evidence. For example, a monastic site may contain sculptures and miniature *stūpas*, whereas a 'settlement shrine' or temple may contain just one piece of sculpture. Moreover, many of these settlement shrines were modest constructions. This has meant that the structure of the shrine may not be found at all whereas sculptures from these shrines have survived. For the classification of the sites, therefore, I will use a third category of 'sculptural sites' apart from monastic and settlement sites.

III.1.2.3 Dating the Sculptures

The survey revealed sculptures from almost every site in the region. As we know from the previous works, the region has been known for voluminous production of sculptures and images from the sixth century CE onwards. This large production at many regional centres has led to the documentation of the sculptures from the region. Scholars such as Fredrick Asher, S. L. Huntington, John Huntington, Janice Leoshko

²² See H. Sarkar, *Buddhist Architecture*, p. 55. The only exception to this trend was the discovery of more than half a dozen *stūpas* situated within the residential quarters of Sirkap. Obviously, these were located in different parts of the city to enable the votaries to offer their worship in the shrines of their respective areas. This indicates that at Sirkap, the different groups of lay worshippers had possibly had their own set of *stūpas* and *stūpa*-chapels. Even as early as the first century CE, we observe the practice of independent shrines within the residential quarters. Questioning this practice of constructing *stūpas* in residential area, Sarkar speculates that the Buddhist *saṅgha* may have been obliged to give such concessions to the Saka-Parthians who not only held the political reins in the period but were patrons of Buddhism. This individualistic concept in an extreme form might have reached Khotan where, as recorded by Faxian, each family had a *stūpa* constructed in front of their house. Again, we see here reliance on textual data to interpret the archaeological material, therefore Sarkar's interpretation needs to be questioned here. Given the recent scholarship on *stūpa* as mortuary deposits, Sarkar's contention needs to be questioned and probably refined.

and C.Bautze-Picron have documented and discussed the art-historical development of this region in greater depth and this work has tremendously benefitted from these previous works. For dating of the sculptures, I have extensively relied on the work of Asher and Huntington because of their survey of a number of sites such as Konch, Kauwa-dol, Barabar Siddhesvara sthan shrine, Guneri, Kurkihar apart from museum collections in different parts of the India and world. I would also like to acknowledge the help of Dr. Michael Willis (from the British Museum), who looked at the photographs of all the sculptures documented during my survey and helped me in dating these images.

As widely practised, the identification of the sculptures has been based on the iconographic features whereas the dating has relied primarily on the stylistic analysis of the material. Considerations were also given to the iconography in relation to time and space as this methodology has been employed by Huntington and Bautze-Picron. The dating of this work has been based on the stylistic features such as posture of body, shape (heavier body in the seventh-eighth centuries CE whereas thinner or thinner), body-proportions (big head and round body for the seventh-eighth centuries whereas lighter head and better body proportion in the later period), carving technique (of body, face), dress (plain dress and right shoulder for the post-Gupta to early Pāla period, backwards on the left shoulder for the ninth century onwards and shawl from tenth-eleventh centuries CE onwards), stele formats (rounded top in the earlier period whereas taper point in the eleventh-twelfth centuries CE), decoration and carving of the stele, pedestals (*ratha* conventions) apart from the palaeographical dating of inscriptions on many of these sculptures.²³ I have dated the sculptures based on a combination of these stylistic features. The diverse sculptural collection with varied iconographic features (and at times unusual images) has indicated that many workshops may have flourished in the region during the Pāla period.

²³ For usage of Dress to date sculptures, see Bautze-Picron, *Art of Eastern*, p. 13, for details on stele, pedestals, facial features, garment, body proportion, and other, see Huntingtons, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 92-98. For dating of sixth and early seventh century on the basis of body proportions, facial features, and others, see Asher, *Art of Eastern India*, pp. 27-29, 70, 75-80. I have extensively relied on Asher for dating the sculptures from Konch and others from gayā and surrounding area of Bodhgayā such as Dharmarajya.

III.1.3 Discussion

Briefly, one can expect a variety of remains such as *stūpas*, *vihāras*, *caitya-gr̥has*, *bodhi-gharas*, miniature *stūpas* and temples in various combinations at a major monastic site like Bodhgayā, whereas a smaller monastic site might just have a single *stūpa* or temple or a mixture of some of these remains. Some artefactual remains such as images or architectural fragments have been found inscribed at sites and if these inscriptions contain information about the donor's native place, motive, and donee, the nature of the site becomes clearer. The availability of these remains is often dependent on the condition and preservation of a site, as my survey was always limited by the archaeological remains visible on the ground. Therefore, the analysis remains open to future research and definite identification. Most of the surveyed sites had sculptures, architectural remains, and surface ceramic-scatters. The sculptural and architectural remains were documented and ceramic-samples were collected from the surface of the sites. The methodology adopted to process ceramic-samples and prepare a relative/broad chronology of the sites will be discussed in the following section.

III.2. Chronological-Sequence: Methodological discussion

The preparation of a broad and tentative chronological sequence of the surveyed sites requires the comparison of ceramic samples from excavated sites within the survey area. A chronological sequence built on excavation (stratigraphic and contextual details) is much more reliable than one prepared exclusively from surface survey-collections. Since the pottery from excavated sites is found and recorded in specific stratigraphic contexts, it provides the 'missing context' for the surface-survey samples.

Three sites- Bakror, Sonpur and Taradih- have been excavated in the Bodhgayā region. The most recent excavations have been at Bakror (2003-2006). The data from Taradih matches data generated from other excavated settlement sites of the middle-Gangetic zone, some of which have provide conclusive C-14 dates. Since no C-14 date has yet been published for Taradih, it is necessary to compare the ceramics of the three excavated sites of the Bodhgayā region with the ceramics from the other excavated sites of middle-Gangetic zone. In this way, I attempt to prepare a

benchmark based on the comparison of datasets from both regions. The next step is to compare the collected ceramic samples with this benchmark in order to prepare a chronological sequence for the surveyed sites.

III. 2.1 Background of Settlement history of the Middle-Gangetic Zone

The settlement history of the middle-Gangetic zone began in the epi-Paleolithic period, dated provisionally between c. 17,000-10,000 BCE. Roughly two hundred sites have been reported in the mid-Ganga valley within eastern Uttar Pradesh, dated approximately between c. 10,000 and 5,000 BCE, in the so-called Mesolithic period.²⁴ The increase in the number of Mesolithic sites is an indication of the fact that there was a spurt in population. This may have been due to a number of factors such as large-scale migration and intermingling of people, climatic changes, or the easy availability of food due to the development of a more efficient hunting kit and trapping techniques.²⁵ The exploration and excavations of these sites have provided important information about housing, tools, food-processing implements, and funerary customs. The Neolithic culture, dated between c. 5000 and 1000 BCE of this region was characterised by sedentary settlements, cultivation of cereal plants, domestication of selected animals, and ground stone industries including a microlithic component, and handmade pottery. The major excavated Neolithic sites reported in the middle-Gangetic zone are Lahuradeva, Sohagaura and Imli Khurd in Uttar Pradesh and Chirand, Chechar-Kutubpur, Senuwar, Maner, Sonpur and Taradih in Bihar. Based on recent excavations at these sites and subsequent research, a chronological framework will be prepared for the survey area in the following section.

III.2.1.1 Neolithic Period

The analysis of pottery-making techniques, vessels and ware-types is the primary method of preparing a chronological framework for any archaeological site, along

²⁴ P. Singh and A. K. Singh, *The Archaeology of Middle Ganga Plain New Perspectives* (Delhi, 2004), pp.6-9. It is dated on the basis of three radiocarbon dates from Sarai Nahar Rai, Damdama, Paisara and Bagor, all located in the districts of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

with properly recorded stratigraphic contexts of the excavation.²⁶ Period I at Taradih (c. 3000-1500 BCE) and period IA at Sonpur (c. 1100 BCE or earlier) represent Neolithic culture.²⁷ Period I at Taradih has been further divided into two sub-periods IA and IB on the basis of ceramic analysis. The pottery reported from the stratigraphic levels of sub-periods IA and IB at Taradih were handmade whereas period IA at Sonpur revealed examples of wheel-made vessels and kiln-burnt ones as well. The fabric of the pottery ranged from coarse to medium fabric and the thickness of the core varied from medium to thick. The core was gritty, porous and heavily tempered with rice husks at Sonpur. The smaller quantity of pottery from the Period IA at Sonpur (the centre of the mound) has led the excavators to suggest a very scanty population and smaller size of settlement in this period.²⁸

The improvement in technology in sub-period IB at Taradih is reflected in the Burnished Grey ware, some of which also bears post firing ochre colour paintings on their rims and profiles. Here, a slip was applied before burnishing was done horizontally as reflected by the burnishing marks. A few pieces are highly burnished and have a glossy surface. Nail, thumb and rope impressions are the common motifs. Similar pottery has also been reported from Senuwar, Chechar, and Chirand. The pottery at Sonpur IA revealed a technical peculiarity of Black-and-red ware (hereafter

²⁶ The early stage Neolithic pottery is hand-made but the use of the wheel turned pot has also been reported from the upper strata of this culture. Cord-impressed ware or cord-ware appears to be the predominant type whereas the other prevalent types of ceramic are Rusticated ware, Burnished ware, Red ware, Grey ware, Lustrous ware, Lustrous red ware and Black and Red ware. Generally the clay is more levigated and contains straw, chaff, rice husks and grit as tempering material. The pottery is ill-fired and has a coarse fabric with sections varying from thick to medium. In the case of Burnished Red wares and Burnished Black wares, cow dung and the husk of millet were used as tempering material. Burnished Red ware and Burnished Grey ware have only been found in south Bihar (Taradih and Senuwar). A limited number of painted sherds have also been reported from Chirand and Senuwar. These post-firing paintings, confined to the rim, have been executed in red ochre on the grey and rarely on plain Red and BRW. The ceramic has incised decorations and appliqué designs whereas the motifs depicted include a linear design of criss-crossed lines and concentric circles. Shallow and deep bowls (lipped, perforated and footed), platters or flat bowls, spouted bowls, basins, vases with broad-mouths and narrow necks, squatted vessels, *handis*, and miniature jars are the functional pottery types. Basins and *handis* are the cooking vessels.

²⁷ The average thickness of the cultural deposit of this period at Sonpur is about 61cm and is comprised of hard whitish clay mixed with fine sand above a yellowish hard natural earth whereas at Taradih it is 80cm and consists of yellowish natural soil. Taradih was located near the flood plains of the river Niranjana in this period.

²⁸ Sinha and Verma, *Sonpur*, p. 12.

BRW) as the black portion of BRW was smooth whereas the red portion of the pottery was dull.²⁹

Based on the ceramic evidence, the earliest date of period IA at Sonpur could be traced between c. 1100 BCE or even earlier by the excavators. This date was proposed in 1971 when not many Neolithic settlements were excavated and now needs a careful examination. Similarly, A. K. Prasad's dating of the Neolithic period at Taradih needs to be questioned. He has suggested that the Neolithic period begins around the third millennium BCE and ends by the sixteenth century BCE. Prasad does not present any specific evidence or C-14 dates from the site and employs relative dating to make his claim. The chronological span presented here for the Neolithic period at Sonpur IA and Taradih I is further questioned by the fact that most of the Neolithic sites in the middle-Gangetic zone, except one or two, have been dated between c. 2000 and 1500 BCE. Moreover, as of now, no consistent date is available from the lowest horizon of the Neolithic phase, which was reasonably thought to date back to the beginning of the Neolithic culture around c. 2000 BCE. Nevertheless, the suggested chronological framework based on radio carbon dates from Chirand (nine C-14 dates of which three are consistent) and Senuwar (four C-14 dates) is from c. 1800-1200 BCE.³⁰ Dhavalikar places the Neolithic in Bihar between c. 1900-1300 BCE based on radiometric dates from Chirand, also justified by the thickness of about three metres of cultural debris.³¹ By calibration, the Neolithic in Bihar may be placed between c. 2200 and 1500 BCE.³² Therefore it would be ideal to follow the accepted chronological span of c. 2000-1500 BCE for the survey area.

III.2.1.2 Chalcolithic Period

There seems to be a cultural continuity from the Neolithic to the Chalcolithic periods in the middle - Gangetic zone. The beginning of the Chalcolithic age witnesses a marked increase in the number of settlements, the introduction of copper/bronze for the manufacture of tools, weapons and ornaments, an improvement in architecture, the

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7. The discovery of a solitary copper wire piece has been used by the excavators to argue for the usage of copper, though this may actually be an aberration. The occurrence of the pottery at the lowest level in the limited area suggests that the settlement was not a large one.

³⁰ D. P. Agarwala and J. S. Kharakwal, *South Asian Prehistory: A Multidisciplinary study* (New Delhi, 2002), p. 202. Also see Singh and Singh, *Archaeology of Middle Ganga*, p. 11.

³¹ M. K. Dhavalikar, *Indian Proto-history* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 242.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

introduction and improvisation of wheel-made pottery, and the diversification of wares with the profuse decoration of vessels by painted, incised and appliqué designs. The excavated sites of the middle - Gangetic zone are Chirand and Manjhi (Saran district), Maner (Patna district), Oriup and Champa (Bhagalpur district), Chechar-Kutubpur (Vaishali district), Sonpur and Taradih (Gayā district) and Senuwar (Rohtas district).³³ Most of these sites are located on river banks, big or small, or on horseshoe lakes. The size of settlements ranges from small to medium.

Period IB at Sonpur and periods II & III at Taradih were identified as Chalcolithic, distinguished by its finer pottery, invariably wheel-made and often well-polished.³⁴ Period IB of Sonpur and period II of Taradih were marked by the appearance of copper, whereas period III of Taradih was marked by the appearance and increasing importance of iron as well as a marked improvement in pottery-making techniques, with well-fired and well-levigated clay. The core of this pottery did not show any mixture of paddy husks in the clay, in common with pottery of the previous period. The fabric ranged from medium to fine. The upper portions of the large pots were fashioned on wheels, while lower portions were shaped by the beating method. This type of pottery has a metallic sound when struck with the finger, indicating an improvement in technology like controlling the temperature within the kiln. A few sherds of Black-and-red ware and Black ware possess a very thin film of glaze on their back surface.

The similarity in fabric, form, shapes, and painting of the pottery assemblage of period II of Taradih with other excavated sites of the middle-Gangetic zone led Prasad to suggest a time-frame for the Chalcolithic period between *c.* 1600 and 1100 BCE. Based on relative dating and the beginning of the use of iron around *c.* 1000 BCE, Prasad dated period III of Taradih between *c.* 1000 and 700 BCE. D.K. Chakrabarti has also fixed the upper limit of the iron-age around seventh century BCE, considering the fact that the advent of NBP ware in this region has been dated to the seventh century BCE. D.P. Agarwala has also used ceramic analysis and five radiocarbon dates each from Chirand and Senuwar to suggest a chronological frame

³³ The lack of horizontal excavation at these sites hampers our understanding of the size and planning of the settlements. However, other information regarding housing, subsistence, and technology are available from the excavated database.

³⁴ The average cultural deposit of the sub-period IB at Sonpur was about 3.05 metres. Copper tools appeared though in very limited quantity and their use was very restricted. In the uppermost layer, lumps of iron ore and slags were found as well.

for the overall Chalcolithic period which includes Copper and Iron Ages.³⁵ P. Singh places the culture in a time bracket of c. 1500 and 900 BCE based on the C-14 dates from Khairadih, Sohagaura and Narhan whereas Dhavlikar places it between c. 1500 and 700 BCE because there is a clear overlap between the Chalcolithic and the Iron Age.³⁶

Considering the fact that even during the Iron-Age phase of the Chalcolithic, the use of bone, stone-axes and copper tools continued at Taradih, it can be argued that it still was in the Chalcolithic phase, to which Prasad attributes the overall development and economic prosperity of the settlement based on the use of iron implements for agriculture. He has argued that copper was primarily used for ornaments and stone was replaced by iron for agricultural equipment. Simultaneously the use of iron multiplied as proved by the discovery of spindle whorls and needles. Therefore, the dating of period IB at Sonpur between c. 1000 and 650 BCE (based on deposits and C-14 dates) matches Prasad's dating of Chalcolithic Taradih. Prasad's dating posited the change from copper to iron and brings out the importance of iron in the subsequent development of civilisation in this region. Thus, considering the copper and iron phases of these two sites, the Chalcolithic span may be dated between c. 1500 and 700/650 BCE.

III.2.1.3 Early Historic Period-I (NBPW Period: c. 700/650 - 200 BCE)³⁷

³⁵ See Agarwala and Kharakwal, *South Asian Prehistory*, p. 197. The main ceramic assemblage comprise BRW, Black-slipped ware, Red-slipped ware, Red ware and Grey ware in limited quantity. The slip treatment on the Red-slipped and on the Black-slipped wares of the Chalcolithic period evolved out of the Burnished Red ware and Burnished Black ware of the Neolithic period. Rustication on the outer surface of Red ware may also be treated as a survival of Neolithic Rusticated ware. Appliqué decoration is also a Neolithic trait as is most of the pottery shapes except spouted vessels which are absent in the Chalcolithic period. Bowls of various types (shallow, straight, or convex sided, carinated, lipped and channel), miniature and small vases, cooking vessels or *handis* with short concave or carinated neck, and dish-on-stand are common pottery types. Painted designs are present in BRW but they occur on limited sherds in Black-slipped ware and Red ware. The painting designs are mostly geometric (linear) and occur on both sides of the vessel.

³⁶ Singh and Singh, *Archaeology of Middle Ganga*, pp. 14-15.

³⁷ I have only included discussion of those materials which can be used to compare the collected samples from the archaeological survey. It is widely known that the settlement pattern grew tremendously in this period because of agrarian growth. A number of researches have examined this issue of agrarian growth and role of iron such as the works by R. S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, A. Ghosh, D. K. Chakrabarti and others. However since I could not collect any agrarian or soil sample for archaeo-botanical analysis, I have focused on the ceramic and other indicators noted at the sites of the region.

Period II of Sonpur and period IV of Taradih were marked by the beginning of Northern Black Polished ware (hereafter NBPW), the use of coins, and burnt brick structures.³⁸ Magadha was the core area for this type of pottery, and the beginning of NBPW is assigned to the seventh century BCE.³⁹ Several NBPW sites have been reported in the old Gayā district.⁴⁰

Other objects reported from both sites include human and animal figurines, beads of semi-precious stones, bangles, rings, punch-marked coins (copper, silver) and cast coins of copper. These objects were also found from the excavations of the early historic urban centres of the middle-Gangetic zone like Rājgrha (Rajgir), Pataliputra, and Vaishali. A clear stratigraphic context for these objects has been established in these urban centres, which can be used to compare the objects from the survey area and to prepare a chronological framework. Another major marker of this period was ring wells, also discovered at Sonpur. Made of terracotta, the rings measured about 61 centimetres in diameter, 15 centimetres or 18 centimetres in height and 5 centimetres in thickness. The number of rings in the well varied from two in one case to thirty in another. Such ring wells were found very close to each other and they were probably used as soak-pits.

Period II of Sonpur has been dated on the basis of the NBP ware dates of early historic sites.⁴¹ The availability of punch-marked silver and copper coins and copper-cast coins has reaffirmed the dates for this period being between c. 650 and 200 BCE. C-14 dates for NBP ware at early historic sites in Northern India have been placed in the sixth century BCE. The earliest evidence from the Mahābodhi temple complex at BodhGayā is the Aśokan pillar which has been dated to the Mauryan period.⁴² The

³⁸ Made of fine levigated clay, the NBPW is well-fired and has a lustrous shine. Both sites reveal NBPW with different shades such as steel blue, silver, golden, pinkish and black, though at times it has been found in two colours. BRW continued as the associated ceramic industry with improvement in firing and lustre. Some pieces of Red ware with black painting on their profile and of Red ware with and without slips were also found. For Sonpur, see Sinha and Verma, *Sonpur*, p. 8.

³⁹ The remains of post holes and a circular mud structure with a platform on either side and the remains of lime coated rammed floors were also noticed. Burnt brick structures of this period were also revealed.

⁴⁰ A. K. Singh, *History of Magadha* (Delhi, 1991), p. 36. Some other NBPW sites in the Gayā, Nawada and Jehanabad districts are Agandha (Bela), Amaraut (Sherghati), Dhangama (Jehanabad), Jhakhad (Ghosi), Kinjar (Jehanabad-Arwal road), Lari (Kurtha/Jehanabad), Makkanpur / Bhadresvaristhan (Warasligunj/Nawada) and Uttara (Lari/Kurtha). I have not been able to survey these sites.

⁴¹ Period II at Sonpur perhaps ended as a result of a large scale fire, which practically destroyed the whole habitation of the place. This is apparent by the ashy layers which have been noticed in some of the trenches of the mound.

⁴² K. K. Chkravarty, *Early Buddhist Art of Bodh-Gayā* (Delhi, 1997), p. 10.

next evidence is the red sandstone railing pillars which have been dated to the first century BCE on the basis of stylistic analysis and inscription.⁴³ The dearth of archaeological excavations in the region made it difficult to notice any architectural fragment from this period, except at Bodhgayā itself. No lower limit for this period is given by Prasad, though he suggests that this period ends with the beginning of the Kuṣāṇa period.

III.2.1.4 Early Historic Period–II (Śunga- Kusāna period: c. 200 BCE - 300 CE)

The stratigraphic level of period III at Sonpur revealed burnt brick structures from the upper level. The maximum courses of brick walls available were four to six. Another significant find from the level III at Sonpur was a new type of copper punch-marked coins of heavier weight, of a type also found at Vaishali, Mahabirghat and Kumrahar from the post-NBP ware layers. Many of these finds from Sonpur III are similar to the objects found from the contemporaneous level at Taradih. The finds from Taradih also include a burnt brick wall, beads of terracotta and stone, bangles of glass and copper, terracotta animal figurines, nails, sickles, arrowheads, spearheads and razors of iron and pottery.

Period II at Sonpur was destroyed by fire and the site was reoccupied after a short interval, which formed period III. At this point, the ceramic typology abruptly changed as NBP ware and BR ware completely disappeared - only Red ware, of a coarse to medium fabric, continued at the site. The vessel types included sprinklers, spouted basins, lid-cum-bowls, lid-like inkpots and miniature vases, whereas the Period V at Taradih revealed sprinklers, high narrow necked *surāhī*, frying pans with handles, knife-edged ware, flat-based bowls and other associated red ware dated to the Kuṣāṇa period. The NBP associated ware continued as did a degenerate form of NBP ware. The continuation of all other ceramic wares and other objects after c. 200 BCE has led scholars to argue that this period was coeval with the characteristic elements of the late phase of NBP ware, the only significant difference being the complete absence of the NBP ware. Some of the vessels had incised or stamped decorations, but generally they were utilitarian and lacked sophistication.⁴⁴ Period II at Sonpur has been placed between c. 200 BCE and 200 CE. Prasad does not provide a clearly

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 58. Chakravarty dates these railing pillars to the c. 75-25 BCE.

⁴⁴ Singh, *History of Magadha*, p. 120.

defined chronological span, bracketing it between the beginnings of the Kuṣāṇa and the Gupta periods, leaving a gap of almost two hundred years. Based on the pottery, a plausible date for period III at Sonpur and period V at Taradih may be c. 200 BCE - 320 CE.

This period is also marked by the beginning of imagery, sculptures and railing pillars, found at Bodhgayā. The beginning of image worship in the Kuṣāṇa period led to the donation of the Buddha-images and other architectural remains at the Bodhgayā. The high number of pillar-railings, depicting numerous themes, has already been discussed and a chronological frame has been provided for them by K.K. Chakravarty.⁴⁵ Many of these pillars are inscribed and dated to the last century before and first century after the Common Era. The number of images dated to this period has been very few. In total, fifteen inscriptional fragments and three other inscriptions have been found from the temple complex. Other evidence includes older silver punch-marked coins, impressions of coins of Huiṣka from the second century CE and a few other coins from Sonpur. The definitive evidence for this period is provided by the inscribed railing pillars, bars and three inscribed images from the temple complex.

III.2.1.5 Gupta and Post-Gupta Period (c. 300 - 600 CE)

Period VI at Taradih was marked by the appearance of Gupta antiquities along with structural remains of burnt bricks of the period. Notable finds include terracotta sealings, beads of semi-precious stones, bangles of bone, terracotta and glass, stone images of the Buddha and Avalokiteśvara, broken stellas, miniature *stūpas*, *chhatrāvalis*, pedestals of miniature stone *stūpas*, and an unfinished image of Viṣṇu.⁴⁶ The excavations also revealed brick-built monasteries of the late Gupta period. The Mahābodhi temple and granite pillars are also dated to this period on the basis of inscribed data. The Gupta period activity at the site is not very clear due to a paucity of images and inscriptions. But by this time, miniature *stūpas* of brick and stone had begun to be constructed, which is also represented on the back of various images found from Bodhgayā. The ceramic industry of the period is mainly represented by

⁴⁵ Chakravarty, *Buddhist Art*, pp. 28-58.

⁴⁶ Singh, *History of Magadha*, p. 122.

Red ware and vessel types include slick bowls, vases, *handis*, basins, jars, miniature pots, lids, and earthen lamps.⁴⁷

III.2.1.6 The Early Medieval Period (Maukhari, Later-Gupta and Pāla Periods: c. 600-1200 CE)

The Bodhgayā region was occupied by the Maukhari, later Gupta and Pāla kings between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE. Numerous images have been reported and studied from the survey-area, indicating the beginning of prolific sculptural activity and patronage from the sixth century CE onwards.⁴⁸ This tradition reached a new height in the Pāla period, as visible in the widespread distribution of Buddhist and Brāhmaṇical sculptures and shrines.⁴⁹ The Pāla period occupation of the Taradih is revealed in the stratigraphic level VII. The excavation revealed a monastery built of burnt bricks, and stone and brick pillars. It also exposed ruins of a verandah and three rooms. The finds included a few burnt brick miniature *stūpas*, seals and sealings, sculptures of the Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Bodhisattvas, Tārā, and Viṣṇu.

Another excavated site in the region is Bakror. This excavation has revealed the remains of a brick *stūpa* constructed in three stages.⁵⁰ The excavation of the *stūpa* has revealed a punch-marked coin and dark polished ware, which indicates a NBP ware period origin of the *stūpa*. Though the chronological frame of the first two stages is not clear yet, the last stage is very clear because of material remains, where an enclosure wall was covered by lime plaster, stone-railings and gateways probably provided in all the directions of the *stūpa*. This new addition to the existing *stūpa* may be dated between the eighth and eleventh centuries CE on the basis of the inscribed terracotta sealings and plaques. The most significant find from the excavation is a terracotta plaque which has '*Devapālarājasya Sūjātā gṛha*' inscribed in the ninth century CE characters. As is well known, Devapāla was the third king of the Pāla

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 122. This data was recovered from the Apsadh excavations.

⁴⁸ Frederick M. Asher, *The Art of Eastern India 300-800* (Minneapolis, 1980). Asher has a different chronological spectrum for the eastern India within which he locates the artistic development of the Gayā district. The periods are: 'the Gupta age (300-550 CE)', 'the growth of style (550-700 CE)', and 'bridge to the Pāla art (700-800 CE)'.

⁴⁹ S. L. Huntington, *The 'Pāla-Sena' Schools of Sculpture* (Leiden, 1984).

⁵⁰ Singh, *History of Magadha*, pp. 123-124. The lack of details about the Dark grey polished ware and punch-marked coin makes it very difficult to discuss the implications of these finds on the date of the *stūpa*. The *stūpa* has also been excavated recently but no results have been published so far.

dynasty in the ninth century CE. This plaque may therefore suggest some religious activity at the *stūpa* in the ninth century CE. The plaque also provided the name of the *stūpa* as '*Sujāta griha*' during the Pāla period. Based on the excavated stratigraphy of the site, it can be argued that the *stūpa* was refurbished and new additions were made during this period.

Red slipped ware was the most predominant type of pottery at this level of Taradih. Since the pottery from this period was neither published nor given due importance in the sites of Bihar, I decided to include that from Jagjibanpur monastery excavations.⁵¹ This monastic site was a monocultural site, built with patronage from the Pāla kings and dated roughly to the Pāla period (ninth-tenth centuries CE). Thus, it is convenient to use the pottery typology from here as a benchmark. It is important to note here that Magadha was also under the Pāla rule at this point of time. The ware types from the site included a few White sherds, Grey coloured sherds, Black sherds, and the predominant Dull Red (with slip) and Buff ware. This Red ware with a slip had been the most widely spread ware in the survey-area, whereas Grey polished ware was also reported from Bakror. Most of the pottery were wheel-made except the heavy potsherds of coarse fabric at Jagjibanpur. The vessel types were *handi*, jars, bowls, shallow bowls, lids, large sized vessels, lamps, spouts, basins, narrow necked jars and frying pans.⁵² As the technology of firing improved, the bowls developed a flat and thin base unlike earlier periods when the base was thicker.

Being the uppermost period of Buddhist activity, this layer has been most often revealed in chance discoveries and digs. The Pāla period is widely documented and most of the surveyed sites contained some remains from this period. Several sites contained only sculptural remains of the Pāla period but the lack of pottery at these places makes it difficult to locate their origins.

II.3. Summary

Thus, a six-phase chronological sequence, from c. 2000 BCE to c. 1200 CE may now be suggested. This chronological framework is based on the analysis of excavated

⁵¹ Amal Roy, 'Nandadirghi-Vihāra: A Newly Discovered Buddhist Monastery at Jagjibanpur West Bengal', in Gautam Sengupta and Sheena Panja, eds., *Archaeology of Eastern India: New Perspectives* (Kolkata, 2002), pp. 557-613.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 575.

data from Taradih, Bodhgyā, Bakror, and Sonpur. Ceramic analysis has been our method for dating the periods prior to the early historic times whereas the availability of epigraphic, structural, architectural and numismatic data has helped in corroborating the chronological sequence from the early historic period onwards. In fact, in the Archaeological Survey of India scheme and excavation reports, ceramic analysis loses its utility for the Gupta period and completely from the post-Gupta period. Therefore, one must be extremely careful in dating rural settlements of the post-Gupta period with no structural or sculptural remains. In such cases, I have relied on the excavated data from Taradih and Jagjibanpur (which has been recently excavated by the Directorate of state archaeology of West Bengal). The chronological framework prepared is as follows:

Period	Time-Frame	Markers
Neolithic	c. 2000-1500 BCE	Ceramic-analysis (Fig. 3.4).
Chalcolithic	c. 1500- 700/650 BCE	Ceramic-analysis (Fig. 3.5).
Early historic –I	c. 650- 200 BCE	Ring-wells, coinage, terracotta, clay-art, Aśokan pillar, Ceramic-analysis (Fig. 3.6, 3.7).
Early historic–II (Śunga-Kuṣāṇa)	c. 200 BC- c. 300 CE	Pillar-railings, imagery, coinage, terracotta, clay art, Ceramic-analysis (Fig. 3.8, 3.9).
Gupta & Post-Gupta	c. 300-600 CE	Imagery, inscriptions, coinage, Ceramic-analysis (Fig. 3.10).
Early Medieval; Maukhari, Later-Gupta & Pāla Period	c. 600-1200 CE	Imagery, inscriptions, pillar railings, temples, ceramic-analysis (Fig. 3.11).

Table 3.1: Chronological-Frame

IV. Presentation of the data

To organise the data, the survey area was divided into four quadrants - north, south, east and west. Similarly, surveyed sites have been divided into the categories of non-monastic or settlement sites and monastic sites. A third category of 'sculptural sites' has been added in the case of sites (villages) containing sculptures without any historical context. As discussed in the methodological section about the emergence of temples along or within settlements from the fourth century CE onwards, it can be assumed that these sculptures were installed within the temples at these places. If any of these sculptures are inscribed with details, the identity and nature of the site is easily established, but unfortunately such cases are very few. During the survey, I tried to enquire about the find-spots of the sculptures but most turned out to be accidental discoveries from the villages themselves. Despite obvious limitations, these sculptures helped establish the historicity/relative dating of the find-spots, as the sculptures could be dated on stylistic and iconographic grounds. A list of the sites and their features is attached in the Table 3.2.

IV.1 North Quadrant (Fig. 3.12)

IV.1.1 Non-Monastic site/Settlement

Suppi-gadh (Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 04' E): This old mound, located one kilometre south of Suppi village, measures 60m x 40m and is at least 10m high (Fig. 3.13). It is surrounded on its south and west by the local irrigation system (commonly known as *ahara-pyne* system). It is a non-monastic settlement site where no remains of brick structures were visible despite cutting on almost every side. The site was damaged on its corners which helped in the collection of pottery from its exposed sections. The survey of the rich ceramic scatter here indicated the Neolithic origin of the settlement. The site was active through the Pāla period. The oxidised condition of ill-fired Red ware of Neolithic provenance was followed by the Chalcolithic BRW with cord impressions, the major vessel types being small and medium cooking *handis*, knobs and knob-lids. The early historic period is represented by NBPW and NBP associated ware, the diagnostic vessel type being channel-bowls.⁵³ The

⁵³ S. P. Singh, 'Archaeological Sites in Gayā: Recent Discoveries', in U. Thakur, ed., *Glories of Gayā*, (Bodhgaya, 1981), pp. 76-98. I was unaware of this publication at the time of my survey. S.P. Singh has reported the presence of NBPW from the site though I did not find any specimen of NBPW.

degenerate Black ware of the Kuṣāṇa period and Red ware with slips from the Pāla period were also found in large numbers.

Other notable finds from the site include two terracotta animal figurines of a horse and elephant and a red bangle piece. S.P. Singh also reported a terracotta plaque which represents the figure of a standing sun-god, driving a one-wheeled chariot drawn by four horses. The god holds the reins of the running horses and is attended by two females, represented on the upper field at a higher level to show their distance from him. Singh has suggested that the terracotta plaque may be dated to the second century BCE, whereas the terracotta animal figurines date to the early historic period-I. No sculpture was found at the site itself. After the Pāla period, the settlement seems to have been abandoned.

Sumera (Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 04' E): This mound, 10m high, is located in the middle of Sumera village, falling within the Tehta Police-station of Jehanabad district (Fig. 3.14). It has been heavily destroyed by encroachment and cutting for clay on all sides. The vertical digging has led to the exposure of a section on the southern part of the mound, from which pottery was collected. The exposed lower section of the mound shows a brick structure for two metres, whereas the top three metres is a loose mixture of mud, sand and remains of potsherds. The site seems to have a Chalcolithic origin as indicated by diagnostic BRW with cord impression and mixed with paddy husk for firing. This period is followed by a few sherds of NBPW and its associated red ware and black ware of the early historic period and predominant red ware of the Kuṣāṇa period. Popular vessel-types include shallow bowls, flat-based bowls, knife-edged plates (a diagnostic of the Kuṣāṇa period), and small and medium sized cooking *handis*. No pottery from the Gupta period was found, though Pāla period Red ware with a slip was in evidence. The site also has a modern temple at the north-western edge of the village which houses four eroded sculptures. Two of these represent Avalokiteśvara and are dated to the eighth and tenth centuries CE (Fig. 3.15). There are two more images of Umā-Maheśvara, dated to the tenth century CE. All these images substantiate later Gupta and Pāla period activity at the site.

Dharawat-village-site (Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 02' E): The village itself is located on three mounds. Only one of the mounds at the eastern edge of the village is intact; whereas the other two are under active occupation, which has led to the destruction of the other two mounds. The site contained rich ceramic-scatter, which has helped

establish the historicity of the settlement site. Ceramic-analysis revealed the Neolithic origins of the site which continued through the six-phase chronological sequence mentioned above. The presence of NBPW and spread of NBP-associated ware over a wide area suggests a large sized settlement in the early historic-I period, which grew in succeeding periods. This early historic activity is also represented by four ring-wells, an octagonal well, and two terracotta figurines (a female face-mask of the second-third century BCE and a full female figurine) (Fig. 3.16, 3.17). The presence of the Grey ware pottery indicates Gupta period occupation of the site and this is further substantiated by the remains found from the Dharawat monastic site, which is just one kilometre south of the settlement site. Cunningham's argument that the site was a city from the Gupta period onwards is based on the account of Xuanzang, though this can only be substantiated by the archaeological excavation of the site. In the early medieval period, the size of the settlement grew tremendously, as visible in the distribution of the Pāla period Slipped red ware. The richness of the site is also reflected in the number and variety of sculptures found from the nearby monastic site.

IV.1.2 Monastic site/Temple site

Kunwa hill at Dharawat (Lat. 25° 02' N; Long. 85° 02' E): At Dharawat, Cunningham identified the area around Kunwa hill as the Gunāmati monastery Xuanzang's account. The monastic site is one kilometre south of the settlement site of Dharawat. The Kunwa hill (also called Ratni hill) has the ruins of two monasteries on its slope, as noted by Cunningham in his report of 1880-81. He briefly excavated one of the monasteries, measuring 45m x 30m, with the walls as thick as 2.75m (Fig. 3.18).⁵⁴ The monastery had a chapel at its south eastern corner indicated by a few granite pillars and two granite statues remaining *in situ* at the time of excavation. The ruins on top of the hill included two small temples, a *stūpa* and three masonry platforms (Figs. 3.19, 3.20, 3.21). The *stūpa* was 30 feet in diameter with a height of only 18 inches (Fig. 3.22). Based on the palaeographic analysis of two inscribed seals recovered from the centre of the *stūpa*, (first one has a *stūpa* and inscription '- - *Tathāgatasya Buddhasya*' whereas the second has '*stūpa*' inscribed on it), Cunningham dated the *stūpa* to the fourth century CE.

⁵⁴ A. Cunningham and H. B. W. Garrick, *Report of Tours in North and South Bihar in 1880-81* (New Delhi, 1883, rpt. 2000), pp. 43-44.

The presence of lumps of burnt bricks at the site of the monastery on the slope of the hill suggests that the monastery may have been destroyed by fire. Based on Xuanzang, other textual sources and remains from the *stūpa* on the hill, Cunningham suggested a fourth century CE date for the monastery as well. He also found a silver punch-marked coin from the excavation of the monastery, though he did not provide the exact location or level. The association of this coin with the early historic period raises the question of the actual date of the monastery. Moreover, the fact that it was found from excavations rather than surface collection suggests the antiquity of the monastic establishment. However, the paucity of other evidence, particularly ceramic evidence due to substantial destruction of the site in the nineteenth century, makes it difficult to reach any definitive conclusion. Nevertheless, the possibility of an early historic origin of the monastic establishment cannot be ruled out.

Most of the sculptures at the monastery have been taken away to the surrounding villages. However, some which are from the site of the early medieval period are now housed in two nineteenth century temples: one at the north-eastern corner of the local tank called Chandokhar *tāl* (measuring 610m x 243m); and another at the eastern edge of the village. The village temple contains a goddess sculpture, dated to the late Gupta period on stylistic grounds. Unfortunately, the inscription at the bottom of the sculpture is illegible. There is also another broken Buddha sculpture with the Buddhist creed, dated to the tenth century CE on palaeographic and stylistic grounds. The temples at the tank have many sculptures, some of which are of modern origin. The older sculptures at the tank-temples include a beautiful twelve-armed Avalokiteśvara (inscribed with Buddhist creed and dated to the late eleventh century CE), another Avalokiteśvara (of the ninth century CE), Jāmbhala (of the ninth-tenth centuries CE), two sculptures of the Buddha (of the tenth century CE), two sculptures of Gaṇeśa (of the eleventh century CE), one sculpture of the Viṣṇu (of the ninth century CE) and another of the Sūrya (of the ninth century CE). Two miniature stone *stūpas* of the tenth century CE and broken fragments of many other miniature stone *stūpas* were documented at the tank-temples. The sculptures suggest prolific activity during the Pāla period at the site, though activity in the seventh and eighth centuries CE is represented by a large number of seals, sealings and votive plaques depicting *stūpas* or the Buddha in the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* with the Buddhist creed (Fig. 3.23). Three specimens of terracotta sealings representing a *stūpa* and the Buddhist creed, and another broken plaque representing a *stūpa* at the edges and a sitting Buddha have

been documented from the site during my survey (Fig. 3.24). Another miniature votive *stūpa* made of terracotta with a broken finial (though otherwise undamaged), probably containing a clay stamped inscription of the Buddhist creed was found by Cunningham.⁵⁵ Indeed, the British Museum has three more such votive plaques from this site.

The survey of the Kunwa and other surrounding hills revealed four caves. The Kunwa hill had a cave with a rock-painting of a *stūpa*. The survey of another hill, called Dholi pahar, also revealed bricks strewn over the hill and miniature *stūpa* fragments, suggesting some Buddhist religious activity at the site.

Kauwa-dol/ Samaspur (Lat. 24° 59' N; Long. 85° 01' E): Kauwa-dol, an isolated hill to the south west of the Barabar hill range falls within the Samaspur village. Kittoe and Cunningham refer to a mound strewn over with brickbats, hewn stones and potsherds along the eastern and northern foot of the hill, representing the remains of an ancient settlement. Kittoe considered it a township called Samanpur whereas Cunningham concluded it was a large village settlement and the site of the Śīlabhadra monastery.⁵⁶ The mound is completely occupied by the village settlement whereas the relatively lower ground along the hill yielded no pottery. Surface collections turned up Gupta and predominantly Pāla period Slipped Red ware ceramic.

At its eastern foot was found the remains of a Buddhist temple of stone with four tall, plain granite pillars and many broken ones.⁵⁷ The temple was a large one as there are traces of an *ardha-maṇḍapa*, *maṇḍapa*, *mahā-maṇḍapa*, an *antarāla*, and *sanctum*.⁵⁸ Remains at the site include pillar fragments, sculptural remains such as a Buddha in the *Bhūmisparśa mudrā*, Jambhala, Avalokiteśvara, and fragments of miniature *stūpas*, all dated to the tenth century CE (Fig. 3.25). Another set of important remains at the site are carvings, on the northern and eastern faces of the hill, of predominantly Brāhmaṇical gods, Durgā being the most prominent (Fig. 3.26). The Buddha and Avalokiteśvara also appear in the carvings. Bloch dated these carvings to the eighth and twelfth centuries CE. One kilometre east of the site is another cut-

⁵⁵ Cunningham, BM data base (Registration number: 1887,0717.93)

⁵⁶ M. Kittoe, 'Notes on the Caves of Barabar', *JASB*, vol.16, no. 1 (1847), pp. 401-416, p. 402; see also Cunningham, *Four Reports Made During the Years 1862-63-64-65* (New Delhi, 1871, rpt. 2000), p. 41. Cunningham and Beglar made this identification based on the account of Xuanzang.

⁵⁷ See T. Bloch, *Annual Report of Archaeological Survey of India, Bengal Circle* (Calcutta, 1902), pp. 11-12. Bloch reported thirteen pillars in his exploration in 1902 at the site.

⁵⁸ J. D. Beglar, *Report of the Year 1872-73* vol. VIII (New Delhi, 2002, rpt.), p. 58.

through mound and the remains of an old embankment which has been destroyed by road construction.

Barabar Hills (Lat. 25° 00' N; Long. 85° 03' E): There are seven caves - four at Barabar and three at Nagarjuni hills with a number of inscriptions, which have been described in various works.⁵⁹ All four caves at the Barabar hill were donated by the Mauryan king Aśoka to the Ājīvikas, as indicated by three inscriptions there. Two of these caves - Karaṇ-chaupar and Lomaśa-ṛṣi also have 'Bodhimūla', inscribed at their entrances. The fact that this term is written in the Gupta characters suggest the occupation of these caves by the Buddhists during the Gupta period. Later, an image of Kriṣṇa was installed in the Lomaś-ṛṣi cave by the Maukhari king Anantavarman, indicating the reclaiming of the cave by a Brāhmaṇical group.⁶⁰

A tank in front of the Karaṇ-Chaupar cave and the ruins of a mound at the eastern edge of the Barabar hill are notable. Unfortunately, the annual fair at the site of the mound has led to the mixing of the older pottery, thereby making it difficult to analyse the data to suggest a plausible date of the mound. However, the antiquity of the caves has been proved beyond doubt by inscriptions ranging from the Mauryan to Maukhari periods and sculptural remains of the early medieval period.

All the three caves at Nagarjuni hill- Gopikā, Vāpi, and Vadathika - were donated by the Mauryan king Daśaratha to the Ājīvikas in the third century BCE. Later, in the mid-sixth century CE, the Maukhari king Anantavarman installed images of Kātyāyanī/Bhavāni and Bhūtapati and Devi (*Ardhanārīśvara* form) in the Gopikā and Vadathika caves, respectively.⁶¹ The third cave Vāhiyaka (also called Vāpi) has a one-line inscription, referring to an *ācārya* of the Śaiva order. All these inscriptions suggest that these caves were reclaimed by the Śaiva order in the early medieval period.

Siddhesvara-sthan Temple (Lat. 25° 00' N; Long. 85° 04' E): The temple on the peak of Barabar hill, also called Surjangiri, is located on an old brick platform. The place has been under active worship and this has meant that the temple has been

⁵⁹ A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas* (London, 1951), pp. 150-160.

⁶⁰ *CII* 3(1888), no. 48, pp. 221-223. The cave was donated by the Mauryan king to the Ājīvikas, proved by the earlier inscription at the cave. There exists no evidence of what happened to the Ājīvikas here and how this site was re-occupied and brought into use again by the donation of the Maukhari kings. Nevertheless, this is an instance of appropriation of sacred space of a *śramana* order by the emerging Purāṇic order of Śaivism.

⁶¹ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 49, pp. 223-226; *CII* 3 (1888), no. 50, pp. 226-228.

repaired and constructed several times. No pottery was found at the site. The temple is dedicated to the goddess Pārvatī and contains two of her images of the eleventh century CE (Fig. 3.26). The hilltop has a number of sculptures, such as a seventh-century Sūrya, a ninth-century Viṣṇu, eleventh-century images of Chāmuṇḍā, Gaṇeśa, Varāha, Umā-Maheśvara, as well as rock-carved *liṅgas* and other deities.⁶² All these remains attest early medieval activity at the site.

Mira-bigha (Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 02' E): Locally termed a temple-city, this village is located two kilometres east of the river Jamuna in the Makhdumpur block of Jehanabad district. The site has been provided with a compound wall to save the historic ruins. The foundation of an old rectangular temple is exposed to the west of a brick-walled tank, measuring roughly 25m x 15m and north of a canal passing through the site. Based on the sculptural remains, the site can be dated between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE. There are fifteen Brāhmaṇical sculptures within the modern one-room temple, apart from pillars and fragments all over the site. Two Sūrya images, two Viṣṇu images and a *Yakṣi* image may be dated to the seventh-eighth centuries CE (Fig. 3.27), a Chāmuṇḍā (Fig. 3.28), Vaiṣṇavī and a further two Viṣṇu images may be placed in the ninth century CE. There exists an earthen tank (15m x 7m) just to the north of the temple foundation outside the compound wall, and a small mound a further 500 metres to the north. The mound was of hard complexion and dry earth. No pottery was found on the surface and no section was found cut into the ground.

IV.1.3 Sculptural sites/Villages with Sculptures

Ghamandi-sthan (Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 84° 59' E): This cluster of small temples is located five kilometres north of Bodhgayā along the riverside road to Gayā. This is the place of *samādhi* of the first *Śaiva Mahanth* (head) of the Śaiva monastery of Bodhgayā. The temple compound contains a few *liṅgas* and fragments of miniature stone *stūpas*. The shrine may be dated to the sixteenth century, where stone *stūpas* from the region were added later.

Amwan (Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 84° 59' E): Amwan village is located five kilometres north of Bodhgayā along the riverside road to Gayā. The survey revealed a partially

⁶² Huntington, *Pāla-Sena*, pp. 91-92.

destroyed Buddha sculpture, fragments of its stele, and architectural fragments and the remains of a few miniature stone *stūpas* lying beneath a *pīpal* tree. According to the people of the village, the sculpture and other ruins were dug from the same place under the *pīpal tree*. The adjoining area is plastered. Local accounts and ruins from the place suggest an early medieval shrine which housed the eighth-century sculpture. The ruins of a building (remains of a *Kutchahari*, the village-court of the local landlord) were found within the village.

Kendua (Lat. 24° 43' N; Long. 84° 59' E): This village is one kilometre north of Amwan on the Bodhgayā - Gayā riverside road. It has the ruins of another *kutchahari* over a small mound, which has been completely destroyed. No pottery was found. The remains of a brick structure were visibly protruding from its eastern side. A ninth-century Viṣṇu sculpture is fixed in one of the outer niches of a small modern temple on the eastern edge of the village (Fig. 3.29).

One kilometre further north of Kendua on the road to Gayā is a mausoleum which has been built of recycled material alongside the foundation of an old structure. The place is littered with brick and pillar remains from the Pāla period. No pottery was found from the site.

Ghughritand (Lat. 24° 44' N; Long. 85° 00' E): The survey of this village has revealed a tenth-century Umā-Maheśvara sculpture installed within an old temple. The temple has been re-plastered and painted with lime, making it difficult to date the structure. Another temple ruin, made of medieval *lakhauri* bricks was found desecrated and used by villagers for keeping cattle. At the southern edge of the village was a tank, on the sides of which were found scattered a few sculptural and architectural fragments. The sculpture can be dated to the ninth-tenth centuries CE. The sculptural and other remains suggest an early medieval date for the shrine whereas the use of medieval *lakhauri* bricks and railing-pillars suggest a medieval occupation of the place.

IV.2 South Quadrant (Fig. 3.30)

IV.2.1 Non-Monastic site/Settlements

Bank (Lat. 24° 29' N; Long. 84° 58' E): The mound is located on the east bank of the seasonal stream called Gulsakhri *nadi*, south of the NH2, which joins the river

Niranjana north of the village of Chansi. The diameter and height of the circular mound is 10 metres and 4 metres, respectively. Pottery collected from the settlement mound, includes *handis*, shallow bowls, plates and small cooking pots of Red ware and Red ware with slips of the Gupta and Pāla periods. No sculpture was found in the vicinity of the site.

Binda (Lat. 24° 33' N; Long. 84° 58' E): This village settlement is located on a high mound on the western bank of Gulsakhri *nadi*. Unfortunately the high density of population and occupation of every part of the mound made it difficult to survey the site and no pottery was found. Sculptures found in two modern temples in the village included architectural panels of the Buddha, miniature stone *stūpas* of the tenth-eleventh centuries CE and a Sūrya sculpture of the ninth century CE (Fig. 3.31).

Dema (Lat. 24° 36' N; Long. 85° 00' E): This village is located at the strategic meeting point of the river Niranjana and the seasonal stream Chajya *nadi*. The mound is in the north-eastern part of the village, on which are ruins of an old mud building. The cutting of the northern and western sides of the mound has exposed remains of brick structures up to 1.5 metres in height whereas the eastern side showed no brick remains. The pottery collection included medium and small *handi*, bowls, bowls with rusticated base and knife edged plates, whereas the ware types were BRW, NBP associated red ware, Black ware, Red ware without slip and Slipped red ware. The Chalcolithic settlement continued through the Pāla period, substantiated by sculptures found within a modern temple. The temple is located at the southwestern boundary of the village along a water tank and houses sculptures of a ninth century CE Maitreya Buddha (with half-illegible inscription) (Fig. 3.32); an eighth century CE Bhairava; three eroded sculptures; two of female deities and another of a male deity; and numerous Buddha-panels of stone.

Atiya (Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 85° 00' E): This mound is located on the west bank of the river Niranjana and measures 40 m x 30 m. The height of the mound is 3 metres. Its pottery collection represented Chalcolithic Black and red ware, NBP associated red ware, and Red ware - the important vessel types being bowls, basins and *handi*. The site continued from the Chalcolithic through the Pāla period and was abandoned later.

Pirasin (Lat. 24° 34' N; Long. 84° 58' E): The circular mound within the village is located on the west bank of the river Niranjana. The diameter and height are 34.3 metres and 3.5 metres, respectively. It is extensively damaged due to the

encroachments on its north, south and west sides which have led to the exposure of remains of a brick structure. Vessel types found at the site include shallow bowls, *handis*, basins, bowls and knife-edge plates, and the ware types are Burnished red ware, NBP-associated red ware, BRW, Red ware with slip. A ring well, exposed during the digging, was also found, indicating that the Chalcolithic settlement continued through the Pāla period.⁶³ No sculptures were found except a few fragmentary remains of miniature stone *stūpas*, though the villagers did mention the theft of a few Buddhist sculptures.

Wari (Lat. 24° 34' N; Long. 84° 57' E): This village is located on the western bank of the river Niranjana. The mound itself has been extensively cut through on all sides. The rectangular mound measures 30 m x 25 m x 3.5 m though the original mound was spread over more than 113.5 m x 78m. The eastern and southern sides are currently used for agriculture. A brick structure was found exposed within an agricultural field to the north of the mound. The ceramics collected from the site were small and medium-sized *handi*, bowls with cord impressions, flat base bowls, and storage jars and ware types included NBP-associated red ware, Red ware with and without slip. Ceramic analysis indicates that this early historic settlement continued through to the Pāla period, and this was further substantiated by sculptures found in the village temple, located eighty metres north of the mound. The sculptures included a statue of Gaṇeśa (of the eleventh century CE), two Viṣṇu statues (of seventh and eighth centuries CE) (Fig. 3.33), a heavily damaged statue of Avalokiteśvara (of the eighth century CE) and two miniature stone *stūpas* of the tenth century CE.

Gothu (Lat. 24° 38' N; Long. 85° 00' E): The mound of Gothu, located on the eastern bank of the river Niranjana, forms the north-western boundary of the village. It has been cut through on its eastern and southern sides by encroachment, and the northern and western sides are used for agriculture. Thus, the mound measures 15 m x 10m x 3.5m whereas the original mound was spread over 100 sq. meters. The pottery from the site includes a diagnostic Neolithic sherd with a red slip, shallow bowls, flat based bowls, plates, handles, a lid-cum-bowl, and a medium *handi* with a thick rim, thumb-impression-designs and cord-impressions. This Neolithic settlement site continued to the Pāla period as indicated by later ware types - Burnished red ware with a rusticated

⁶³ A number of ring-wells are reported from Sonpur and Taradih from the early historic stratigraphic levels during excavations. For details, see Sinha and Verma, *Sonpur*, pp. 16-17.

base, NBP ware and its associated black ware, Red ware, and Slipped red ware. A compact brick structure was exposed in the process of digging a tube-well.

Koshila (Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 85° 00' E): At the southern and south-eastern edges of modern Koshila village is a mound, which is divided into two parts by the road from Bodhgayā to NH2. The village is located on the western bank of the Niranjana river and is at a crossing point to Dema. The mound is roughly 5 metres high and spread over 150m x 100m. The surface survey has revealed ceramic sequence from the Chalcolithic to the Pāla period, though NBP ware is absent at the site.

Lakhaipur (Lat. 24° 35' N; Long. 85° 06' E): Grierson reported this site as a fort of the local Kol Kings of the region.⁶⁴ The mound along the eastern bank of the Mohane river measures more than 1000 m x 500 m. The survey of the site has revealed NBP associated ware, Red ware, Black ware and Slipped red ware and the major vessel-types include channelled bowls, small and medium sized *handis*, *lotas* (water pot), bowls, and basins. A complete Pāla-period pot and a bronze box, kept in the temple, have been recorded from the site. The settlement may thus be dated from the early historic through the Pāla periods. A new temple, at the southern base of the mound and on the eastern bank of the river, was constructed on an old brick terrace. The brick-size indicates Pāla period activity at the site. Other remains included one piece of a miniature stone *stūpa* and an illegible inscribed broken fragment of a statue. There is a Sūrya temple at the eastern boundary of Lakhaipur village.

Jagannathpur (Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 85° 07' E): This mound is located on the eastern bank of the Paimar river and the western edge of Jagannathpur village. It is at the crossing point of the river and measures 40m x 38m, and 10 metres high. My survey of the mound revealed NBP associated ware, Red ware and Black ware, indicating an early historic origin of the site. The sculptural remains, kept in an agricultural field, included a few broken pieces of two images and miniature stone *stūpa* fragments, which may be dated broadly to the early medieval period.

IV.2.2 Monastic site/Temple sites

Gurpa (Lat. 24° 33' N; Long. 85° 18' E): This temple site is located at the top of the Gurpa hill near Fatehpur. Its identity has been established as Kukuṭāpadagirī of the

⁶⁴ G. A. Grierson, *Notes on the District of Gayā* (Calcutta, 1893), p. 25

mid-seventh century CE.⁶⁵ The temple at the hilltop contains a few fragmentary sculptural remains, an architectural panel of the Buddha, a footprint with the Buddhist creed and a donative inscription from the tenth century CE (Fig. 3.34). The inscription was noticed earlier but never published. I have deciphered the inscription as “*Nama(h) ranam?kamalayadharmana ka...[?]tenaya pu...(?)tais-krtampunya Tadbhavattusanca-rasrame-tapitu purvva-kambha*”. It records a donation, though the name of the donor is not clear.

Khojwatti (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 58' E): The village, located about four kilometres south of Bodhgayā, has ruins of a *Kutchahari* on a mound and a cluster (five) of single room shrines, each having a Śiva-liṅga. The place, located to the east of the village, was owned by the Bodhgayā *Mahant*. The site may be dated to the seventeenth century.

IV.2.3 Sculptural sites

Badki Babhani (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 57' E): This village is located five kilometres to the southwest of Bodhgayā. The survey revealed a twenty-five metre high modern temple, which was constructed on an old brick terrace. The terrace itself was part of a mound which was extensively eroded on every side for agricultural purposes. A ceramic survey of the site has revealed Slipped red ware sherds, indicating Pāla period activity. This is also substantiated by a Buddha image in the *Bhūmispārśa mudrā* with the Buddhist creed inscription of the ninth century CE (Fig. 3.35) as well as a miniature stone *stūpa*. A similar statue of the Buddha of the tenth century CE is also displayed at the Bodhgayā museum (Acc. No149).

IV.3 East Quadrant (Fig. 3.36)

IV.3.1 Non-Monastic site/Settlement

Bhuthra (Lat. 24° 43' N; Long. 85° 08' E): This abandoned, rectangular site is located along the Gayā - Fatherpur road and is 250 metres south of the Bhuthra village. It measures 46m x 28m x 2m. A large water tank, measuring 125m x 56m with a 3.2 metre high mud embankment, was located 40 metres east of the mound.

⁶⁵ For details, see D. R. Patil, *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* (Patna, 1963), pp. 156-158. The identification of the site is also discussed in the discussion of Kurkihar and its identification.

The vessel-types from the site include small and medium-sized *handis* with cord-impressions, bowls, knife-edge plates, and jars. Ware-types include NBP-associated red ware, Black ware, Red ware and Red ware with slip. This early historic settlement seemed to be abandoned at the end of the Pāla period.

Miyari/Maher (Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 85° 09' E): The hillside settlement is located at the eastern foot of Maher hill on the Gayā – Fatehpur Road. My survey has revealed that the modern village is spread over an old settlement mound which was occupied at various places. The ceramic collection from the ground includes a Neolithic diagnostic sherd with a cord-impression, thick plates, bowls, flat-based bowls, knife-edge plates, and the ware-types include NBP associated red ware, Red ware and Slipped red ware. A tank, measuring 100 square-metres, was found to the west of the village, fed by a hilly stream. The ceramic-analysis indicates that the Neolithic settlement continued through to the Pāla period.

Malikpur (Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 16' E): A survey of the other villages in the vicinity of Kurkihar revealed a non-monastic habitation mound at Malikpur. The mound, extensively damaged from agricultural and settlement use, is roughly 2.3 metres high and located one and a half kilometres east of Kurkihar village. Like Kurkihar, NBP-associated red ware, and the early historic period-II Red wares have also been found on the mound. The physical proximity with Kurkihar and similar pottery suggests a coeval occupation of both the sites, and a definite link between the two. The Gupta period pottery was characterised by potsherds with a silica paste on the mid-section of the body whereas the Pāla period was characterised by Red ware with a slip and a Grey ware carinated *handi*. At the northern edge of the Malikpur village, there is a plastered and walled tank.

Silaunja (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 85° 01' E): The mound is located on the eastern edge of the village along the river Mohane. Measuring 20 m x 8m x 1.5m, it has been extensively damaged because of encroachment, and is under occupation on the north and west sides. The use of the rest of the mound for keeping animals and other purposes has made it difficult to collect pottery, though two terrace-structures, one made of stone and the other of brick were found. The dearth of the pottery scatter made it difficult to determine the origins of the site. An Umā-Maheśvara sculpture of the tenth century CE is under active worship at a local shrine in the village and an

image of Viṣṇu of the ninth century CE is housed in Bodhgayā museum (Acc. No. 163).

IV.3.2 Monastic site/Temple sites

Kurkihar (Lat. 24° 49' N; Long. 85° 15' E): This village, located five kilometres to the northeast of Wazirganj, was reported by Kittoe in 1847 and later explored by Cunningham.⁶⁶ The identification of the site as Kukuṭāpadagiri by Cunningham was contested by M.A. Stein and R.D. Banerjee.⁶⁷ Stein's identification of Sobhnath hill as Kukuṭāpadagiri was later corrected by R.D. Banerjee who established the identity of the Gurpa hill as Kukuṭāpadagiri.⁶⁸ My survey supports the identification of R.D. Banerjee. Kurkihar needs a detailed discussion because of its importance as a prominent monastic centre, the origins of which probably dates back to the early historic I period. Since the site is yet to be excavated, it is difficult to guess its importance in the early historic period. However, the site was a major monastic centre in the early medieval period, as represented by voluminous production of stone and metal images, apart from 93 donative inscriptions, mostly from monks coming from Kanchi and Sri Lanka.

⁶⁶ Kittoe conducted an excavation of the *stūpa* and collected ten cart-loads of sculptures which he despatched to Indian museum, Kolkata.

⁶⁷ M.A. Stein, 'Notes on an Archaeological Tour in South Bihar and Hazaribagh', *Indian Antiquary*, vol. 30 (1904), pp. 66-107.

⁶⁸ The following account describes another hill in the Gayā district which for various reasons, seems to agree more closely with the account given by the Chinese of the Kukatapada or Gurupadagiri, as it also used to be called. The hill has first been brought to notice by Babu Sree Gopal Bose, a sub-overseer of the public works department, in charge of Bodhgayā, who had already noticed the great similarity between the remains on the Gurupa hill with the description given by the Xuanzang of the Kukatapadagiri.

The points to validate his identification are: 1) the modern name Gurupa is an exact Prakritic development out of Sanskrit Gurupada, the second name by which the hill used to be called by the Chinese pilgrim-monks. (2) The distance of 19 to 20 miles east of Bodhgaya agrees better with 100 *li* east of the same place, the distance given by Xuanzang, rather than the distance of fourteen miles, north-east of Bodhgaya as calculated by M.A. Stein for Sobhnath hill. The corresponding distance from the approximate site of *Buddhavana* agrees better with the Chinese accounts for the Gurupa than for Sobhnath. (3) The Gurupa hill has a large tunnel running through it and forming a passage leading to the top, thus corresponding accurately with the cleft through the hill made by Kaśyapa on his ascent according to the Chinese accounts. No similar feature is recorded at the Sobhnath hill by Stein. (4) The top of the Gurupa hill has three distinct peaks forming the three cardinal points of a triangle. Xuanzang likewise speaks of three high peaks on the summit of Kukatapadagiri, between which Kaśyapa sat down when he entered *Nirvāna*. With regards to Sobhnath, Stein mentions merely three spurs, extending from one joining point into various directions and thus resembling a cock's foot from which, according to him, the hill came to be named as 'Cock's foot hill' (Skt. Kukatapadagiri). (5) The Gurupa hill has remains of old brick buildings and sculptural fragments, which may have belonged to the *stūpa* on the top of Kukatapadagiri, mentioned by Xuanzang. These five points by Banerjee clearly indicate that Gurupa matches better with Kukatapadagiri than Kurkihar.

Kittoe's report mentioned the place as the site of a great monastery and large town, indicated by ceramic-scatter, many fine wells, tanks, and a vast mound of bricks and rubbish. Cunningham found two mounds - the bigger one to the south of the village and a smaller one called the *Sugatghar* mound to the north of the village. The bigger mound now has a Hindu temple at its top. According to Cunningham, the mound measured 182 square metres and about 7.6 metres high and included the ruins of a small fort with a solid brick wall on its north-western edge. Kittoe and Cunningham, based on their respective digging, claimed the existence of a Buddhist *stūpa*, surrounded by small shrines and miniature stone *stūpas*. In fact, my survey confirmed a large number of miniature stone *stūpas* scattered on the northern and southern edge of the mound. A wall, roughly one metre high, and pillar fragments are also exposed on the south-eastern edge of the mound (Fig. 3.37). The availability of NBP ware and BRW in the exposed sections of the *stūpa*-mound indicates the early historic origin of the site, though the nature of the site in this period is far from clear. The later discovery of the famous Kurkihar bronzes, in what seems to be the corner of a room from the east part of the mound as reported by Jayaswal, and the high number of the early medieval sculptures together indicate the existence of a monastery at the site instead.⁶⁹

The inscriptions on the bronze sculptures from the site suggest that it was a famous monastic site called the Apānaka monastery.⁷⁰ A large number of miniature stone *stūpas* and Buddhist sculptures from the Pāla period also indicate the importance of this monastic centre as a place of pilgrimage, substantiated by ninety-three inscriptions found there.⁷¹ Large number of sculptures, miniature stone *stūpas* and donative inscriptions from monks coming from southern India and Sri Lanka suggest that the Apānaka *vihāra* was a major monastic centre in the early medieval period. My survey has also revealed three inscribed Pāla period sculptures, two with the Buddhist creed inscription and a damaged one with a donative record. The previously reported sculptures from the site have been discussed and reported by several scholars such as Sarkar and Saraswati, K.P. Jayaswal, Asher and Huntington (Fig. 3.38, 3.39, and 3.40). Huntington has argued for the existence of a local

⁶⁹ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, p. 224.

⁷⁰ P. Pal, 'A Forgotten Monastery of Ancient Bihar', *South Asian Studies*, vol. 4 (1988), p. 84.

⁷¹ A. Banerjee-Sastri, 'Ninety-Three Inscriptions on the Kurkihar Bronzes', *JBORS*, vol. 26, part 3 (1940), pp. 236-251.

workshop during the Pāla-Senā period at the site based on the high quantity and quality of sculpture from this place. C. Bautze-Picron has also discussed a number of sculptures housed in the Devasthan at Kurkihar and I have relied on her dating to date them.⁷²

From this survey, the chronology of the site may now be revised. This revision takes into account ceramic-analysis whereas the previous dates have been based exclusively on the early medieval sculptural and epigraphic remains. Kurkihar may also have been the site of an early historic *stūpa* and a major monastic establishment in the subsequent periods. This can be confirmed only by an excavation of the site. The location of the modern village with dense settlement on the eastern and northern sides of the old mound makes it very difficult to collect any information on the settlement history of the place.

Murali Hill at Kurkihar (Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 15' E): Three small hills are located to the north of the village. The survey of the hills revealed the remains of a square brick structure and broken brick pieces on the southern slope of the Murali hill. There is a Śiva-liṅga on the top of the hill and the southern slope is occupied by a low caste community. Cunningham's report about the existence of a *stūpa* on top of the hill cannot be substantiated due to lack of any structural remains.⁷³ The survey of two other hills did not reveal any remains. An old tank, measuring 100 m x 65 m and walled with stairs on three sides was located around 400 metres east of the Murali hill. The use of bricks, stones, lime and mortar for plastering and walling the tank indicate an early historic period date for the tank.

Hasra-kol (Lat. 24° 46' N; Long. 85° 13' E): The Hasra-kol valley, located six kilometres southwest of the Wazirganj, extends over 500-600 metres east to west with an irregular width between 50 and 70 metres. The whole of the valley is strewn with brick and stone ruins. Beglar reported nearly thirteen mounds, large and small, of brick and stone, representing the ruins of either temples or Buddhist monasteries.⁷⁴ On some of the stones, Beglar noticed characteristic mason marks, and that the largest

⁷² Bautze-Picron, Claudine, 'Early Buddhist Sculpture at Kurkihar: Images of Bodhisattvas and Tārās', In G. Bhattacharya, ed., *Akṣaynīvi: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Administration of her Scholarly Contributions*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991.

⁷³ A. Cunningham, *Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80*, vol. XV (New Delhi, 2000, rpt.), pp. 5-6.

⁷⁴ J. D. Beglar, *Report of the Tour in 1874-75* (New Delhi, 1878, rpt. 2000), pp. 104-105.

mound was in the centre of the valley where there were some granite pillars (Fig. 3.41). It is circular, about twenty-three metres in diameter and three metres high. During digging by villagers for bricks, it yielded a stone slab carved with four rows of miniature Buddha figures, now fixed in the wall of a nearby well. Similarly, there were two other mounds, one measuring 28m x 23m and over 6 metres high, and the other 15 metres in diameter and over 2.5 metres high. Kuraishi considered these three mounds to be *stūpas* and another mound, located southeast of the central mound, and measuring about 45m x 15m and 1-1.5m high, was possibly a monastery.⁷⁵ The further erosion of the site has exposed at least five alignments of stone or brick walls at different places and a rectangular structure east of the central mound.

My surface survey revealed two miniature stone *stūpas* and various sculptural fragments (Fig. 3.42). Ceramic collection from the site included mainly NBP associated black and red ware, and Red slipped ware of the Pāla period. The Red ware and knife-edged ware of the Kuṣāṇa period is also quite prominent here. Hence the previous dating of the site may now be revised, as the ceramic-analysis suggests an early historic origin. The growth of the monastic establishment in the subsequent periods is further proved by the construction of many *stūpa* structures and inscribed sculptures. Six inscribed sculptures, dated between the ninth and twelfth centuries CE, have been previously reported from the site.

The western end of the valley revealed several brick walls which indicate another settlement. Patil considered this a settlement site and assigned to it an approximate date of ninth to twelfth century CE on the basis of sculptural fragments. It is now occupied by a modern settlement.

The hill south of the valley, about 305 metres high, is called Shobnath hill. Stein attempted to link it to Kukuṣāpadagirī, but this has been contested.⁷⁶ He reported a large terrace of about 22 square-metres and 3 metres high. On this terrace of rough masonry, he also discovered a mound, 3 metres high and 6 metres in diameter, with five-granite pillars. Based on the study of these pillars, Patil suggested that the site might be earlier than the ninth century CE. Nevertheless, for a clearer and more definitive chronological framework of the ruins within the valley, the site needs to be

⁷⁵ M. H. Kuraishi, *List of Ancient Monuments Protected Under Act VII of 1904 in the Province of Bihar and Orissa* (New Delhi, 1931), p. 43.

⁷⁶ Stein, 'Notes on South Bihar', pp. 86-90. See discussion on Kurkihar.

excavated. As for the sculptural remains, a number of images have been reported from the site. The earliest known surviving image from the site is a fragmentary six-armed figure of Avalokiteśvara that dates from the ninth or early tenth century, the majority of remains seem to have been produced after this time. Almost all the reported sculptures from the site has been dated and discussed by Leoshko in a recent article where she has also highlighted the later Buddhist activity at the site, as represented by the production of a late tenth or early eleventh century Kurukullā image and many other images of Buddhist deities.⁷⁷

Harahi-sthan (Orel) (Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 14' E): Another site, called Harahisthan is located half a kilometre south of the Amethi village and two kilometres northwest of Kurkihar village. The site has a new temple with a *linga*, an old temple made of recycled material enshrining Durgā / Mahiṣāsūramardinī and the remains of an old temple dated to the Pāla period. There is also a square brick-walled tank (20m x 20m), which has been repaired in recent times. Due to an annual fair at the site which seems to fill the surface with modern pottery it was not possible to collect the required pottery for the survey. The brick remains of the old temple together with a square brick platform on the ground appears to have been part of a larger temple at the site, probably of the Pāla period, as it was full of broken pieces of sculptures. The sculptural remains at the site included a an eighth century heavily eroded image of Avalokiteśvara, another eighth century image of Viṣṇu, a heavily damaged Buddha statue of the ninth century CE, a Durgā/ Mahiṣāsūramardinī statue, a Sūrya image and some fragments of Umā-Maheśvara sculptures of the tenth-century CE (Fig. 3.43, 3.44). There are several other sculptural fragments, two of which are inscribed. The first one is illegible whereas the second one reads “*deyadharmmoyam vanidāyaka (?)suta-pusyata-ka –dadāti*”. The donative inscription, recording gift of a sculpture for wish-fulfilment, may be dated paleographically to the tenth centuries CE (Fig. 3.45).

Jethian / Tapoban (Lat. 24° 55' N; Long. 85° 19' E): These two sites were explored because of their location along the Rajgir - Bodhgayā route. Both were thought to

⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of sculptures from this site and their ritual importance, and historicity, see Janice Leoshko, 'Considering Unusual images and their Sites: The Example of kurukullā from hasra Kol', *Journal of Bengal Art*, vol. 5 (2000), pp. 29-39.

have been visited by the Buddha according to the textual sources.⁷⁸ Tapoban has hot water springs, which have been organised into three plastered tanks. Three heavily damaged sculptures, one each of Avalokiteśvara, Viṣṇu and Sūrya of the ninth and tenth centuries CE, are plastered on the edges of these tanks. The site also has two broken and eroded pieces of an Umā-Maheśvara sculpture of the eleventh century CE.

Jethian is today a densely populated village settlement. Most of the archaeological remains so far reported have been from the nearby hill where no ceramic scatter was found (Fig. 3.46).⁷⁹ A sculpture of Khasarpaṇa Avalokiteśvara, dated to the ninth-tenth centuries CE, is housed in the Bodhgayā museum (Acc. no. 41). The other sculptures in the village include a Sūrya (of the eighth century CE), two Buddha statues (one at the shrine on the southern edge of the tank and the others at the village school, both of the tenth century CE) (Fig. 3.47), an Avalokiteśvara (of the eleventh century CE), and an Umā-Maheśvara statue (of the ninth century CE).

IV.3.3 Sculptural sites/Villages with Sculptures

Amethi (Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 14' E): Two kilometres north-west of Kurkihar is another village with a small temple where six Buddhist sculptures were enshrined, along with fragments of four broken pieces. Kittoe published an image from the site, and Stein also reported three sculptures, including one of Avalokiteśvara.⁸⁰ The sculptures at the village shrine include two Tārā statues (inscribed, and of the tenth century CE), two Maitreya statues (of the ninth and tenth centuries CE), an Avalokiteśvara statue (of the tenth century CE), and three broken and headless sculptures, representing Avalokiteśvara and the Buddha in the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* and *pralambapādāsana mudrā*, respectively. Another stone piece at the site is completely eroded, but can be dated to the tenth century CE, based on the inscription on the piece. The Buddhist creed is inscribed on both the Maitreya and Tārā sculptures (Fig. 3.48, 3.49 and 3.50).

⁷⁸ Stein, 'Notes on South Bihar', p. 93; Kittoe, 'Notes on the *Vihāras* and *Caityas* of Bihar', *JASB*, vol.16, no. 1 (1847), pp. 272-279.

⁷⁹ For details on archaeological remains and sculptures, see Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, pp. 187-190; 560-561.

⁸⁰ Stein, 'Notes on South Bihar', p. 101; Kittoe, 'Notes on Viharas', p. 274.

Punawan (Lat. 24° 48' N; Long. 85° 14' E): The reports of Kittoe and Cunningham mention a temple and a mound at the site. Although the mound has been completely destroyed, a temple was indeed found there. The temple has a number of sculptural fragments, which include three headless figures of the Buddha (one piece is in *bhūmisparśa mudrā*), two Tārā statues, (one completely eroded and the second only has an upper torso) and five miniature stone *stūpas*. All of these pieces may be dated to the ninth and tenth centuries CE.

IV.4 West Quadrant (Fig. 3.51)

IV.4.1 Non-Monastic site/Settlement

Sonpur (Lat. 24° 58' N; Long. 84° 58' E): The Sonpur mound, known as Banasura ka garh, is located to the west of the modern village of Sonpur in Belaganj block of Gayā district, along the north-eastern and southern banks of the Jamuna river. The mound, about 1.52 to 3.05 metres high above the surrounding fields, is cut into two parts by a metalled road from Belaganj towards Tekari. The northern section is again cut into two parts by a rain-gully which flows towards the river from the roadside in the northern direction. The nearest sites to this place are the Nagarjuni and the Barabar hill caves. The attempts to identify the historic name of the place based on textual data and mythology has remained inconclusive due to lack of any inscribed material.⁸¹ According to Sinha and Verma, the excavation at Sonpur has revealed three main cultures of continuous occupation (the first divided into two sub-periods), represented by a 6.70 metres thick deposit at the centre of the northern mound. At other spots the depth varies between 3.05 metres and 6.10 metres. The cultural sequence and pottery have been discussed in the methodology section.

Ghenjan (Lat. 25° 04' N; Long. 84° 54' E): Located on the west bank of river Morhar, Bishanpur Ghenjan was reported by Beglar.⁸² The mound, known locally as a *gadh or dhibra*, is located to the south-west of the village. A seal from Nalanda, dating to the eighth century CE seems to mention the village “*Ghananjana-grāma-ja (or jā)-napadasya*”.⁸³ The seal represents an eight-armed Durgā seated on a lion

⁸¹ For a detailed discussion on the name of the site, see Sinha and Verma, *Sonpur*, pp. 3-4.

⁸² Peppe published photographs of the place and Beglar also briefly reported the mound and sculptures. Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, p. 144; Beglar, *Report-1972-83*, p. 63.

⁸³ H. Sastri, *Nalanda and its Epigraphic Material* (Delhi, 1942, rpt. 1999), p. 46.

above the inscription. The seal suggests that the village did exist in the eighth century CE and that it was somehow linked to the Nalanda *Mahāvihāra*, though the nature of this link is not clear. A ninth century CE Avalokiteśvara sculpture from the site is inscribed and mentions that the image was a gift of *Sthavira* Ratnasimha of Nalanda.⁸⁴ The sculptures from the site include a Viṣṇu mounted on Garuḍa, a Śiva-liṅga, a broken image of Sūrya, and many others. There is also a Tārā image which is enshrined and worshipped in a modern temple at the site. All these sculptures have been dated to the Pāla period.⁸⁵ The high number of sculptures and donative inscriptions suggest a monastic establishment and a Buddhist temple at the site.

Tekari (Lat. 24° 55' N; Long. 84° 50' E): The ruins of an old fort of the Tekari king were constructed on this mound. NBP ware, Grey ware and Black ware were found on the unoccupied portion of the mound to the south of the fort. Potsherds and a copper punch-marked coin indicate an early historic settlement at the site. Another Tekari king's fort-site, Simauri, is located two kilometres west of Tekari and may be dated to the same period.

Baiju-bigha Mound (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 49' E): The site is located along the road between Gurua and Daryapur. It is a mound measuring 800m x 300m. Although Kittoe reported a mound on the bank of the Morhar river, locally known as Murghut, this site is half a kilometre east of the river and therefore cannot be identified as Murghat. There are two tanks - one to its east and one at its north-west. The site is used for agriculture and is littered with pottery and bricks. My survey led to the collection of NBP ware and its associated red ware, Red ware, and Slipped red ware, and the vessel-types include thick and flat-based bowls, handles, bowls, and small and medium *handis*. The ceramic analysis suggests that the site was an early historic settlement, which continued through the Pāla period and was subsequently abandoned. The proximate location of the Baiju-bigha hillock temples (to be discussed in the section V.4.2) with the remains from the Gupta and Pāla periods also suggests a clear link between the temple and the settlement.

Mangrawan-gadh (Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 84° 45' E): This mound is located to the west of the Gurua - Guraru metalled road at the northern end of the village. This 30-metre diameter and 12-metre high circular mound has revealed a range of ceramics

⁸⁴ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, p. 144.

⁸⁵ Kuraishi, *Ancient Monuments*, pp. 44-45. Kuraishi's list describes all the sculptures from the site.

such as flat-based bowls, a lid-cum-bowl, carinated *handis*, horizontal *handis*, dabbers, and flared rims. The prominent ware-types include BRW, NBP and its associated ware, Red ware, Black ware and degenerated-NBP ware. A modern temple exists to the north-east of the mound which houses three Viṣṇu images of the ninth-tenth centuries CE (Fig. 3.52), an Umā-Maheśvara image, a *linga*, two miniature stone *stūpas* of the tenth century CE, and a Bhairav (Fig. 3.53) and a Gaṇeśa image of the eleventh century CE. The above evidence suggests that the Chalcolithic emergence of the settlement continued through the early historic, Kuṣāṇa and the Pāla periods.

Nasher (Lat. 24° 38' N; Long. 84° 47' E): The mound is located on the eastern end of the village called Nasher, and measures 40 m x 25m. The digging of the sides of the mound has allowed the collection of pottery from the exposed levels. The ceramic-types include BRW, NBP and its associated ware, Red ware and Red ware with a slip. The local shrine in the village contains a tenth-century Buddha image in the *bhūmiśarśa mudrā*, a Pāla period *linga*, and a tenth-century *Navagraha* panel (Fig. 3.54). A sculpture documented along the northern bank of the village tank is a seventh-century Avalokiteśvara. Therefore, the analysis of ceramic and sculptural remains suggests a Chalcolithic origin of the settlement which continued through the Pāla period.

Chansi (Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 84° 46' E): The circular mound, located at the northwestern edge of the modern village, is encroached on every side despite being used as a Muslim graveyard. Surface finds include Slipped Red ware, indicating Pāla period activity at the site. Some fragments of Brāhmaṇical sculpture under active worship were also found beneath a *pipal* tree, which was located 50 metres to the south of the mound.

Jhikatiya (Lat. 24° 38' N; Long. 84° 46' E): The mound is located to the west of the village Jhikatiya and is completely destroyed because of agricultural use. My survey has revealed a range of ceramics from the site such as Neolithic BRW, Chalcolithic Burnished BRW, NBP associated red ware and black ware and Red ware and Black ware. Vessel-types include Channelled-bowls, the conical base of pots, a lid-cum-bowl, knob-lids, bowls, and jars. The only sculpture from the site was a partially destroyed image of Viṣṇu from the ninth century CE. The pottery analysis suggests a Neolithic origin of the site, which continued through the Pāla period.

Chillaur (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 48' E): The site is located on the western bank of river Morhar. Kittoe reported this site, which he considered it to be an ancient city. It had a mud fort, which was constructed on the ruins of an older settlement mound in the medieval period. Kittoe also reported two other mounds south of this one, which he thought were part of a Buddhist *stūpa* and from which were recovered several Buddhist sculptures.⁸⁶ S.P. Singh has reported basins with chocolate polish on the upper surface of the sharp finished rims and BRW of pre-NBP types bearing black and white paintings of parallel and vertical lines similar to Sonpur.⁸⁷ Dishes, bowls, cups, and basins of NBP ware have also been reported from the site.⁸⁸ My survey has resulted in the collection of footed-bowls, shallow bowls, *handis* of NBP ware and its associated red ware, and a small ritual pot (*lota*), and cooking-pots of Slipped red ware. A tenth century CE Simhanād Avalokiteśvara from the site is also housed in the Patna museum. The site has a Neolithic–Chalcolithic origin which continued through the Pāla period.

Nagwa-gadh (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 40' E): There is a mound in the western part of this village, on top of which are the ruins of a mud-fort and a temple. The survey of the mound has resulted in the collection of lid-cum-bowls, medium and small size *handis* of NBP associated red ware, carinated *handis*, and shallow bowls of the Slipped red ware. The site, an early historic settlement where a Buddhist shrine emerged in the early medieval period, also has a pillar carving of the eighth century CE, a partially broken Buddha statue of the eighth century CE, an Avalokiteśvara statue of the tenth century CE (Fig. 3.55), and several sculptural fragments dated between the tenth and twelfth centuries CE.

Guneri (Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 84° 44' E): Kittoe reported Guneri as the site of a large town and *vihāra*. Based on an inscribed Avalokiteśvara sculpture, he suggested that the monastery at the site was called 'Sri Gooncherita'.⁸⁹ The modern village-settlement is located on a mound. There is a tank to the north of the mound, at the western edge of which are ruins of a Śiva temple. The place is littered with bricks and pillar fragments. The survey of the mound revealed various types of vessels such as channelled bowls, footed bowls, vases, small and medium sized *handis*, bowls and

⁸⁶ Kittoe, 'Notes on *Vihāras*', p. 277.

⁸⁷ S. P. Singh, 'Sites in Gayā', p. 63.

⁸⁸ Singh, *History of Magadha*, p. 46.

⁸⁹ Kittoe, 'Notes on *Vihāras*', p. 278.

knife-edged plates. The ware-types include NBP associated red ware, Black-polished ware, BRW, and Slipped red ware. The settlement seems to date to the early historic period. The site was also a major Buddhist monastic centre, which received many donations from the monastic community and laity between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE, as indicated by inscriptions and sculptural remains there. An inscribed Buddha sculpture of the ninth century CE specifically mentions donation of the statue in the ninth regnal year of the Pratihāra king Mahendrapāla (c. 890-910 CE). There is another Buddha image of the tenth century at the site. The Bodhgayā museum has three sculptures taken from the site: one each of the Buddha, Maitreya and Mañjuśrī of the tenth century CE. There are several other sculptures at the site, dated approximately between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE.⁹⁰ These include a sati-pillar, a mother goddess panel, a Mātrikā, a Viṣṇu, a Durgā, and miniature stone *stūpas*.

Kabar (Lat. 24° 52' N; Long. 84° 44' E): The main mound, measuring more than 500 square-metres, is located to the south of the village Kabar and is surrounded by a deep moat on all sides. The present village is settled on the northern and eastern part of the mound. Its large size and compact earth suggest a major settlement at the site, probably an early historical city. There is also another mound, which has been cut through, found on the northern edge of the village. A further 50 metres north is a Pāla period Śiva-liṅga, the ruins of a Pāla period temple now being used as a *dargah* (mausoleum) and a tank measuring 50m x 50m (Fig. 3.56, 3.57). The existence of a temple is proved beyond a doubt by the presence of large numbers of carved granite pillars, perhaps dated to the seventh century CE and similar to those found in the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist temples of the Bodhgayā region. One hundred and fifty metres to the south-east of this place was another temple called the Mahadev-sthan, a dry lake measuring 400 m x 250 m and a miniature stone *stūpa*.

The survey of the mound and surrounding areas has resulted in the collection of BRW, NBP ware and its associated red ware, Grey ware, Black ware and Slipped red ware. Vessel-types include *handis* with cord impression, lid-cum-bowls, shallow-bowls, small and medium sized *handis*, carinated *handis*, knife-edged plates, and small ritual pots (*lota*). Ceramic-analysis indicates a Chalcolithic origin of the

⁹⁰ For details on sculptures, see Huntington, *Pāla-Sena*; Asher, *Eastern India*; and for inscriptions, see Kuraishi, *Ancient Monuments*.

settlement, which continued through the early historic, Kuṣāṇa, Gupta and Pāla periods. The early historic period is further substantiated by the reporting of silver and copper punch-marked coins, cast-copper coins and a bullion coin bearing the legend *Vasudattasa* in early Brāhmī characters of about the second-third centuries BCE.⁹¹ Later Gupta and Pāla period activity is suggested by Brāhmaṇical sculptures such as a Śiva-liṅga, two Viṣṇu images, a Nṛsimha image, a Maḥiṣāsura-mardīnī image, a goddess image, an Umā-Maheśvara image and many other fragments, all of which may be dated between the seventh and twelfth centuries CE. The site continued through the medieval period as indicated by four medieval coins of sultanate period found within the village.

IV.4.2 Monastic site/Temple site

Kespa (Lat. 25° 02' N; Long. 84° 51' E): Reported by Buchanan and explored by Beglar and Bloch, Kespa was a place famous for its fair in the locality. The village is located 10 kilometres north of Teakri. There exists a modern temple on a mound in the southwest corner of the village. The mound has been extensively damaged and almost levelled to the ground level, while its northern part has been occupied by the villagers. The predominant pottery collected from the mound surface was Slipped red ware and Red ware without a slip of the Pāla period. Popular vessel-types include *handis*, plate and shallow bowls with thin bases. The remains spread around the temple included Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist sculptures and granite pillar fragments, indicating the use of recycled materials for the construction of the temple at the site. The sculptures from the temple and village included a life-size Buddha image, an Avalokiteśvara image worshipped as *Tārā devī* within the temple-temple, a Viṣṇu mounted on a Garuḍa, four-faced Śiva-liṅga, a Gaṇeśa image and various other sculptures dated between the ninth and twelfth centuries CE (Fig. 3.58 - 3.63). Based on the available remains, it may be suggested that site was a prominent temple site during the Pāla period.

Makhpa (Lat. 24° 57' N; Long. 84° 50' E): The Makhpa village, located 5 kilometres to the north of Teakri, is located on a mound and therefore it was impossible to collect pottery from the settlement-site. There is another brick mound, 3 metres high, called

⁹¹ S. P. Singh, 'Sites in Gayā', p. 65.

Varahi-sthan, located some 200 metres south of the village. A modern temple now stands on top of it with a tank on its eastern side. The mound had been dug up on its western side which exposed a burnt brick structure/terrace on which the temple now stands. The brick size seems to indicate a Pāla period temple at the site. A life-size sculpture of Viṣṇu-Varāha, dated to the tenth century CE was found in the temple along with several other sculptural fragments (Fig. 3.64).

Bahelia-bigha (Lat. 24° 57' N; Long. 84° 50' E): A Śiva temple made of *lakhauri* bricks was found along the Tekari road. The temples housed a modern Śiva-līnga, a miniature stone *stūpa*, a Buddhist panel, and an eroded sculpture of devotee of the early medieval period.

Misr-bigha (Lat. 24° 56' N; Long. 84° 50' E): Located 300 metres north of Tekari, the mound at Misr-bigha has been completely destroyed. There is a modern temple with sculptural fragments such as an Umā-Maheśvara, a broken Viṣṇu image and others dated to the Pāla period. Interestingly, there is a ring-well along the mound indicating early historic activity.

Utren (Lat. 24° 53' N; Long. 84° 50' E): Utren is located at the strategic crossing point of the Morhar river. The village has two mounds, one each at its eastern and western boundary. The western mound was reported by Beglar to be the remains of a Śiva temple beside which was another mound, now a graveyard.⁹² Beglar noticed various old temple materials such as door-jambes and architraves but nothing was found in my survey except brick scatters. The remains have probably been transferred to the eastern mound, where there is a new temple with old sculptures. Beglar had noticed another Śiva temple on the eastern mound which has been replaced with a new structure. The only way to date this temple site is through sculpture and, based on the style of the sculptures of Umā-Maheśvara, Gaṇeśa (Fig. 3.65), Nandī, Viṣṇu, Durgā, Sūrya and Lakuliśa, the site may be dated between the Gupta and Pāla periods.⁹³

Pali (Lat. 24° 54' N; Long. 84° 49' E): Buchanan, Beglar and Cunningham reported three temple ruins and four mounds within this village. One of the mounds located on the western boundary of the village has been cut through and brick remains and a

⁹² Beglar, *Report*, vol. 6, p. 62. This mound was called Himmat khan gadh.

⁹³ S. P. Singh, 'Sites in Gayā', p. 69. Singh suggests this date based on the sculptures of Lakuliśa, Sūrya, Śiva, and Pārvaī which he himself deposited in the Gayā museum.

door-jamb are visible at the site. Another mound was located on the south-east side of the village, along the Gayā - Daudnagar road. All mounds are occupied by villagers except the western mound. According to Cunningham, there were two temples of Śiva and Viṣṇu here. He also reported several sculptures, a door-jamb of the Gupta period and granite pillars.⁹⁴ My survey revealed one door-jamb (Fig. 3.66), five granite pillars and sculptures of Nandī, Śiva-liṅga, Umā-Maheśvara, and a Śiva, dated to the tenth century CE. A Lakuliśa sculpture of the eleventh century CE is also housed in the Gayā Museum. Based on the available information, it may be suggested that the place had a Śaiva temple in the Pāla period.

Konch (Lat. 24° 56' N; Long. 84° 46' E): Konch has been discussed in detail by almost all scholars who have surveyed this region, because of the Kocheśvara-Mahādeva temple.⁹⁵ The focus here is on the mound located in the middle of the village measuring 100m x 70m. My survey of the mound led to the collection of Black ware of the Gupta period and Slipped red ware from the Pāla period. Vessel-types include *handis*, vases and a shallow bowl with punctured decorations of the Pāla period. The earliest sculpture from the village, a Viṣṇu image, has been dated to the mid-sixth century CE, which corroborates the evidence from pottery. The continuation of the settlement is further corroborated by the sculptural remains housed in the Kocheśvara-Mahādeva temple and two other shrines in the village. The sculptural remains include a Viṣṇu-daśāvatāra panel (Fig. 3.67), images of an *Ekamukhī* Śiva-liṅga (Fig. 3.68), Lakuliśa (Fig. 3.69), Sūrya, Garuḍa, Umā-Maheśvara, a big Śiva-liṅga, two Buddha images and many others - all of which may be dated between the sixth and twelfth centuries CE.

Baiju-bigha Hillock temples (Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 49' E): There are two small hillocks on the eastern bank of the Morhar river and located half a kilometre east of the Baiju-bigha settlement mound (discussed in the settlement section). A Gupta period Śiva-liṅga was installed in a makeshift shrine on the southern hillock. There was a stone cut staircase to this shrine, which is built on the ruins of an old shrine, proved by the remains of a brick terrace of the Pāla period. The presence of a shell inscription on the adjoining northern hillock also indicates Gupta period activity at the

⁹⁴ Cunningham and Garrick, *Report*, vol. 16, pp. 51-52.

⁹⁵ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, pp. 213-215. Patil has summarised all the surveys and details of sculptures reported from the site. The sculpture from the site has also been discussed by Asher and Huntington as well.

site (Fig. 3.70). There is another temple dated by an inscription to the c. 1349 CE on the northern hillock, which seems to have been built on an older brick platform (Fig. 3.71).

Burha (Lat. 24° 39' N; Long. 84° 44' E): The site was reported by Kittoe who also noticed several *caityas* and considered this to be the place of a large *vihāra*.⁹⁶ The site Burha, located on the southern bank of the seasonal river Burha, is a temple-complex and presently consists of two temples. The first temple is the ruins of an old structure, which has been repaired. A new temple has been constructed on an old brick platform to the east of the old temple. A Śiva-liṅga is installed in the sanctum of the new temple. The temple-precinct contains twelve miniature stone *stūpas*, and broken sculptural fragments including three *bhūmisparśa mudrā* Buddha images without heads, two of which are inscribed. Both the inscriptions are damaged and eroded, though they may be palaeographically dated to the eleventh and twelfth centuries CE, respectively. All the sculptural remains indicate Pāla period activity at the site.

Dubba (Lat. 24° 39' N; Long. 84° 44' E): The nearest modern settlement to the site of Burhā is the Dubba village, located 75 metres south of the temple-complex. A mound exists at the northern edge of Dubba and measures 40m x 30m x 4m. It has been extensively damaged on three sides - east, west and south - by increasing encroachment and digging by villagers for bricks. The exposed sections of the mound have revealed burnt bricks and a compact brick structure. The structure probably represents the site of a Buddhist *stūpa* (Fig. 3.72). The survey of the mound revealed shell bangles, and NBP associated red ware and black ware and vessel-types including flat-base bowls, vases, and storage jars. The mound possibly seems to be a brick *stūpa* which originated in the early-historic period and continued until the Pāla period.

Digging by villagers has revealed three life-size sculptures - two of the Buddha and one of Viṣṇu - dated stylistically to the tenth century CE. One of the Buddha sculptures is flanked by two bodhisattvas, and to its left is an inscription in tenth-century characters (Fig. 3.73). Three pillars with *Gavākṣa* carving have been documented from the site, which may be dated to the seventh century CE. Several other pillars, one of which was *in situ* and partly inscribed on both sides with the mid-eleventh century characters, have been documented (Fig. 3.74). The monastic nature of the site is also suggested by the presence of approximately fifty miniature stone

⁹⁶ Kittoe, 'Notes on *Vihāras*', p. 277.

stūpas of granite and grey sandstone on the northern side of the mound, all of which may be dated between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE (Fig. 3.75).

Manda Hill (Lat. 24° 39' N; Long. 84° 43' E): Kittoe reported the remains of a *chaitya* and a small statue of the Buddha which was removed from the site. My survey of the southern side of the hill and its slope revealed a modern temple constructed on an old brick terrace 1.5 metres high, possibly the remains of an older temple. There is a tank west of the modern temple. At the south-eastern base of the hill, there is another temple constructed on an old platform of bricks. This temple housed a Buddha statue of the eleventh century CE and fragments of numerous miniature stone *stūpas* and several other images, including one of Parśvanātha. Based on the sculptures, the temple site may be dated to the Pāla period.

V. Discussion

V.1 Settlement pattern

The data presented above indicates that the settlement origins of the region may be placed in the Neolithic/Chalcolithic period. Most of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic settlement sites were found along the rivers Niranjana, Mohane, Jamuna, Burha and Morhar in the survey area or along the foothills. The origin may be attributed to the favourable environmental conditions in the second-first millennium BCE in south Asia whereas the reason for the emergence and growth of settlements along river and foothills needs to be discussed. As noted in the Introduction, the south Bihar region is a relatively dry zone with scanty rainfall (and recurrent monsoon failures). Therefore, the reason for the emergence of settlements along the rivers may seem obvious whereas the development along the foothills needs an explanation. Most of the hills of the region are dry and do not have much vegetation. In the rainy season, these hills receive rain-water which falls off the slope of the hill and forms a lake or tank at the base of the hills of the region. This pattern was noted along a number of hills such as Barabar, Kauwa-dol, Maher, Dharawat and other. In fact, two water bodies were noted at the mid-level of the Barabar hill – one in front of the Karan – Chaupar cave whereas another one was located 50 metres west of the same cave. This pattern suggests the dependence of early settlers on the topographical features for their sustenance. As the Taradih excavations have revealed fishing equipments apart from

the fish bones, the early settlers may also have depended on these rivers and tanks for their food supply. Lastly, the lakes, and marshes, formed due to inundations in the rainy season, may also have been places for the wild growth of various crops including rice and therefore, may also have emerged as likely places for practising agriculture in the region. In fact, the edges of tanks and lakes are still being used for growing rice and other crops in the region. The ceramic collection from the Neolithic/Chalcolithic sites suggests the smaller size of the settlements during these periods. All of these settlements of the region continued and grew further into larger settlements in the early historic period.

Apart from the continuation of these thirteen sites, sixteen new settlement sites emerged in the early historic period (I and II), which continued through the Gupta, post-Gupta and Pāla periods in the region (See Table 3.2). However, unlike the previous periods, many of these settlements arose in the plains, leading to the movement into newer areas and probably necessitated by the exponential growth of population in the early historic period.⁹⁷ Most of these settlement sites did not provide any structural remains or remains of public buildings, a fact which suggests their rural nature. This is further supported by the availability of the forms of pottery from these rural settlement sites that were prevalent in the region. Based on the large size of the mounds and availability of higher volume of pottery, and NBP ware (found mostly at urban sites), Dharawat, Kabar, and Baiju-bigha may be considered larger settlement sites or townships along with Bodhgayā and Sonpur. The exposed sections of the mounds at Dharawat, Kabar and Lakhaipur suggest that these were definitely fortified sites.

Chronological framework	Number of Settlement Sites	Number of Monastic/temple sites
Neolithic Period	7	0
Chalcolithic Period	7 Neolithic + 6 new	0
Early historic Period I	13 Neolithic/Chalcolithic + 15 new = 28	4
Early Historic Period II	28 Early historic period + 1 new = 29	4 + 1 new

⁹⁷ A few crossing points on the river were ideal for settlements as reflected in the location of Koshila, Dema, Baiju-bigha and Chillor.

Gupta and post-Gupta Period	29	5 + 3 new
Later-Gupta and Pāla Period	29	8+ 14 new. This excludes temple-sites of Gayā

Table: 3.2 Chronological-chart of the surveyed-sites

The exact size of these settlements and approximate population at any one time can only be determined by excavation, though the Pāli canon does provide information about the general size, nature, connectivity and boundaries of many settlements in the early historic period. According to the Pāli canon, a village or *gāma* can be as small as a single *kuṭī* or 'hut', (a hamlet of one large house surrounded by a few smaller buildings) though small *gāmas* consist generally of about four *kuṭīs*.⁹⁸ Many of these *gāmas* (*grāma*) were occupied by homogeneous groups such as a particular occupation or a *vanna* (*varṇa*), but can also refer to a village of renunciants who have stopped and stayed in a place to wait out the rainy season.⁹⁹ The canon also attests the existence of towns or *nigamas* in the early historic period which were permanent habitations with more diverse economic activities.¹⁰⁰

Excepting Bodhgayā, none of the settlement sites of the region are mentioned in the early Buddhist texts. As discussed earlier, texts do however indicate a settlement context by mentioning villages and settlements within the region in which Buddhism emerged. Conversely, none of the sites mentioned in the Pāli and Sanskrit texts could be located archaeologically due to the paucity of geographical information. But these were never traced because the focus of earlier studies was on sites with monumental remains or urban centres. Therefore, the juxtaposition of literary and archaeological sources means that they supplement each other, as both reflect a settlement context though they are unable to confirm each other to specifics. Thus, the above discussion attests to a settlement context for the Bodhgayā from the early historic period onwards. For the early historic period the evidence is limited to ceramics at most of the settlement sites, whereas the later periods are further represented by structural, architectural, sculptural, and inscriptional evidence.

⁹⁸ E. B. Findly, *Dāna Giving and Getting in Pāli Buddhism* (Delhi, 2003), p. 25. See also N. K. Wagle, *Society at the time of the Buddha* (Bombay, 1966), p. 13.

⁹⁹ Findly, *Dāna Giving*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

V.2 Spread of Buddhism and Spatial Pattern

With the emergence of Bodhgayā as a Buddhist monastic site from the Mauryan period onwards, Buddhism began to spread in the region. Thus, four new monastic centres - Kurkihar, Hasra-kol, Dharawat, and Dubba - were established there in the early historic periods I and II, as duly illustrated by the ceramic evidence from the exposed sections of the *stūpa* mounds. Three of these monastic sites are on the hill-sites or in their proximity whereas Dubba is along an older paleo-channel of a river. The question then is why these hill-sites were occupied by the monastic community in the early historic period. One of the explanations has been that these hills were not occupied previously and provided seclusion to the monastic community. Another explanation has been the visibility of the sacred monastic structures such as *stūpa*. However, these explanations do seem plausible; another one needs to be added to the existing explanation. In the Bodhgayā region, these low-rise hills were reasons for the development and continuation of water bodies such as tank and lakes along the hills. The monastic community, by locating itself on these hills, in a way developed some sort of control over these water bodies, which may have helped them in developing agrarian units in the region. These experiences may also have helped them grasp a better sense of the topography and its subsequent modifications to promote agriculture and socio-economic development in the region. This point is further elucidated by the development of these monastic centres in the vicinity of settlements.

All these monastic sites grew in the vicinity of habitation sites (table 3.3), for example, the Kurkihar *stūpa* mound was located in the vicinity of the Malikpur habitation mound, and the Kunwa hill monastic ruins were located near the Dharawat settlement site. This trend reflects the process of the spread of Buddhism in relation to existing and new settlements as two new monastic centres – Kauwa-dol and Guneri – emerged in the early medieval period (Fig. 3.76). The spatial analysis of monastic and settlement sites also reveals a consistent distance between settlements and the monastic sites in the early historic period, thereby confirming the rule prescribed in the Vinaya texts about the proximate distance of monastic complexes in relation to settlements.

Nature of sites	North	South	East	West	Total
Non-Monastic/Settlement site	3	10	4	12	29
Monastic/Temple – site	4	2	5	11	22
Sculptural-sites Modern temple in villages	5	1	2	0	8
Total	12	13	11	23	59

Table 3.3: Geographical-distribution of the surveyed-sites

Between the fourth and twelfth centuries CE, Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva orders emerged alongside Buddhism. A new Buddhist monastic centre — Kauwa-dol — emerged, whereas the early historic monastic centres continued to exist, and grew tremendously during this period. This is reflected by the sculptures, inscriptions and miniature stone *stūpas* reported from these sites. A new phenomenon witnessed during this period was the emergence of temples/shrines as new ritual *foci* within the existing settlements. Three new Buddhist shrines were constructed in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, whereas fourteen new shrines were added to the existing settlements during the Pāla period.

The fact that these shrines/temples were constructed within the existing settlements, suggested two new developments. Firstly, it marked a distinct difference from the early historic tradition when shrines were erected only within the monastic complexes, located in proximate isolation from habitation centres. The emergence of shrines within the settlements completely blurred the earlier tradition of proximate distance between the religious shrines and settlements. Secondly, this development suggested that Buddhism already had a presence in these pre-existing settlements from the early historic period, and that previous links between temple and monastic and non-monastic settlements were reinforced through these new shrines.

The high number of temple and sculptural sites from the Gupta period onwards, and particularly in the Pāla period, also indicated the prolific growth of Buddhism. However, the lesser number of shrines in the early historic period is explained by the paucity of indigenous sculptural tradition within the region. The

sculptures in this period were imported from Mathura, which was one of the predominant art centres of this time.¹⁰¹ Most of the early historic monastic sites contained structural or fragmentary architectural remains, the evidence for which was concentrated within the urban centres. In this region, the only such site was Bodhgayā itself. A systematic excavation of monastic sites such as Kurkihar, Dubba, Hasra-kol and Dharawat might help uncover some structural and architectural remains from the combined spans of the early historic I and II periods.

V.3 Summary

As laid out in the objectives of this chapter, a settlement context has been suggested for the Bodhgayā region within which Buddhism emerged in the early historic period. It is within these settlements that Buddhism made its early inroads and later grew. The tentative chronological framework, which has been built up using a combination of sculptural and ceramic evidence for the region, has demonstrated the growth of settlements in the early historic period. This has led to the revision of the chronology of several previously reported sites, such as Dharawat, Hasra-kol and many others, which have therefore been provided with new dates. The late appearance of sculpture within the region was compensated by a reliance on ceramic evidence for dating the earlier periods at all these sites.

The fact that most of the sites were under active occupation had a direct impact on the ceramic collection. Of the twenty-eight sites whose earliest chronological marker points to the early historic period, only nineteen were dated on the basis of ceramic samples collected from ploughed surfaces. For the remaining eleven sites, ceramic was collected from exposed sections. This indicates the continuous occupation of the sites as demonstrated by damage arising from high population density. It should be stressed that the chronology presented here only reflects the presence or absence of a certain sculptural phase, or diagnostic ceramic ware. Therefore the resolution of the present chronological framework will be subject to re-evaluation at a later stage as new forms of evidence come to light.

¹⁰¹ Asher, *Eastern India*, pp. 10-12. Asher has cited a few examples of sculptures and pillar remains from the Maurayn period onwards at Kumharar, Rajgir, Bodhgayā, and Nonagadh where sculptures made of Sikri sandstone were found. In fact, Kumharar and Rajgir were monastic establishments located near urban centres whereas Bodhgayā was an autonomous monastic centre.

Sculptural evidence provided the sole chronological indicator for many sites which have not been excavated or exposed. Eight such sites from the Pāla period were found. The lack of pottery at these places makes it difficult to locate their origins.¹⁰² Inscribed sculptures from these sites suggested their donative nature but as the inscriptions were damaged and fragmentary, they often did not provide details about the donor or the motives. Despite these shortcomings, paleographic analysis helped strengthen the chronological framework for the current purpose, which is to provide a regional backdrop for understanding the archaeological setting of the Bodhgayā region.

The distribution of the sculptures in the Pāla period indexed the geographical spread of Buddhism. It also suggests interconnectivity between the settlements and the monasteries. The settlement-shrines also suggest linkages between villages and monasteries, as the monasteries played a key role in establishing these shrines along the settlements. The early historic trend of proximate distance between monastic centres and settlements probably continued to exist, but the emergence of temples led to the establishment of shrines within settlements themselves. It is at these shrines where images were installed and worshipped, thereby providing the immediate ritual context for the existing settlements of the Bodhgayā region. The identification of these temples/shrines *within* settlements was based on their spatial contexts. These shrines were dated by an analysis of a combination of inscriptional, sculptural, structural and architectural remains such as door-jambes, pillars, and architectural/ornamental fragments. Many of these shrines also contained Brāhmaṇical sculptures indicating the emergence of the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva orders during the Gupta and post-Gupta and Pāla periods.

To summarise, this chapter maps the geographical spread of Buddhism in the larger Bodhgayā region in tandem with the growth of the settlements. This may be analysed by studying the early historic monastic centres, which continued to exist until the twelfth century CE. We do not have any inscriptional or other written evidence to suggest that any of these *stūpa* sites were constructed through royal

¹⁰² This number excludes the temple-sites of Gayā. Generally the images were found to be under active worship within the temples. Most of these temples seemed to be of a relatively modern date whereas the dates of the images ranged between the fifth and twelfth centuries CE. The Pāla period, being the uppermost period/layer in terms of sculptural activity, was most often revealed in the accidental discoveries and digging. Since these images were discovered within the villages, they were always installed in the village-temples.

support, as has been the case with most of the early ones in the middle Ganga valley. The question then is: who constructed these *stūpās* and how were these constructions funded? As most of these monastic sites continued to exist for centuries, how did they generate resources to sustain themselves? These issues will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter-4 Foundations and Sustenance

As we have seen, the Bodhgayā region witnessed significant socio-economic and religious change in the early historic and early medieval periods. The emergence and spread of the Buddhist *saṅgha*, in the form of new monastic establishments and shrines, was accompanied by the development of smaller, rural settlements. Thus the examination of the surveyed monastic establishments, shrines and new settlements, discussed in section five of the third chapter raises two sets of questions: the first concerns the history of settlements, and the second the history of development of the *saṅgha*.

Let us begin with the first set here: Why did older settlements grow in size, scale and resources in the early historic period? What led to the growth of new settlements and how were these settlements sustained? An obvious answer would be the 'overflow' from population growth in pre-existing settlements, for which it was essential to have surplus agricultural production. We may then ask what were the factors that led to the production of enough agricultural surpluses to ensure the food security of these settlements in the region? When and how did this agricultural transformation occur?¹

The second set of questions relate to the rise of Buddhism and the emergence and the continuation of the institution of the *saṅgha* in the Bodhgayā region. For the institution of the *saṅgha* to continue in the region for almost fifteen centuries between the c. 300 BCE and the 1200 CE, as documented from the archaeological, textual and epigraphic sources, were required for sustenance. How did Buddhist establishments at Bodhgayā and other monastic centres in the region sustain themselves? To answer these questions, one must examine the nature of interaction between the institution of the *saṅgha* and the surrounding settlements with specific regard to water management in the Bodhgayā region.

¹ These issues have been discussed by many scholars in a broader Indian context. R.S. Sharma has argued for the role of iron in this transformation. Another set of scholars, led by A. Ghosh, argued for the role of fire in the clearance of forests for agriculture. The use of iron in itself was not sufficient for agriculture and settlements, which were also dependent on several other factors such as water management. Therefore the focus here is to examine the role of water management, which was crucial for the development of this region.

I. Historiography

The processes of the 'domestication' of the *saṅgha* and the emergence of 'settled monasticism' in varied locales in early India have been much researched topics, particularly in the middle Gangetic zone.² But most of the research has been confined to the study of monasteries along urban centres or trade routes. Based on such studies, several models have been proposed to show the nature of linkages between urban settlements and the institution of the *saṅgha*. Indeed, almost all of these models attribute the reason for the emergence and growth of the institution of the *saṅgha* to the universally high agricultural production in the middle Gangetic zone, including Magadha. The survey of settlements within the Bodhgayā region, however, suggests that it was agriculturally backward until probably the second-first centuries BCE. How, then, did the institution of the *saṅgha* develop in the region if the essential surplus was not produced there?

Several models have been proposed for the sustenance of Buddhism.³ An early model conceived of the *saṅgha* as a parasitic and passive institution, dependent upon the laity for its sustenance. This has been successfully challenged by scholars such as James Heitzman, H. P. Ray, M. D. Willis, and K. D. Morrison. Heitzman has suggested a proactive role of the *saṅgha* in promoting trade, though he contends that the institution did not play any political or economic role.⁴ Arguing on similar lines, Ray and Morrison suggest a much more active role for the *saṅgha* in promoting trade and agrarian expansion in the context of the Deccan, where activities of the *saṅgha* helped them acquire resources for their sustenance and growth. M. D. Willis and Julia Shaw have argued for the involvement of the *saṅgha* in introducing irrigation and rice cultivation in

² See G. Bailey and I. Mabbett, *The Sociology of Early Buddhism* (Cambridge, 2004); see also B.N. Prasad, 'Major Trends and Perspectives in Studies of Functional Dimensions of Indian Monastic Buddhism in the Past One Hundred Years: A Historiographical Survey', *Buddhist Studies Review*, Vol. 25, no.1 (2008), pp. 54–89.

³ This has been a much researched issue. See, Bailey and Mabbett, *Sociology of Early Buddhism*; Prasad, *Functional Dimensions of Indian Monastic Buddhism*; James Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire', in K.A.R. Kennedy and G.L. Posschl, eds., *Studies in the Archaeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia* (Oxford, 1984), pp.121–133; H.P. Ray, *Monastery and Guilds: Commerce under the Satvahanas* (Delhi, 1986); K.D. Morrison, 'Trade, Urbanism, and Agricultural Expansion: Buddhist Monastic Institutions and the State in the Early Historic Western Deccan', *World Archaeology*, vol. 27, no.2 (1995), pp. 203–221.

⁴ Heitzman, 'Early Buddhism, Trade', p. 131.

the Sanchi region which subsequently transformed the region into an agriculturally secure region,⁵ resulting in food security, material growth and the proliferation of settlements in the Sanchi region in return for which the inhabitants of the region supported them. The *saṅgha* thus managed to develop a social sustenance base by actively participating in the socio-economic dynamics of the region in the early historic period. This interpretation of Willis and Shaw moves away from previous models and provides a convincing frame to study the interaction between the *saṅgha* and the laity in other regions.

Taking a cue from the new model of Willis and Shaw, this chapter will examine the process of the growth and sustenance of the *saṅgha* in the Bodhgayā region.⁶ In doing so, the chapter is divided into seven sections. The second and third sections provide a backdrop to the chapter by furnishing the geography, irrigation and agricultural history of the region as recorded in the nineteenth century. The details of the nineteenth century irrigation and agricultural history will be subsequently examined to study the historical origin and growth of irrigation mechanisms of the region in the fourth section. This will also help in developing an understanding of the irrigation history of the region in the early India. After establishing the historicity of the irrigation system in the region, the fifth section will analyse the linkages between the Buddhist *saṅgha* and the irrigation system of the region in the early historic and early medieval periods. Section six will discuss the impact of the involvement of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in the irrigation system and how the involvement of the *saṅgha* led to its own continuation and sustenance in the region, while the last section will conclude the findings.

II. The Physical Environment of the South Bihar and the Bodhgayā Region

In the following paragraphs, I will discuss the key geographical factors of the south Bihar region. This discussion will provide the background for analysing the agricultural and

⁵ M. Willis, 'Relics and Rice', (Paper presented at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, October, 2004); Julia Shaw, 'The Sacred Geography of Sanchi Hill: the Archaeological Setting of Buddhist Monasteries in Central India' (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 2002).

⁶ It is pertinent to point here that the Bodhgayā region shared a number of geographical attributes such as an uneven geographical terrain, rainfall pattern (relatively dry region), and dependence on irrigation for agricultural purposes.

irrigation history of the Bodhgayā region which facilitated the growth of rice cultivation and agricultural settlements in the region.

II.1 Soil Types, Land Use, and Crop-Pattern in the South Bihar Region

The crops grown in the south Bihar region are divided into three categories: the *aghani*, *bhadoi*, and *rabi* crops. *Aghani* refers to the winter crop of rice which is cut in the month of *Aghan* (November–December), *bhadoi* is the early or autumn crop, reaped in the month of *Bhado* (August–September), consisting of sixty days' rice, *marua*, *kodo*, Indian corn, millet and less important grains, while the *rabi* crop, so-called because it is harvested in the spring (*rabi*), includes such cold weather crops as gram, wheat, barley, oats, and pulses.⁷ All these crops have a long history in the region, which has been substantiated by the excavations at Taradih and Sonpur. Carbonised grains of rice (both wild as well as domesticated variety), barley (domesticated), millet, horse gram (*kulthi*), lentil (*masur*), and grass peas (*khesari*) have been found from the Neolithic level at Taradih.⁸ Subsequently, green gram (*moong*), green peas (matar), bean (*sema*) and black gram (*urad*) were added to the diet, as remains of these grains have been reported from the Chalcolithic level at Taradih.⁹ Similarly, rice husk mixed with clay on potsherd and a broken jar with five kilogram charred rice were found from the earliest level (Chalcolithic) at Sonpur.¹⁰ All these crops may have been produced in the region from this early period. However, none of these grains have been carbon-dated to conclusively suggest their exact dates – of beginning of cultivation as probable dates for domestication. This is further compounded by relatively little information provided in the excavation reports of these two sites. Nevertheless, these findings indicate that the early settlers were familiar with these crops.

Land use and soil types can be assessed by classifying the level of the land and the tilt, texture, and colour of the soil, and the nature of the crops cultivated. A study of the districts of south Bihar reveals that the soils in the south Bihar region are somewhat

⁷ L. S. S. O'Malley, *Gaya Bengal District Gazetteers* (Calcutta, 1906), p. 106.

⁸ Ajit Kumar Prasad, Excavation at Taradih, Bodhgayā, p. 33.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁰ Sinha and Verma, *Sonpur*, p. 7, 8.

heavier and finer in texture. The soil contains high amounts of Potassium Oxide (K_2O) and Phosphorous Pentoxide (P_2O_5) and a low amount of Calcium Carbonate ($CaCO_3$). The soil reaction is almost neutral, but becomes acidic towards the southernmost parts of the region.¹¹ The cultivatable land may be divided into four general classes. Local names, which vary somewhat from place to place, are given to designate each classifications also made: 1. *Kewal* (clay); 2. *Paura* or *Pairu* (clay loam); 3. *Doras* (loam); and 4. *Balsundari* (sandy-loam). The highly sandy soils are usually unfit for most crops. *Kewal* soil is generally cultivated with rice and, on account of its high water-holding capacity, is also suitable for *rabi* crops. *Pairu* is generally of a black colour and very rich for agricultural purposes, supporting sugar cane, poppy and wheat. However, *pairu* requires timely irrigation. In *doras* soil, rice, sugar cane and *rabi* crops are grown depending on the level of land mass. In highland *doras* soil, potatoes and vegetables are grown. *Balsundari* soil is used for both *bhadai* and *rabi* crops, but also requires sufficient irrigation. Besides these four general classes, there are also *reh* or *usar* and *diara* or *char* lands. *Usar* lands are either infertile or agriculturally unproductive without ameliorative treatments. However, *Diara* lands, formed by fresh deposits near river banks, are very fertile and usually devoted to *bhadai* crops.¹²

The areas sown as *rabi* in this ecological niche consist mainly of *paira rabi* crops — mainly *khesari* and gram — which are sown in the stubble of standing rice just before *hathia* rains begin. The semi-diara tracts are islands of *rabi* in the flood plain, the cropping pattern resembling that of areas of dry agriculture, as it comprises crops of *bhadai* followed by *rabi*.¹³ All the major crops, cultivated in the above classified soil-types, need abundant water through irrigation, for which the south Bihar region (including Magadha) is dependent on the climate and adequate rainfall in the region.

¹¹ S.R. Bose and P.P. Ghosh, *Agro Economic Survey of Bihar: A Pilot Study Bihar* (Patna, 1976), p. 16.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹³ Alok Sheel, 'South Bihar Geography and the Agricultural Cycle: Gayā and Shahabad in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *IESHR*, vol. 30, no.1 (1993), pp. 85–113, p. 88.

II.2. Climate, Rainfall, Drainage and Irrigation in the South Bihar Region

It is useful to have an idea of climatic conditions and general rainfall for the south Bihar region as the system of irrigation is dependent on these, due to the moisture and water requirements of crops.

Hot weather	March to mid-June
Rainy season	Mid-June to mid-October
Cold weather	November to February

Table 4.1 Weather Cycle of Bihar

May is traditionally the hottest month of the year in the region. The annual mean temperature varies between 25.05 and 26.83 degree Celsius, with the maximum varying between 40 to 46 degrees Celsius and the minimum varying between 3.8 to 9.4 degrees Celsius. Gayā is the hottest district in the state of Bihar, with temperatures reaching 46 degrees Celsius.

Bihar's rainfall pattern remains mostly influenced by climatic conditions: The Irrigation Commission of the state has summarised the meteorological seasons under four groups: 1. the southwest monsoon; 2. the retreating southwest monsoon; 3. the northwest monsoon; and 4. the hot weather period. The monsoon and post-monsoon rainfalls are unevenly distributed over different regions and various months of the year. It is this uneven level and distribution in Bihar's rainfall pattern which is important to note, though the average annual rainfall in southern Bihar remains consistently low. The distribution of rainfall during different seasons is as follows:¹⁴

¹⁴ Bose and Ghosh, *Agro Economic Survey*, p. 5.

Monsoon	Period	Rainfall Amount	Percentage
Main monsoon rainfall	Mid-June to mid-September	40.0 inches (1016 millimetres)	83.7%
Post-monsoon rainfall (<i>Hathia</i> rains)	Mid-September to mid-October	3.85 inches (98 millimetres)	6.7%
Winter rainfall	November–February	3.70 inches (93.9 millimetres)	3.4%
Pre-monsoon rainfall	March- May	2.50 inches (63.5 millimetres)	6.2%

Table 4.2 Rainfall Pattern of Bihar

The normal annual rainfall for Bihar is 48.53 inches (1232.6 millimetres) while that of Chhotanagpur is 53.35 inches (1358.9 millimetres). Patna, Nalanda, Nawada, Jehanabad, Aurangabad and Gayā, covering most of the early historic Magadha region, are low rainfall districts with less than 45 inches (1143 millimetres) of rain per year.

Despite this low rainfall, the plains south of the river Ganga are over 52% irrigated (this increases according to proximity to the river), and account for over 80% of Bihar's total irrigation. The higher percentage of area under irrigation in south Bihar has been attributed to the presence of many rivers and large-scale canal irrigation. Both these reasons reflect a skewed picture, and may hold true for the lower Sone valley, particularly for the areas falling under the Ara and Buxar districts, but the case of Gayā district is completely different.

Gayā district is divided into a number of parallel strips, separated by four wide rivers: the Phalgu (formed by Mohane and Niranjana), Morhar, Dhadhar, and Paimar (see Fig. 3.1). All of these rivers originate in the hills of Chotanagpur and pass through the length of the Magadha region to meet the Ganga or its tributaries. The line of drainage in the district runs from south to north. Each of these parallel strips is higher in the centre

and sloped down on each side of the rivers, so that each section of the district - from east to west - represents a series of undulations separated by a river. These rivers each have wide sandy beds, which are mostly dry except during the monsoon season of the year, when they can be utilised for canal irrigation.¹⁵ Moreover, no canals have been dug into rivers such as the Sone.

The actual reason for the higher percentage of area under irrigation in the Gayā district (and Magadha region) is the traditional irrigation system, locally termed the 'āhar and *pynes*' system, based on the drainage and rainfall pattern of the region. At present there are 0.5 million hectares of land irrigated by 8,000 *āhars* (three-sided embanked tanks) and related *pynes* (channels) with about 10,000 kilometres of embankment in the Magadha region. The feeder *pynes* alone may add up to 5,000 kilometres, in addition to the vast distribution network. Land levelling work may have been done for approximately 20,000 square kilometres of land in the districts of Magadha region.¹⁶ The higher scale of the traditional irrigation system attests the importance of the system for Magadha, but it also raises two questions: firstly, what was the need for such a magnitude and secondly, how did this system emerge and develop?

To answer these two questions, one has to examine the agricultural and irrigation history of the Bodhgayā region in the nineteenth century before the introduction of many new changes, like government funded canals and the use of new machinery. A discussion of the agricultural and irrigation practices of the colonial period, particularly of the nineteenth century, can give us some idea of the crop production and dependence of the existing settlements on such a system. Of particular importance in this context is the primacy of rice cultivation to sustain the settlements of the region. Rice cultivation was dependent on pre-existing irrigation systems.

¹⁵ Alok Sheel, 'South Bihar Geography', p. 89.

¹⁶ N. Sengupta, *A New Institutional Theory of Production: An Application* (New Delhi, 2001), p. 42.

III. The Agricultural and Irrigation History of the Bodhgayā Region in the Nineteenth Century

III.1 Rice Cultivation

Rice cultivation has been important in the Bihar region for its ability to sustain a much larger population as previously recognised in the nineteenth century particularly in the Bodhgayā region. This is now confirmed by the accounts of Buchanan and O'Malley. Except on the immediate bank of the Ganges, rice is by far the region's most important crop, and much attention has been paid to its cultivation.¹⁷ While Buchanan wrote that the winter rice (*aghani*) was the chief crop, O'Malley mentioned that out of the total normal cropped area, 57.5 per cent grows *aghani*, 31.8 per cent grew *rabi*, and only 9.4 per cent grew *bhadoi*. The latter is, therefore, a relatively unimportant crop as the people are mainly dependent on the winter *aghani* rice and secondly on *rabi* crops.¹⁸ Having now established the importance of the rice crop, we can now turn our attention to the process of its cultivation.

A noticeable feature of rice cultivation is the way in which it is conducted according to lunar asterisms (*nakshatras*). Throughout Bihar, the seed beds are sown within a period of fifteen days — the *Adra nakṣatras* — generally falling between June 20th and July 5th. Transplantation from the seed beds continue during the *Punarbās*, *Pukh*, and *Asres asterisms* (July 18th – August 15th). The water in the fields, in which the young rice plant has grown after transplantation, is regularly drained off during the *Utra nakṣatras* (September 12th – 25th), a period when, as a rule, there is little rain. After exposure of the soil to the air and sun, the usual heavy rain of the *Hathiya nakṣatras* (September 26th – October 7th) is awaited. Once this is over, it is customary to keep the fields wet during the *Chitra nakṣatras* (October 8th – 20th), and then drain them again at the commencement of the *Sivati nakṣatras* (October 21st – November 3rd). The paddy is then left to itself until the *Bisakha nakṣatras* (November 4th – 15th), when it is finally cut.¹⁹

¹⁷ F. H. Buchanan, *An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna 1811–1812* (Patna, 1936, rpt.), p. 493.

¹⁸ O. Malley, *Gayā District*, p. 106.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

The above description of the rice cultivation process shows the crop's dependence on rainfall and the availability of water. However, the Bodhgayā region (within the Gayā district) is prone to a high degree of variation and fluctuations in rainfall. This is illustrated in the table below, showing the average annual rainfall recorded in four different years:

Year	Rainfall
1960-61	40.5 inches (1028.7 milimetres)
1965-66	29.6 inches (751.8 milimetres)
1970-71	40.2 inches (1021 milimetres)
1971-72	29.4 inches (746.4 milimetres)

Table 4.3 Average Annual Rainfall of the Gayā District

Similarly, rainfall, particularly during *Hathia* and *Chitra nakṣatras* (September and October), is of critical importance due to the flowering stage of the paddy crop (*aghani*). From a technical point of view, this is the stage in the growth of the rice plant when water is mostly critically needed. Moreover, adequate rainfall during this period also ensures soil moisture for the sowing of the winter crops (*rabi*). The Bihar State Directorate of Statistics, which studied rainfall for a period of 21 years from 51 rain recording stations, found that *Hathia* rains generally fail once every three years in southern Bihar, once every four years in northern Bihar, and once every five years in Chhotanagpur.²⁰ Though the data presented here is from the mid-twentieth century, it is safe to assume a similar monsoonal trend during the nineteenth century in the region. Despite low rainfall and frequent failure of the monsoons in the Gayā district and southern Bihar in general, the

²⁰ S. Mishra, *Irrigation Development and Economic Growth; A Case Study of Bihar Economy* (Delhi, 1988), p. 29.

area continued to be an agriculturally secure zone; this has been affirmed by the colonial records of the then Gayā district detailing its agricultural productivity, famines and the population figures, which will be discussed in the following section.

III.2. Irrigation Means: Colonial Records and Fallacies

It is interesting to note that while the rest of colonial India faced repeated famines due to the adverse impact of colonial policies during the nineteenth century, parts of erstwhile Magadha in the Gayā district remained immune to famine. This was despite the high population figures in nineteenth-century Gayā, as discussed by Alok Sheel.²¹ Sheel has discussed the trends and changing demographic patterns in Gayā district and its various parts in the nineteenth century, based on pre-census and census reports from 1811–1921.²² The population density of northern Gayā district, which formed the core survey area, has always remained high:

	1812 (Buchanan's estimates)	1822 Survey	1822 Survey (corrected)	1881 Census
Population Density of North Gayā	469	247	346	552

Table 4.4 Population Density of Northern Gayā ²³

The high population density of the then Gayā district was attributed to agricultural productivity, particularly rice production, which was dependent entirely on irrigation. Often scholars tend to attribute this to the irrigation provided by the opening of the Sone

²¹ Alok Sheel, 'Long-term Demographic Trends in South Bihar: Gaya and Shahabad Districts, 1811–1921', *IESHR*, vol. 29, no.3 (1992), pp. 323–348. Sheel has analysed dates pertaining to population densities provided in the official surveys and reports along with census reports from 1871 to 1921. In this paper he has also discussed 'demographic determinants' such as deindustrialisation, developmental works (canals, roads and railways) epidemics (plague, fever, influenza), subsistence crises (failure of rainfall and its impact on local population), and migration (emigration and immigration) which affected the overall demographic composition and its trends in the Gayā and Shahabad districts.

²² An important factor to be kept in mind here would be the changes in the district boundaries of Gayā. Gayā district was formed in 1825 and the statistics are based on the area covered under the district and contemporary population figures.

²³ Sheel, 'Long-term Demographic', p. 328. This table is taken from Table 3.

canal system in the 1870s. This canal was opened in the Shahabad district on the western side of the Sone, with the Patna canal branch in the Gayā district on the eastern side. However, this understanding is erroneous as the canal was confined to two western blocks of the district - Arwal and Daudnagar, leaving all of north Gayā completely untouched.²⁴ The reason for not digging a canal in the northern Gayā (of which Bodhgayā region was a major constituent) and leaving it untouched was the presence of a pre-existing irrigation system and its effectiveness in ensuring the food security of a high population density area.²⁵ The existence and effectiveness of a traditional irrigation system was also affirmed by Buchanan. He mentioned the existence of many small embankments of moderate depth which were converted into the richest land for rice cultivation.²⁶

Recently, Sengupta has argued that not only before, but even after the realisation of the success of the existing irrigation system in mitigating famines in nineteenth century Gayā, the colonial administration remained oblivious to the source of the district's immunity - an indigenous irrigation system which covered close to a million hectares throughout the region. So what exactly is this traditional irrigation system to which Sengupta, Buchanan and O'Malley refer? How does this system work, and what are its mechanisms? When did this system originate and what impact did this system have on the agrarian development of the Bodhgayā region?

III.3 Irrigation Strategies

The indigenous irrigation system of the Gayā district consists of the *āhar-pyne* system and isolated tanks (locally termed as *pokhar* or *tal*). As one proceeds from south to north

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 334. Trevor Grant, the District Collector of Gayā in 1869, describes the rationale for digging the canal into Daudnagar and Arwal area. Grant reported that the tract along the Sone river was the worst part of the district and unfit for extended agricultural purposes. Grant's description of Arwal and Daudnagar also showed that the areas along the rivers were not necessarily suitable for agriculture simply because of proximity to a source of water, but agricultural suitability comes from a combination of factors. It was the only portion of the district in which Grant saw no preparations being made for the *rabi* on account of the failure of the rains. It can be inferred from Grant's account that other blocks of the Gayā district still prepared for the *rabi* despite the failure of the rains.

²⁵ South Gayā, the area south of the Grand Trunk road, was kept out of the purview of this study due to the difficult geographical terrain. And this part continued to be dependent on traditional/ rain-fed agriculture. This area has not been studied either for the agricultural development or for the historical development.

²⁶ Buchanan, *Bihar and Patna*, p. 537.

in the Gayā district, the gradient of the land reduces with a slope averaging roughly one metre per kilometre. This slope leads to the flow of rainwater northwards in the region. *Ahars* are constructed to contain this rainwater at the edges of the villages in the region where the flow of the runoff lessens. An *āhar* (literally translated as 'tank') consists of a major embankment across the line of drainage, with two side embankments running backwards up the line of drainage, gradually losing their height because of the gradient of the terrain. An *āhar* thus resembles a rectangular catchment basin with only three embankments on its northern, eastern and western sides, the fourth side on the south being left open for the runoff water to enter the reservoir through the force of gravity (Fig. 4.1). The *āhar* collects rainfall in the catchment area; the runoff water enters through the high side and collects in the bed of the *āhar*. Generally, diversion channels (*pynes*) are dug into the *āhar* to supply water from the adjacent river (or vice versa). Because of the physical structure of the *āhar*, the stored water reaches its maximum depth near the major embankment across the line of drainage (Fig. 4.2). The elevation of these embankments ranges between two to five metres, whereas the area covered could be as much as 2,000 *bighas* (1352 Hectares).²⁷ For the purpose of irrigation, water is drawn out through controlled sluices at the base of the embankments and led, through open channels, into agricultural fields located at still lower levels. Sluices may be located at different (*pynes*), terraced heights. Those at higher levels may have sufficient height to allow a gravitational flow into nearby areas, whilst those at the lowest level can only be used to irrigate distant areas through longer channels, allowing the water level in these channels to rise gradually because of the natural slope of the area. Unlike dugout ponds, tank irrigation does not require mechanical water lifts.²⁸

Pynes, on the other hand, are systems devised either for utilising the water from the rivers of the region or for distributing water from *āhars* or *tals* (Fig. 4.3). For most of the year the rivers of the region remain almost dry, but turn rather suddenly into swollen torrents following heavy rainfall in the Chhotanagpur plateau. Due to the gradient and sandy beds, the river water is either swept rapidly through the region or percolates down

²⁷ Buchanan, *Bihar and Patna*, p. 537. Buchanan has mentioned the height and length of such embankments, which shows that many people owned land within an embankment itself.

²⁸ N. Sengupta, 'The Indigenous Irrigation Organization of South Bihar', *IESHR*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1980), pp. 157-189, p. 164.

through the sand, and within a few days the same old sandy look returns to the rivers. Numerous artificial channels, called *pynes*, lead off from points following the river currents to the agricultural fields, in order to prevent the loss of valuable water resources. Because of the gradual slope of the region, within a few kilometres of the beginning of the *pynes*, their beds rise to near the level of the ground to facilitate irrigation of the adjacent areas, while still retaining an incline to ensure the flow of water from the rivers. To raise the water to field level, the *pynes* are temporarily blocked to produce an overflow.

The above discussion shows that the *āhar* and *pyne* are suitable to the landform of the Magadha (and Bodhgayā) region as they are planned in accordance with its natural contours. Both *āhars* and *pynes* generally carry water during the rainy season, from July to September, and protect against the untimely or scanty rainfall common in southern Bihar. In fact, Sengupta has pointed to the efficacy of the *āhar-pyne* system of irrigation and water management because of which, some of the small rivers of southern Bihar have never reached any of the main rivers like the Ganges or the Punpun, but were completely dispersed for irrigation.²⁹ Since the topography of the Bodhgayā region consists of low lying plains and sporadic hills, different strategies are adopted in these areas. The archaeological survey of the region confirmed this difference in strategies, which will be examined now.

III.4 Plains: Structures and Functions

The vast expanses of the plains had their own strategy for water management. The land use pattern was different in the plains than that of the undulated hilly areas; since the land surface was more level, a higher proportion of the geographical area was reclaimed for cultivation. Almost all the surveyed sites in the plains used the *āhar-pyne* system, whereas some utilised the isolated tanks (*tāls*) along the agricultural fields (Fig. 4.4).

The survey revealed that thirty sites of the Bodhgayā region contained tanks (*tāls*) which were used for irrigation purposes (Fig. 4.5). The tanks were located either next to the settlements or along the agricultural fields. For example, the tank (*tāl*) at Nasher was

²⁹ See Sengupta, *New Institutional*, p. 38.

located on the western edge of the existing settlement and was surrounded by agricultural fields on its southern and eastern side. Similarly at Sumerā, the tank (*tāl*) was located on the western edge of the village and surrounded on the other three sides by agricultural fields, whereas at Konch, it was located on the northern edge of the village. At times, the tanks (*tāls*) were also located at some distance from the settlements contiguous to the agricultural fields such as at Nagwan, Mahādevpur, Guneri, Kābar and many others, which clearly indicated its agricultural usage. The large size and higher reservoir capacity of the tanks (*tāls*) also indicated their agricultural utility. The sizes of the tanks varied between 1000 square metres and 20000 Square metres. Despite such large sizes, at a number of places, such as Jethian and Guneri, two tanks were observed in very close proximity to each other. While one tank would not be able to catch all the available runoff water, twin tanks could retain as much rain water as possible. The division of water into twin tanks also ensured the longevity of the respective embankments. Other features of these large tanks (*tāls*) included cuts or *pynes* on the sides that opened towards the agricultural fields in order to provide irrigation. Four sites - Tika-bigha, Mira-bigha, Hasra-kol and Amethi - had tanks which were meant for non-agricultural purposes. Indeed, their smaller sizes and locations within the settlements/temple/monastic establishments indicated their use for domestic purposes. All the tanks of the region had mud embankments, which were reinforced several times. Unfortunately, the reinforcements destroyed the historical evidence necessary to accurately estimate the tanks' ages.

Almost every settlement in the plains had *āhars*. Another noticeable feature was the presence of links between *āhars* and *pynes* and multiple uses of *pynes*. The linkages varied according to regional or geographical features. Moreover, sometimes *pynes* were dug into *āhars* at the edges, so ensuring storage of any superfluous water. Alternatively, small *pynes* were also led from *āhars* for water distribution into agricultural fields. For example, at Gothu I observed a *pyne* connected to an *āhar* on one side and a river on the other. The direction of the *pyne* was north-south, with the *āhar* located fifty metres east of the river Niranjana. Rather than cutting or connecting the *āhar* in an east-west direction, to save labour, the *pyne* moved in a north-south direction for almost 500 metres and then ended in a westward turn to meet the river Niranjana. As there is a settlement

mound here as well, it makes perfect sense; to have the *pyne* situated around it, and then connected to the river. Such coordination proves the existence of a mechanism to keep an amount of floating water within the village area, most likely for domestic or agricultural uses, rather than losing all of it to the river nearby.

III.5 Hilly Area: Structure and Functions

The Bodhgayā region has extensive hill ranges originating at the eastern edge of Rajgir and continuing up to the modern town of Gayā. From Gayā onwards, there are sporadic hills and hillocks dotting the landscape. All these hills provide runoff water which is either stored in tanks at the base of the hills or channelled to *āhars* near the cultivable areas. These tanks are then used for irrigating the appropriate soils in the low lying plain. Even now one finds small tanks (called *bāndh* or *hir*) in the Chota Nagpur plateau, irrigating small patches of land.

Another system observed was that of runoff water channelled through a *pyne* to a larger tank at a proximate distance. The reason for constructing these tanks away from the hills was three-fold; the location of the settlement along the hills; rocky stretches along the hills, which made it difficult to dig a tank; and lastly the proximity to the cultivable area. The natural springs and inclination/slant of the hills were optimally utilised while planning these features, as seen in the case of Miyari and DUNGESHWARI (Fig. 4.6).

Yet another case is that of Kauwadol, where a *pyne* was observed running right through the middle of a settlement mound which goes into an *āhar*, located east of the modern village of Samaspur. In hilly areas, most of the *pynes* (due to their retaining capacities) are used as water sources for the settlements before being fed to the *āhars*. This method reflects an attempt to channel all the rainwater to an *āhar* to avoid wastage and to recycle the water in these areas. Only small tanks were possible in the hilly areas, as large embankments could easily collapse from the brute force of rushing water after a heavy rainfall. In order to ensure safety of the tanks along the hills - such as in the event of higher than average rainfall - new innovations were introduced by constructing *pynes* to the tanks, as seen in the case of Dharawat (Fig. 4.7). These channels connected the

tank to the nearest river for drainage, which in the case of Dharawat is at least five kilometres to the east. The channel's length also served the purpose of irrigating a wider area, possibly a few villages including neighbouring settlement clusters. It was also possible to retain some water in the *pynes* at times of higher than average rainfall.

The villagers of Dharawat owned lands behind the Kunwa hill, the site of monastic ruins. This area is surrounded on three sides – the south, north and east - by stretches of the Barābar hills, forming a natural *āhar* in which to collect water. Since this natural *āhar* receives a high amount of runoff water, *pynes* also cut through the area. Needless to say, this belt is very fertile.

III.6 Impact: Water Table and Land Use

The above discussion regarding irrigation techniques in the plains and hilly areas reflects the utility and flexibility of the *āhar-pyne* system and how this mechanism works for both water distribution and flood control, in addition to ensuring the region's status as a rice bowl. The cultivation of rice is based predominantly on these irrigation techniques; the need for irrigation from *āhars* and *pynes* is evident from its sowing through to its final reaping. Irrigation is most critical during the *Hathiya nakṣastra*. In the case of the failure of the rains (as once in three or four years), the water in the *āhar-pynes* is diverted to the paddy fields. If there is a good amount of rain, then the system of *āhar-pyne* is also used to drain the water from the paddy fields during that time. It is essential to control the amount of water there during the *Hathiya nakṣastra*. These irrigation mechanisms increase the rice yield by encouraging cultivators to undertake *nigar* operations (diverting water through *pynes*). The late rains during *Hathiya* are also crucial for the subsequent sowing of *rabi* crops. In the event that the rains fail, cultivators will use the last bit of water left in the *āhars* and *pynes*, after irrigating the rice crops, to prepare the *rabi* fields for sowing.³⁰

Such irrigation means are widespread in the region, and combined with the wide cracks found in the ground of these dry parched lands (up to 50cm across), help to recharge the ground water and aquifers. Information collected during my fieldwork

³⁰ Sengupta, 'Indigenous Irrigation', p. 164.

supports this assertion. As an example, two consecutive drought years (2004 and 2005) led to the drying up of the tanks and the *āhar-pyne* system in the study area. Despite the drought, irrigation continued and crops were grown using pumped ground water. The only possible reason for the continued availability of ground water is a high water table, a result of constant ground water renewal through the optimum use of rainfall.

The above discussion shows how agricultural productivity in the Bodhgayā region, particularly rice production, has been dependent upon the irrigation system there. It also illustrates how irrigation, dependent upon climatic factors such as rainfall, has been planned in accordance with the natural land formations. This manipulation of the landscape transformed the region into an agriculturally sustainable zone by the manual construction of the tanks (*tāls*) and the *āhar-pyne* system, which maximised the available water resources and simultaneously provided resistance against natural vulnerabilities.

IV. Dating Water Management Systems: Chronology and Construction

So far we have examined the planning and functioning of the traditional irrigation system in the Bodhgayā region, its dominant role in agricultural operations, and how this system sustained a large population even in drought years, as documented in the nineteenth century records. Considering this data, it is not difficult to imagine the region's reliance on the tank and *āhar-pyne* system from its inception. The question, then, is how to date this indigenous irrigation system? Scholars generally label the *āhar-pyne* system as 'traditional' or 'ancient' without ascertaining the actual chronology. An attempt will be made in the following section to determine the chronological frame within which the origin, growth and subsequent spread of the tanks and *āhar-pyne* system may be placed. This will, in turn, assist in examining changes in agricultural expansion over time and space, in addition to its overall impact on the development of the Bodhgayā region.

IV.1 Dating Irrigation Techniques

Many tanks, *āhars* and *pynes* were found in the survey area. However, there was a lack of river dams, probably because most of the sites were rural settlements, and therefore

geographical and ecological factors, such as scanty rainfall, large sandy beds and relatively dry rivers with little water, would have rendered the dams useless. Unfortunately, the *āhar-pyne systems* and tanks found during the survey (reported in Chapter 3, Section IV) could not be given a precise archaeological date in the absence of archaeo-botanical analysis of faunal remains from the beds or edges of the tanks, *āhars* and *pynes*. The dating of such tanks is often made more difficult by constant repairs and alterations, as almost all of the tanks, *āhars* and *pynes* had mud or earthen embankments. In light of the above difficulties, I will examine the textual references to the irrigation technologies in the early historic period in the following section.

IV.2 Textual Evidence and Etymology

The *Arthaśāstra*, a text on statecraft in early India, provides detailed descriptions of the settlements and their requirements in the mid-Gangā basin.³¹ The text, though compiled in the fourth or fifth centuries CE, does contain layers of information from a much earlier period, possibly from the Mauryan period onwards. The text describes typologies of land and soil, rainfall, settlements, water bodies and their utility and agricultural details such as crop cycles, types of crops, and their respective requirements.³² Analysis of the relevant portions of the text reveals its importance for early historic northern India, including Bihar.³³

³¹ There have been several studies on the text. Previous studies have placed this text in the Mauryan period. This dating has been contested, however, and after Tom Trautman's work, the text is currently dated to the fourth or fifth centuries CE. Since Magadha was the centre of state in the Mauryan and Gupta period, it is generally accepted that the text can be geographically placed in the southern Bihar or Magadha regions. Some of the details do seem to coincide with specific geographical and ecological factors, as shown by the works of Nirmal Sengupta and Sibesh Bhattacharya, but we cannot say with absolute certainty whether this text was actually written and composed in Magadha. Geographically, the text seems to be aware of a few regions such as Aśmaka (upper Godavari region), Avanti (Malwa), Aparānta (Konkan) and Haimanya. Haimanya has been described by Kangle as 'snowy regions', but based on the commentary *Bhāṣāvyaḥkhyāna*, Bhattacharya has explained that this may mean the Ganga plains where the Himalayan snow fed rivers flowed and where the annual rainfall was as heavy as in Aparānta (Konkan). See T. Trautman, *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra: A Statistical Investigation of the Authorship and Evolution of the Text* (Leiden, 1971).

³² S. Bhattacharya, 'Land, Soil, Rainfall, Irrigation-Some aspects of the Backdrop of Agrarian life in the *Arthaśāstra* of Kautilya', *IESHR*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1978), pp. 211-219.

³³ The description in the text and does seem to match various facets of the south Bihar region such as agriculture, cropping patterns, rainfall, and shows familiarity with a few other geographical regions.

The text provides a clear idea of the early historic topography within the Indian subcontinent and also describes the geographical setting of Magadha. Two verses from the text differentiate between various types of geographical areas and lands. The first verse '*tatra aranyo grāmya / parvata audako bhaumah samo viṣama iti viśeṣāḥ*' can be translated as 'there the various types (of land are): forest land, village land, mountainous land, marshy land, dry land, level land and uneven land.'³⁴ The verse mentions forest areas (*aranya*), village areas (*grāmya*), mountainous areas (*parvata*) wet areas (*audaka*), dry lands (*bhauma*), plains (*sama*) and uneven lands (*viṣama*). The second verse '*vivīta sthala kedāra ṣaṇḍa khala veśmavāhanako ṣṭhānām pūrvam pūrvam ābādham saheta*' can be translated as: 'As between a pasture land, dry land, wet-crop field, a vegetable garden, a threshing floor, a shed and a stall for vehicles the earlier one may suffer encroachment from the later one.'³⁵ This verse also enumerates different types of land. Of all these land types, the Bodhgayā region could be defined as *sthala* land, which means dry land. While explaining the *sthala* area, the text also distinguishes between *adevamātrīka* - river fed areas - and *devmātrīka* - rain fed areas.³⁶ Based on these classifications, the geographical setting of the Bodhgayā region can be defined as a *devamātrīkā* (rain fed) and *sthala* (dry) land.³⁷

In order to ensure agricultural productivity on these dry lands, the text emphasises the importance of irrigation facilities. A verse from the text reckons this necessity and lists the irrigation sources in dry lands: '*anudake kūpasetubandhotsān sthāpayet, puṣpaphalavāṇāms ca*'.³⁸ This verse can be translated as 'irrigation works are to be built in the waterless region.' In this verse, *anudake* (waterless region) seems to denote a *sthala* (*bhaumah*), dry land, where *kūpa* (well), *setubandha* (embankment) and *utsān* (springs) are sources of irrigation.

These irrigation sources are further elaborated in two other verses: '*grāham kṣetram ārāmaḥ setubandhas taṭākam ādhāro vā vāstuḥ*' and '*.....ārāma setubandham taṭākam*

³⁴ R.P. Kangle, *The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra* Part II (Bombay, 1963), p. 407, verse 9.1.19; see also Bhattacharya, 'Land, Soil, Rainfall', p. 212.

³⁵ Kangle, *Arthaśāstra*, part II, p. 221, verse 3.9.25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 315, verse 6.1.8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-183. Another verse where these two terms are mentioned is 2.35.03.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 221, verse 3.9.27.

*ādhāram maryādāsuyathā setubhogam...*³⁹ The first verse describes immovable property and provides terms for embankments (*setubandhas*), tanks (*taṭākam*) and reservoirs (*ādhāro*); the second verse also uses the same terms for these water bodies. These terms are often indiscriminately translated as ‘tanks’ or ‘water bodies’, without specifying their nature and differences. Three terms – *setubandhas*, *taṭākam* and *ādhāro* – are used in the same verse twice; suggesting that they held different meanings. Bhattacharya explains that the term *setubandha* had a restricted technical sense: an embankment or a rampart, which was constructed to collect rain water. But what is the difference between a tank, a reservoir and an embankment, if all three are dependent on rainwater? The text provides no clues as to how we might differentiate between these structures. However, a terminological discussion of these and other terms used to demarcate water bodies in the region may help to determine their exact nature.

The meaning for the term *taṭāka*, according to the Monier-Williams’ Sanskrit dictionary, is a pool or a tank. *Tatāka* probably denotes a smaller size shallow tank, often plastered on all sides, and used interchangeably for domestic or agricultural purposes.⁴⁰ Two such tanks were found in the survey area at Kurkihar and Amethi. The Kurkihar tank was plastered on three sides - east, north and west - whereas the southern side was embanked by mud. The Amethi tank, adjacent to the ruins of the temple at Harahi-sthan, was also plastered.

The term *ādhāra* means pond or reservoir, many of which were found in the survey area and in this context could mean a larger tank used mainly for agricultural purposes. Similarly, the term used for channel or canal digging seems to be *khātapravṛttim*, which refers to water set into motion by digging from a river dam (*nadībandhāyatana*) or tank. Indeed the term *nadībandhāyatana* could also mean

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219, verse 3.9.03. The verse can be translated as ‘owners shall proclaim a dwelling (as for sale) in front of the house, in the presence of members of forty neighboring families, and a field, a park, an embankment, a tank or a reservoir (as for sale) at the boundaries, in the presence of village elders who are neighbours, according to the extent of the boundary, saying ‘at this price who is willing to purchase.’

⁴⁰ This term is also used for very small tanks which are part of a household and located in the outer space of a house. The term continues to be used in the villages of Bihar.

making an effort to dam a river. Channels for diverting water from a reservoir or river were also made, and were perhaps known as *ādhāra parivāha* or *udakamārga*.⁴¹

It is important to note that the *nadībandhāyatana* - a river embankment or a river dam - is different from *setubandha*, which is not a river dam, although the Monier Williams' Sanskrit dictionary translates it as a 'dam' or 'bridge'. If we break the term into '*setu*' and '*bandha*', each of these separate terms mean 'dam' as well. But another meaning of the term '*setu*' is a ridge of earth or any raised piece of ground separating fields (serving as a boundary or as a passage during inundations) whereas '*bandha*' also means combining, forming or putting together. If we join these two meanings together, then the term means 'forming or putting together a ridge of earth'. This meaning of *setubandha* is illustrated by the Junagadh dam inscription. The term used for the dam at Sudarśan Lake is '*setubandhena*' and this dam also consisted mostly of earthwork and stones.⁴²

Another verse from the *Arthasāstra* should clarify the term further: '*setubandhayor apy āhāryodakāt sahodakaḥ śreyān*'. This verse can be translated as 'of two water works, one with naturally flowing water is preferable to one into which water has to be brought.'⁴³ This verse introduces two types of *setubandha* (a ridge of earth or dam/embankment made of mud) - *Sahodaka* and *āhāryodakāt*. *Sahodaka* literally means 'with water' and therefore, *Sahodaka setubandha* can also be translated as 'a ridge of earth around a river or a river dam' in this context. *Āhāryodaka* is formed by two terms - *āhārya* and *udaka*. *Āhārya* means 'to be brought' whereas *udaka* means 'water'. The joint term therefore means 'a dam in which water has to be brought or received'. The above description of *āhāryodaka* is very similar to the *āhars* of the Bodhgayā region which received water due to the rainfall and retained that water because of their earthen ridges. And due to the contours and natural gradient of this region, *āhāryodaka setubandha* may denote the *āhar-pyne* system of irrigation itself. It may be suggested that

⁴¹ Bhattacharya, 'Land, soil, Rainfall', p. 217. The verse mentioning these two terms in *Arthasāstra* is 3.9.35, p.221. *Ādhāra parivāha* means a natural or artificial inundation through a watercourse or drain to carry off excess water. *Udakamārga* means a way for water or a channel through which water could flow.

⁴² *EI* 8 (1905-06), no. 6, p. 43. The terms used for conduit and drains are '*praṇālī*' and '*parivāh*'.

⁴³ Kangle, *Arthasāstra*, part II, p. 359, verse 7.12.04.

the prevalent name *āhar* (in Hindi) and *āharā* (popularly called by the local inhabitants in Magadhi) may have emerged from the Sanskrit term *Āhār*.⁴⁴

Megasthenese's description also confirms the existence of closed canals in early historic south Bihar, from which water was distributed in conduits for the purpose of irrigation.⁴⁵ The existence of river dam and canal irrigation is also confirmed in the *Kunāla Jātaka*, which mentions the importance of such an irrigation system.⁴⁶ Based on the accounts contained in Megasthenes' *Indika* and the *Arthaśāstra*, it is beyond doubt that both the tank and *āhar-pyne* system existed in the early historic period.

IV.3 Construction and Maintenance

It is essential to explore how the *āhar-pyne* system and the tanks originated and spread in the early period. A simple assumption would be that once people realised the tanks would bring a lot of material benefit these were constructed at increasing rates. One may also wonder about the organisation of labour.

Two models of irrigation have dominated this debate for over a century. The first, proposed by Marx and elaborated by Wittfoegel, proclaims a link between the management of hydraulic irrigation and the centralisation of state power, an organised bureaucracy and extractive land revenue system as characteristic of 'oriental despotism'. The second model stresses the autonomous role of small village republics and their assemblies; pre-colonial irrigation technology is understood as having been relatively simple, requiring only earthwork organised locally without the involvement of the state.⁴⁷

Wittfoegel's argument about 'hydraulic despotism' has led many scholars to argue that despotic rulers and their centralised bureaucracies provided the necessary means for undertaking irrigation works in almost all the dynastic states of pre-colonial

⁴⁴ Sengupta, *New Institutional*, p. 76. Sengupta has referred to the term *āharyodaka-setu* as a method used for irrigation.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁶ E.B. Cowell, trs., *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births* (Oxford, 1895, rpt. 1995).

⁴⁷ David Mosse, *The Rule of Water: Statecraft, Ecology and Collective Action in South India* (New Delhi, 2003), p. 57.

India.⁴⁸ Simplistic analyses of texts like the *Arthasāstra* have been frequently cited to support this argument. This argument is supported by studies of the colonial period system, when the Zamindars (local landlords) were responsible for maintenance of the irrigation systems. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Tekari king and some of their local Zamindars were responsible for the maintenance of *pynes* networks falling under their area of influence in the Bodhgayā region. These responsibilities have led to the popular belief that these Zamindars also constructed the system.

However, two points make this proposition difficult to sustain. Firstly, there are frequent references to changing landlords and the emergence of new landlords in the colonial and pre-colonial periods. These changes in landlordship may not have motivated landlords to construct new *pynes* network or maintain existing ones, though some of them may have been involved in regulating and manipulating the network under their respective control or influence. In fact, there is no evidence to prove any construction. Secondly, land grants and landlordship emerged in the Bihar region only from the Gupta period, whereas these irrigation techniques and the settlements they catered to were much older, as shown in the discussion of the settlements in section IV of chapter three and textual references from *Arthasāstra* and other texts above. Moreover, none of the land grant charters of the south Bihar region indicate construction of *pynes* or dams by kings or local landlords.

The idea of 'village republics,' as an autonomous institution looking after the welfare of the village, emerged from the Gandhian philosophy in the colonial period.⁴⁹ Mosse explains the rationale of this construct and its use by 'new traditionalists' when he writes, "that the idea of autonomous village republics, while initially invoked as part of the discourse of imperial government, has now gained popularity as a trope in the critique of the modernising development strategies of the centralised state and the dominance of western technical engineering over indigenous community perspectives in irrigation."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ James Heitzman, *Gifts of Power Lordship in an Early Indian State* (New Delhi, 1997), p. 38. Heitzman writes, 'one body of thought sees the Chola kingdom in particular as a hydraulic despotism with a centrally organised bureaucracy, taxation and mensuration system that had a major impact on irrigation development, especially in the Kaveri delta'.

⁴⁹ Mosse, *Rule of Water*, pp. 8-10.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

There is no evidence in the Bodhgayā region, either in pre-colonial or colonial times, to indicate the role of the village assemblies in organising or managing the ecological resources of villages. Indeed, although there are a few epigraphical references to the management of irrigation by medieval *brahmdeya* village assemblies in the Pandyan and Nāyaka periods in southern India, this cannot be taken as a universal model. The number of *brahmdeya* villages is very few in comparison to others, and the basic political and economic unit in the Chola period was the micro-region *naḍu*, not the Brāhmaṇa villages.⁵¹ As for the Bodhgayā region, the dearth of evidence (and textual record) makes it difficult – firstly, to examine their existence and secondly, to study their role in the irrigation management.

The above discussion reveals that the ‘hydraulic despotism’ and ‘village republics’ models, based upon polarised notions of state and community, fail to explain the emergence of the irrigation systems in the Bodhgayā region. Indeed on close scrutiny we see that the studies of the construction and maintenance of irrigation systems in the medieval and colonial periods have led to an erroneous assumption about the construction and maintenance of these irrigation systems by landlords/local kings in the early historic and early medieval periods. Furthermore, if land grants and landlordship did not exist in the early historic Bodhgayā region, how were these irrigation means constructed throughout the settlements in the region? How did technological know-how for an irrigation system spread and how did it transform the region? Was there a need for an institution to construct and regulate the irrigation means in the region?

These questions have been critically examined by Heitzman in the context of Chola history in the early medieval Tamil region. For example, while explaining the political economy of the Cholas and the nature of its polity, he has argued that an intermediary or middle level existed which linked the state to the larger society. This ‘middle level’ worked within an ideological framework to create a political economy which also led to the sustenance of the widely spread monumental architectural complexes in southern India.⁵² Heitzman’s explanation emphasises the role of temples,

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵² Heitzman, *Gifts of Power*, p. 20. In this context, Heitzman introduces the concept of ‘lordship’ which emerged primarily from the agrarian economy but stood above it by its attributes of birth and merit, reinforced by ritual demonstrations. He attempts to construct a picture of the Chola period that links land

which provided the ideological framework as well as the role of an intermediary or middle level, formed by local landlords, which played a crucial role in organising irrigation in the Tamil region.

Heitzman's model provides us with a usable framework to analyse the developments within the Bodhgayā region. There exists no evidence of state agents or political intermediaries (feudatories or landlords) in the region in the early historic period. However, the construction of Buddhist *stūpas* and the presence of Buddhist *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā (Bakror), Hasra-kol, Dharawat, Kurkihar, and Dubba- is attested. Based on the presence of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in the early historic period, this chapter envisages a similar role for it in the region and therefore argues that the Buddhist *saṅgha* introduced the irrigation mechanisms and played a key role in the development of the region. This assertion will be illustrated in the following section.

V.1 Buddhism and Development

The assertion that the Buddhist *saṅgha* played a key role in introducing and spreading the irrigation mechanisms in the region raises a pertinent question: what were the factors that motivated the *saṅgha* to take such steps? To answer this question, one must analyse the impact of the spread of Buddhist orders - firstly, in existing settlements and secondly, in the overall growth of the larger region.

V.2 Undeveloped Bodhgayā Region of Magadha

It is generally assumed that the Bodhgayā region, being part of Magadha, was a developed region at the time of the Buddha in the early historic period. Indeed, Magadha emerged as a core political arena, on account of its status as the most powerful state in the early historic period. It also had urban centres like Rājagṛha (Rajgir) and Pataliputra which contain rich archaeological assemblages. Gayā, by contrast, is mentioned as a large settlement in the Pāli canon but not in the league of the above mentioned important urban

and labour with the larger structure of the state through intermediate forms. He demonstrates the links between the temples and lords, and how the interactions between the two facilitated the existence and growth/prosperity of the both.

centres of the Gangetic zone at the time of the Buddha. Moreover, Gayā hardly exhibits any archaeological remains which could prove it as a contemporary urban centre. The point here is that despite being part of the core political area of Magadha, the Bodhgayā region was not an agriculturally secure region until probably the third - second centuries BCE. It is important to note here that the number of settlements increased tremendously during this period, as discussed in the section V.1 of chapter three. At the same time, this is also the period when Bodhgayā begins to emerge as a sacred centre, demonstrated also by the construction of structures in and around the Bodhi tree.

V.3 Transformations: Growing Populations and Sustainable Agriculture

Many settlements in the region which emerged in the Neolithic/Chalcolithic period, grew tremendously from the third-second centuries BCE onwards. Indeed, analysis of the archaeological survey of the region revealed an upsurge in the number of settlements from the third-second centuries BCE, most likely due to a population explosion. Many of these new settlements emerged in the plains, indicating the expansion of settlements into new areas. However, such an expansion could only take place after the plains, away from the rivers and relatively dry, were transformed into agriculturally sustainable areas in order to ensure food security for the growing population. Even settlements located in close proximity to the rivers in the region only became agriculturally sustainable after the introduction of the *āhar-pyne* system.

The food security in the settlements of the region was achieved by cultivating rice over a larger area with the assistance of tanks (*tāls*) and the *āhar-pyne* irrigation system. Another equally important fact to consider is that almost all the early historic settlements of the region continued to exist until the twelfth century CE, as indicated by the ceramic-analysis and sculptures. Most of them in fact continue to date. Furthermore, the continuation of all these early historic settlements could only be attributed to the extension and maintenance of the tanks and *āhar-pyne* system, which were crucial for the agricultural sustenance of this region.

V.4 Buddhist Landscape: Settlements, *Caitya* and Water Bodies

The remaining issue, then, is the Buddhist monks' level of involvement in the water management of the region. Interestingly, there are references to the domestication of the *saṅgha* and settled monasticism from the time of the Buddha himself. Textual evidence, confirmed in some measure by archaeological research, reveals that the great majority of *vihāras* were built on the outskirts of villages, enabling monks to practise a degree of isolation within the monastery while being able to view life outside as well. In fact, five locations are mentioned in the *Nikāyas* and *Vinaya* where early Buddhist monks spent their time, among which are temporary residences in villages whilst on tour, and monasteries on the outskirts of villages and large towns.⁵³ This suggests the construction of monasteries on the outskirts of villages. This is further attested by another verse from the *Arthaśāstra*.⁵⁴

This verse refers to the act of recording of the various constituents of a village including the prominent markers, which were used to fix boundary of a village. Two features in particular stand out here: *caitya* and *setubandha*. Epigraphical sources also indicate the use of water bodies, landscape features and religious places as boundary markers.⁵⁵ In particular, these two features – *caitya* and *setubandha* – are often located in close proximity outside the village, marking the boundary of one village in relation to its neighbours. On the basis of the above cited evidence, it can be inferred that the proximate locations of the *caitya* and *setubandha* was a result of a careful planning of the water bodies by the Buddhist *saṅgha*. This is reflected in the analysis of the proximate location of the monastic establishments and water bodies in the Bodhgayā region.

⁵³ Baily and Mabbett, *Sociology*, p. 86.

⁵⁴ Kangle, *Arthaśāstra*, part I, p. 96, verse 2.35.03; Part II, pp. 182-183.

⁵⁵ B.D. Chattopadhyaya, *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India* (Calcutta, 1990), pp. 30-32. Chattopadhyaya has argued that settlements existed along the natural water sources and its extensions in the early medieval period. He in fact refers to a number of inscriptions from the Bengal region from late Gupta period onwards (such as Khalimpur Inscription of Pāla king Dharmapāla), in which channels (*srotah*), embankments (*āli*) and temples (*devakulikā*) are mentioned as boundary markers.

V.5 Buddhist Saigha and Water Bodies: Early Linkages

A spatial analysis of the Bodhgayā region revealed that monasteries and water bodies were consistently located next to each other. For example, at Kurkihar, a hill with the ruins of a *caitya* on its peak is situated away from the village settlements (Fig. 4.8, 4.10). An *āhar* exists on the southern base and a tank sits on the northern base of the hill, catching all the runoff water from the hilltop. Since this hill sits beside two smaller hills, there are *pynes* which bring the runoff water from these other hills to the tank on the northern side (Fig. 4.9). Within Kurkihar village, Jayaswal noticed a large tank, located south of the *stūpa* mound. The banks of this tank had numerous miniature stone *stūpas*.⁵⁶ The Dharawat Buddhokar tank (*tāl*) is at the northern base of the Kunwa hill, while the hill itself was the place of Guṇāmāti *vihāra* (see Fig. 4.7).⁵⁷ The tank is still being used for agricultural purposes, and one can easily locate the *pynes* connecting the tank to the agricultural fields on its northern and southern edges, while another *pyn*e connects it to the river Phalgu on its southern edge.

At Kauwa-dol, a Buddhist temple at the base of the hill had the ruins of the Śīlabhadra *vihāra* next to it. A *pyn*e collected the runoff water from the hill and transported it to the *āhar*, located east of the modern village settlement. Similarly, at Dubba, another monastic site is located on the southern bank of a seasonal river, and the water of this river is dispersed through the *pynes*. Hasra-kol, another monastic site of the early historic period, has an *āhar-pyn*e system on its western side, which collects runoff water from the hills.

The proximate location of the monasteries and water bodies, combined with the reliance of the water bodies on the monastic hills for their existence, is much too suggestive to be simple coincidence. The link is clear; the monasteries played a major role in planning and operating these irrigation systems in the early historic period. Clearly, the process of cumulative and interdependent building of the tanks and *āhar-pyn*e systems was guided by emerging local needs; construction at this level could have only been managed by a local power or institution which could command labour and

⁵⁶ Patil, *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar* (Patna, 1963), p. 223.

⁵⁷ The tank or Buddhokar *tāl* is also mentioned in Xuanzang as well.

capital. The only institution present in this region in the early historic period is the *saṅgha*.

Moreover, although Magadha was a core political centre of India, the state's level of influence in the Bodhgayā region and in the larger Magadha region in the early historic period is far from clear. Apart from Bodhgayā, which began to emerge from the Mauryan period, the only other location with inscriptions is the Barabar hills, where Ājīvikas were donated caves by the Mauryan kings Aśoka and Daśaratha, respectively.⁵⁸ These early historic inscriptions do not mention any local authority or institutions in the Bodhgayā region, whereas archaeological data substantiates the emergence and spread of settlements and the presence of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. However, this widespread presence of the Buddhist *saṅgha*, exhibited by the archaeological data, is not documented by the texts. It needs to point here that the region did witness rise and growth of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava order during the early medieval period.

V.6 Saṅgha and Irrigation Management

To be fair, there exists no inscription in the Bodhgayā region which confirms any link between the *saṅgha* and the local settlements in the early historic period. The connection is suggested, however, when we analyse the spatial context of the settlements and the monasteries. Both of them were part of the same geographical locale, as argued earlier. The relationship solidifies when we analyse three other factors as well; the spread of this irrigation management system; how it was maintained and regulated; and the impact it had on the region in the early medieval period.

V.7 Dating Technical Diffusion

Unfortunately, there is no way we can date the technical diffusion of the system without excavation of the structures or archaeo-botanical analysis of faunal remains from water bodies. But as mentioned in the early *Vinaya* texts, monks often travelled in far flung areas and frequently took temporary residence in villages. With the spread of settled

⁵⁸ Bhagwant Sahai, *Inscriptions of Bihar* (Patna, 1983), pp. 3-9.

monasticism, the travelling monks began to establish newer monasteries near these settlements in the region, and thus spread knowledge of the tanks and *āhar-pyne* system through their interactions with the local inhabitants. The wider geographical reach of the monks helped in spreading the knowledge over a much larger area.

V.8 Saṅgha and Maintenance

A second aspect regarding the maintenance and regulation of this irrigation system will clarify the relationship between the monastic institutions and water management. The construction, maintenance and operation of the tanks and *āhar-pyne* system required knowledge of resource availability, terrain characteristics, hydrology and strong materials. The skills required consisted of moving earthwork, masonry construction, sluice operation and channel de-silting, and for each of these tasks, various equipment, materials and labour were necessary. In addition, much of this work required the joint participation of many individuals, where multiple participants must not only work together, but also in tandem, according to certain rules of cooperation. Also associated with these tank construction tasks were a wide range of rules. For example, there are operative rules related to boundaries; the allocation norms and facilities; input rules regarding labour and cost sharing; leadership selection and decision rules, and rules regarding information circulation, among others.⁵⁹

Since the surveyed irrigation structures, tanks and *āhar-pynes*, were larger in size, they required sharing between many villages. Moreover, the location of the *āhars*, at the boundaries of the villages, meant there had to be sharing of the water between various settlements. This is also demonstrated by the network of *pynes* or channels, which were devised through various villages to carry the water to secondary tanks in other settlements. For example, the Supi Desiyain *pyne* is dug into the Jamuna, one of the seasonal rivers of the region. The largest settlement to benefit from this *pyne* is the village Kako, which is dated to the ninth century CE (on the basis of sculptural remains).⁶⁰ According to survey and settlement records of the early twentieth century, the

⁵⁹ Sengupta, *New Institutional*, p. 42.

⁶⁰ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, pp. 162-164. The site may date to a much earlier period as there is a big mound with ceramic scatter there. The ceramic from site has not been examined yet.

total length of this *pyne* was 35 kilometres, and its channels and branches passed through nearly 60 villages. This *pyne* also fed tanks and catered to land in almost all the villages.⁶¹ Similar *pyne* networks were also surveyed around Dharawat, Kauwa-dol and Kurkihar. Such long and widely spread water channels necessitated regulations regarding appropriation and methods of distribution to avoid conflicts either at the individual or village levels. Obviously, this needed the knowledge and skills of an institution which could help in operation and regulation of the system by providing the required leadership and knowledge; the only institution which was present in the region at this time was the Buddhist *saṅgha*.⁶²

Buddhist monks, because of their travels, were far more aware of the geography and terrain of the region. Moreover, the spatial location of the monasteries on the hilltops and the surrounding agricultural fields, as noted at Dungeshwari, Kurkihar, Dharawat and Hasra-kol, must have helped the monks to develop a better grasp of the surrounding landscape. Indeed the religious importance of the *saṅgha*, in addition to their strategic locations on the boundaries of the villages, meant that they were a natural rallying point for bringing together various villages and settlements. These gatherings could have been used to organise and plan the construction and also the mechanism of water distribution. The position of the *saṅgha* as an institution not directly involved in agriculture, and therefore not an immediate beneficiary of the irrigation system in the region, also lends the credibility needed to regulate the system.

The dependence of the settlements on hydrological interconnectivity must have led to what Stephen Lansing calls 'hydraulic solidarity'.⁶³ This term refers to all the farmers who share water from the same source, and who must cooperate in construction, maintenance, water allocation and the management of disputes. However, the case of the Supi Desiyain *pyne* shows lack of cooperation between the villages on numerous occasions, which intensified during times of water scarcity.⁶⁴ Similar conflict over the

⁶¹ Sengupta, *New Institutional*, p. 169.

⁶² In the nineteenth century, this *pyne* was maintained by the Tekari kings, the chief landlord of the area. In the early historic period, however, there was no Zamindari system like the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁶³ J. S. Lansing, *Priests and Programmers* (New Jersey, 1991), p. 128.

⁶⁴ Sengupta, *New Institutional*, p. 38.

water rights of a river dam has been discussed in the *Kuṇāla-Jātaka*, where the Buddha himself had to intervene to avoid conflict.⁶⁵ The story mentions that the fight began between the *Koliyas* and *Mallas* over the attempt to divert water from the dam to the fields of just one side because of scarce supply.

The above mentioned examples indicate that intermediary institutions are crucial to the existence and functioning of water management systems. Any evidence of the direct participation of the Buddhist monks is of course difficult to find in the early historic period due to the paucity of epigraphic, textual reference or art historical evidence.⁶⁶ This absence of information could also be due to the nature of these settlements as rural economies, which have not been investigated due to lack of evidence (and excavations). It also should be mentioned that such evidence would be difficult to find due to the expanding settlements and population explosions over the last two millennia, although this might just be possible by excavating the rural temples or settlement sites. Nevertheless, Julia Shaw has also demonstrated the instrumental role played by the institution of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in constructing dams and regulating water mechanism for rice paddy cultivation in the Sanchi region in the early historic period.⁶⁷ The role of religious institutions in organising and sustaining hydraulic solidarity has also been proven in the cases of Sri Lanka by R. A. L. Gunawardana, and in Bali by Lansing from early medieval times.⁶⁸

V.9 The Saṅgha and Water Bodies: Early Medieval Period

In the early medieval period, the Bodhgayā region reveals various proofs to substantiate the involvement of Buddhist *saṅgha* in irrigation process. The early historic linkages

⁶⁵ E. B. Cowell, *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's Former Births, Kuṇāla-Jātaka* (rpt., Oxford, 1995), p. 219.

⁶⁶ The Bodhgayā region did have a strong sculptural tradition in the post-Gupta and particularly Pāla periods. But this tradition was a later development and is missing in the early historical period.

⁶⁷ Julia Shaw and J. V. Sutcliffe, 'Ancient Irrigation works in the Sanchi area: An Archaeological and Hydrological Investigation', *SAS*, vol.17 (2003), pp. 55-75.

⁶⁸ J.S. Lansing, *Priests*, p. 128. Lansing has shown that decisions regarding water management were made by the priests of the water temples of Bali, on which the irrigation area depends, and assume a ritual form that emphasises the hierarchical interdependence of all levels of the system. See also, R. A. L. Gunawardhane, *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tuscon, 1979).

between the *saṅgha* and surrounding communities were reinforced from the sixth century CE, as indicated by the archaeological survey. The survey revealed large tanks within close proximity of all the monastic sites, with the perimeter of each of these tanks having Buddhist sculptural shrines. These tanks were used predominantly for agricultural purposes as indicated by the example of Dharawat, Kurkihar and Hasra-kol. The *pynes* connected to the Buddhokar *tāl* indicate its use for irrigation along Dharawat. The plastered tank at Kurkihar sat two hundred metres east of the Murali hill and was possibly used for agricultural purposes. Apart from the *āhar-pyne* system and a monastic complex tank, another tank measuring 100m x 150m was observed at Hasra-kol, the edges of which revealed a few sculptures. Unfortunately, these Buddhist sculptures were moved by M. Kittoe and cannot be traced. At Jethian, a water dam and *āhar* were found at the bottom of the hill, which also contained the remains of a *stūpa* and a few sculptures (Fig. 4.11, 4.12). These examples demonstrate the spatial link between the irrigation bodies and *saṅgha*.

The links between the *saṅgha*, irrigation system and settlements is further illustrated by the fact that the settlements of the region continued to multiply and proliferate with the wider dissemination and subsequent strengthening of the irrigation system during the early medieval period. This is again reflected by the survey which has revealed Buddhist sculptures, dating to the early medieval period, along tanks at sixteen settlement sites. It is important to point out the general practice in the region that the villagers installed sculptures at the same place where they were discovered.⁶⁹ Based on the general practice of the region and dating of the sculptures, it can be argued that all these tank sites had Buddhist shrines associated with them in the early medieval period. I will illustrate this by presenting a few examples from the region.

⁶⁹ Unless the village already has an established temple, such as Kurkihar, the sculptures were not moved. This has led to the reconstruction of small shrines at the place of discovery at almost all the sites and hence their installations at the tanks.

Chronological Framework	Settlement Sites	Monastic Sites	Temples
Early Historic Period	13 +16 new sites	5	
Gupta and post-Gupta Period	29	5+3	2
Later Gupta and Pāla Period	29	8+ 2	16

Table 4.5 *Saigha* and Settlement Distribution Patterns

At the site of Nasher, a sculpture was found *in situ* at the northern edge of the tank, and a few Buddhist sculptures and panels were also spotted within a small shrine northeast of the settlement mound (Fig. 4.13, 4.14). At Jethian, twin tanks were also found at the entrance of the village, collecting runoff water from the hill on its western side (Fig. 4.15). There was a temple shrine on the western edge of the twin tanks, while a new temple had been constructed by Japanese pilgrims on the southern edge, housing a massive Buddha sculpture from the eighth century CE (Fig. 4.16). The twin tanks are located next to the agricultural fields, and another *pyne* connects them to an *āhar* further north. At Sumera, two Avalokiteśvara sculptures were located within the tank shrine located at the northern edge of the tank (Fig. 4.17). At Baiju-bigha, the irrigation tank was located at the north-western edge of the settlement mound. This tank was also connected to the river Morhar through a *dokri* (a waterway between two low hills) and a *pyne* on the eastern bank of the river. Both hills were temple sites which revealed panels of the Buddha, in addition to several sculptural fragments and a Śiva-linga. Amethi revealed ruins of a temple complex and a plastered tank, both located outside the modern village settlement on its southern side (Fig. 4.18). In addition, another large tank with a mud embankment, connected to the agricultural fields through a *pyne*, was found about twenty-five metres away from the temple complex. Obviously, this other tank (on the northern edge of the temple) was meant for agricultural purposes (Fig. 4.19). Five sculptures of the Buddha and two of Tārā were noted within the small village shrine. Interviews with the local villagers revealed that these sculptures were found at the temple

complex.⁷⁰ These examples demonstrate the proximate spatial context of the Buddhist *saṅgha* and irrigation bodies, and suggest, too, the active role of the *saṅgha* in their planning and management activities, thus illustrating their involvement with the surrounding settlements in the region (Fig. 4.20).⁷¹

This understanding has been questioned by scholars who have often confined themselves to the idea that the temples/shrines were often constructed at existing village tanks in the countryside. This explanation tends to ignore the other possible reasons for constructing Buddhist shrines or installing Buddhist sculptures along the irrigation bodies. Such an understanding also overlooks the impact that the spatial context had on utility and distribution mechanisms, maintenance and control of the tanks and the reasons for erecting a shrine at the tank rather than within the settlement itself. All of these questions have been raised and analysed in the contexts of Sri Lanka and Bali where both examples enumerate the institutional role of the Buddhist *saṅgha* and Brāhmaṇical temples respectively. I will briefly cite these two case studies to illustrate the management of the irrigation systems by religious institutions.

Epigraphic and textual evidence has proved that major reservoirs were part of the monastic complexes at Anuradhapura from the third century BCE. The *Saṅgha* began to own substantial amounts of land, villages and water rights in the Anuradhapura area from the first century CE onwards. The role of the water bodies in the irrigation system of the area can be gleaned from the *Mahāvamsa* and *Dīpavamsa* texts and inscriptions. Water rights were granted to the monasteries, as reflected in a number of inscriptions. This made clear the control of the monasteries over the tanks and reservoirs, and, as a result,

⁷⁰ The villagers also reported attempts at theft by smugglers, and this motivated them to build a small shrine within the settlement itself to ensure the safety of these sculptural pieces.

⁷¹ It is important to point here that, at times, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sculptures were also found placed with the Buddhist sculptures at the sculptural shrines along the tanks and water bodies, such as Sumera, and Dharawat and others. As discussed in the chapter five, both the Brāhmaṇical orders emerged in the region only from the fifth-sixth centuries CE onwards. Whereas, the Buddhist *saṅgha* preceded these Brāhmaṇical orders by several centuries in the region. All these settlements also preceded these Brāhmaṇical orders. Therefore, it can be said that the placing of many of these Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava sculptures had more to do with the inter-religious dynamics than their involvement with the irrigation activities. In case of finding of only Brāhmaṇical sculptures along the water a body, the dearth of evidence makes it difficult to provide a definite explanation. This is further complicated by the much earlier date of the settlement in comparison to the later emergence of these Brāhmaṇical orders.

the agricultural productivity of the region. This system was crucial for the support of the city's inhabitants, their cattle and crops, a fact also attested by a number of inscriptions.⁷²

In the case of Bali, Lansing has shown a direct link between the *subaks* and their temples/shrines, which are further linked to a chain of temples from multi-*subaks*, to regional, and higher levels.⁷³ All water temples are physically located at the upstream edge of whatever water systems they purport to control. This chain of water temples articulates the hydro-logic of the irrigation system. The temples and shrines are situated in such a way as to exert influence over each of the major physical components of the landscape. At another level, these temples also link the physical features of the landscape to social units according to a logical plan of production; the congregation of each temple consists of the farmers who obtain water from the irrigation component controlled by the temple's god. This leads to the management and regulation of the irrigation mechanisms at multiple levels, as the Balinese system is built on the principle of 'hydraulic solidarity' and 'irrigation dependency'. Hence the temples provide a vehicle to achieve voluntary social cooperation in the management of the irrigation, on which each village – and society as a whole - is utterly dependent.⁷⁴

In the Bodhgayā region, unlike Sri Lankan monasteries, there exists no inscriptional evidence for the control of water bodies by the Buddhist monasteries in the region. However, the spatial context of the Buddhist monasteries (and shrines) and water bodies suggests a clear link. Indeed, the physical location of shrines and monasteries along the water bodies was similar to the location of the temples along water bodies in Bali. Unlike Bali, not all settlements were interlinked in terms of dependency on a single source of irrigation in the Bodhgayā region. A single *āhar* or tank, still, irrigated cultivable fields in a number of settlements through *pynes*. In a number of cases, water from tanks and *āhars* had to be shared among the members of several villages. These

⁷² Robin Coningham, *Anuradhapura The British – Sri Lankan Excavations at Anuradhapura Sangha Watta 2* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 10-11, 23-25. The province has around 3000 village tanks, apart from these major reservoirs, which were crucial for the village settlements. Coningham also mentions the lack of archaeological surveys in the Anuradhapura region for studying rural settlement sites and their linkages to the tanks.

⁷³ Lansing, *Priests*, p. 27. The complexes of rice-fields obtaining water from the one conduit or from the one branch of a conduit is called a '*Subak*' in Balinese. The *subak* consists of a stretch of ground divided into allotments sharing a single system of irrigation and drainage.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

water bodies, therefore, defined the extent of water sharing social units and institutions beyond individual villages. The villages or settlements sharing from a single water source constituted agro-economic units, and by establishing Buddhist shrines along these tanks and *āhar-pynes* the *saṅgha* attempted to regulate these units as well. Therefore, it may be argued that the Buddhist monasteries were implicitly involved in irrigation mechanisms in the region.

VI. Discussion: Analysis of Impact

VI.1 Socio-economic Implication

The above discussion enumerates the role of the *saṅgha* in organising and regulating irrigation in the region. By facilitating irrigation, the *saṅgha* promoted agriculture and thereby a new mode of life which was more secure than the previous system of pasturage. A passage in the *Samyutta Nikāya* reflects the Buddha's recognition of the importance of agriculture; in a conversation between a *deva* (deity) and the Buddha, the *deva* upholds the traditional view and remarks on the significance of cattle. In his reply, the Buddha favours agriculture as against pasturage.⁷⁵ Indeed, agricultural growth also meant development of new settlements and socio-economic progress. Moreover, Buddhist literature suggests that the increase in population was a sign of development and prosperity, and the kingdom of Magadha is described as consisting of 80,000 *grāmas* (villages).⁷⁶ It is very difficult to verify this data from the *Mahāvagga* but, nevertheless, it does indicate a substantial growth of settlements and population by the second or first century BCE, when the Pāli *Vinaya* was compiled (Table 4.4). This prolific growth was only possible because the region was transformed into an agriculturally sustainable zone due to the new irrigation methods. Therefore, the institution of the *saṅgha* played a significant role in the material advancement and development of the region and furthermore resulted in the growth and sustenance of the institution of the *saṅgha* itself.

⁷⁵ U. Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism* (Delhi, 1996), pp. 18-19.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 19. The Buddhist narratives speak of teeming cities with people jostling each other and of numerous settlements in the countryside, all of which were an index of a flourishing and prosperous kingdom.

VI.2 Social Support System: Satellite monasteries of the region and Mechanism for Sustenance

The increased agricultural productivity meant that the local inhabitants produced enough surplus to donate to the *saṅgha*. Mabbet and Bailey note several instances from the Pāli *Vinaya* where there is mention of donations to the monks by individual families in villages.⁷⁷ Indeed, there are many examples of local people bringing food, grains, oil, cloths, and other supplies to the nearby monasteries. Similarly, the *Mahāvagga* refers to a number of resident-monks in villages, who were supported by the local people.⁷⁸ These donations had become a permanent feature by the second century CE when the concept of *akṣaynīvī* (permanent endowment) emerged.⁷⁹ The proximate location to a settlement and water body, and generation of enough surpluses, ensured the practice of perpetual endowment by the people in the nearby settlements, and this resulted in the generation of merit for the donor.

These donations ensured the sustenance of the *saṅgha* in the region. This sustenance mechanism worked by being organised as a tri-level system. Firstly, the lower level was formed by a network of settlement shrines, which emerged and grew as a result of the irrigation system designed and regulated by the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Then the middle level was developed by regional monasteries such as Kurkihar, Dharawat, Hasra-kol, Burha/Dubba, Guneri and Kauwa-dol, which functioned as satellite monasteries as well as nodal centres. At the top of this level was Bodhgayā. Because of its paradigmatic significance, all the other monastic centres of the region drew inspiration from Bodhgayā.

⁷⁷ Bailey and Mabbett, *Sociology*, pp. 70-75. The donations to monks and monasteries have been a much researched topic and therefore will be skipped here.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-75.

⁷⁹ The earliest inscriptional reference to the *akṣaynīvī* comes from the Mathura inscription of the year 28. The donative inscription has been dated to the time of Kuṣāṇā king Huviṣka in the second century CE. See *ET* 21 (1929-30), no. 10, pp. 61.

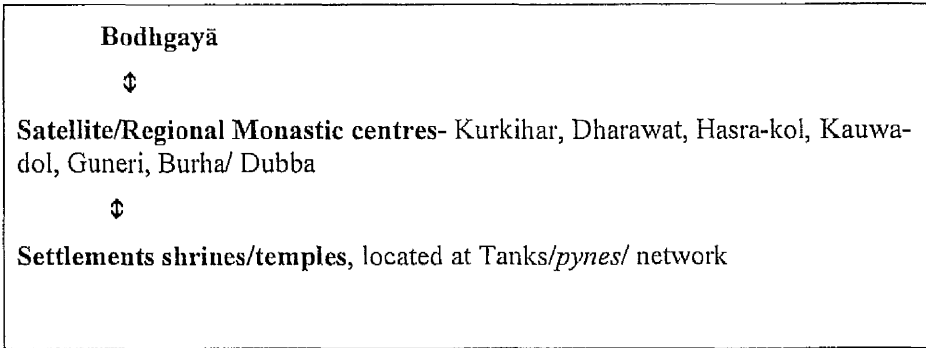


Table 4.6. Tri-partite system of Bodhgayā, satellite monasteries and settlements

The centrality of Bodhgayā is indicated by the occurrence of the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* sculpture of the Buddha from almost all the regional monasteries and settlement shrines/temples. This sculpture acted as the symbolic reminder of the importance not just of the event of the enlightenment, but also of its place. Therefore, the widespread distribution of this particular type of sculpture represented a deliberate move by the monastic establishment at Bodhgayā to emphasise its paradigmatic importance and simultaneously the contribution of the *saṅgha* to the region.

At the local level, each of the shrines along tanks and *āhars-pynes* required offerings from the agro-economic units it coalesced, and these offerings were provided on a number of ritual occasions. As noted earlier, the Buddhist monks were only allowed to take temporary residence within the villages. This meant that they, while residing at the regional monasteries, could demonstrate the responsibility of the monasteries for rituals by organising these at the settlement shrines in the region. And through their ritual control, they collected resources from the local settlements and acted as nodal centres for the *saṅgha*.

We do not have any inscriptions detailing the offerings at any of these settlement shrines or regional monastic sites. However, there exists a description of the mechanism being proposed in the court of the Tibetan king bTsan po. In this account, the king appointed Yeshe dBang po as the doctrinal leader who travelled to Bodhgayā and the other monastic sites of Magadha in the ninth century CE.⁸⁰ Drawing from the prevalent

⁸⁰ I am thankful to Dr. M. Willis for providing his translation of this Tibetan text fragment. See, P. Wangdu and H. Diemberger. trs. & eds., *dba'bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Wien, 2000), pp. 63-64.

model in the Magadha, he suggested a regular entitlement for food allowance (*bShos cha*) for the *saṅgha*, which the king duly arranged. While doing so, he suggested that seven subject households should be assigned for sustaining a monk whereas the prime-minister suggested five subject households for a monk. Finally it was agreed upon, on the words of Yeshe, that two hundred subject-households (should go) to the Triple Gem (i.e. each monastery) assigned at a rate of three subject households for each individual monk, after which jurisdiction should be bestowed on the *saṅgha*. As per the proposal of Yeshe proposed, a new system for the sustenance of monasteries was decreed in Tibet. It is widely accepted that Buddhism travelled to Tibet from Bihar, and many of the great monk-scholars like Śāntarakṣita or Atiśa migrated to Tibet to propagate and teach Buddhism. We also have many Tibetan monks coming to Bihar and being trained there. Hence it is likely that the system proposed and decreed above, was modelled on the existing system in Magadha and Bodhgayā region. This Tibetan system of assigning households for the sustenance of each monk is further supported by the references in the *Vinaya* about particular households being assigned to feeding individual monks in the early historic Magadha.⁸¹

To illustrate, Mabbet and Bailey present a number of examples from the *Vinaya* which illustrate the dependence of monks on individual families in specific villages. Each of these examples restricts a single monk to a single family, or a single village.⁸² The feasibility of this system rested on the fact that the monks/monastic establishments had adequate information about the productivity and quantity of resources available to a family. And this information became available to the *saṅgha* only when they lived in close proximity to these settlements and knew sufficient details about the agricultural practices there. Once settled in the monasteries along the rural settlement, the monks developed networks of influence in the villages and settlements around them.

The above discussion indicates that the *saṅgha* was deeply embedded in local societies. It did not matter whether its context was urban or rural; in this case it was mostly rural except probably Bodhgayā which emerged as a major monastic establishment in the early historic period. Nevertheless, the existing mechanism of

⁸¹ Bailey and Mabbett, *Sociology*, pp. 70-75.

⁸² Bailey and Mabbett, *Sociology*, pp. 70-75.

support for the *saṅgha* ensured the continuation of the monastic establishments in the Bodhgayā region until the twelfth century CE. This is also proved by some associational evidence.

VI.3 Associational/Negative Evidence

Despite the fact that Bodhgayā was the centre of the Buddhist universe, why did the Gupta, later-Gupta and Pāla kings not grant any land or village to the *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā? Bodhgayā had a sizeable monastic community as mentioned by the Chinese pilgrim monk Xuanzang. This fact is also proved by the excavation of monastic ruins at the site. Furthermore, the Pāla kings, with their preference for Buddhism, donated land-grant charters to the Buddhist *saṅgha* at the Nalanda, Vikramśilā and other Buddhist monasteries, but not to the *saṅgha* at the Bodhgayā.⁸³ This royal disregard of Bodhgayā and its monastic community may only be explained by the fact that Bodhgayā did not require any support. Indeed, the temple and *saṅgha* with their large monastic community were sustained by the diversion of resources using an existing system. Moreover the temple did not just sustain itself but also grew tremendously as seen in the large number of sculptural and architectural fragments from the Pāla period.

This fact can also be explained by another example. Kurkihar is the place of the once famous Apanaka *vihāra* and the Sugātagaṇḍha-*kuṭī*, which attracted monks from as far as Kerala and Sri Lanka from the eighth century CE onwards. This has been proved by 93 inscriptions recorded on the bronze sculptures found there.⁸⁴ None of these inscriptions refer to any royal grants or land-grants at the site. Neither do we have any evidence of the involvement of royalty to explain the construction of the *stūpa* and hence monastic establishment at the site in the early historic period. Other monastic centres such as Hasra-kol or Dubba, also do not show any major donations by royalty, either for their construction or maintenance. Instead, what emerges from the analysis of the sculptures, structural remains, and inscriptions, is that support came from the local

⁸³ Sahai, *Bihar Inscriptions*, pp. 67-77. A number of the Pāla kings donated land-grant to the *saṅgha* at the *Nalanda* such as Dharmapāla, and Devapāla.

⁸⁴ Sahai, *Bihar Inscriptions*, p. 63.

followers of the region. Therefore the construction and maintenance of these monastic centres must be the result of material support from local and neighbouring settlements.

VII. Conclusion

Location along the rivers may not be enough for any region to be agriculturally suitable, as the examples from the Bodhgayā region illustrate. The reason for the agricultural vibrancy of Bodhgayā region in the early historic and medieval periods was its dependence on the irrigation system - the *āhar-pynes* and tank system. This system began in the early historic period and helped in the optimum utilisation of the available water resources and rainfall in the region. The efficacy of this system can be seen from the increased number of settlements, which emerged in the early historic period. The increase in the number of settlements also indicated the growth of population in the region, which could only be sustained by increased agricultural production, particularly of rice. In fact, the cultivation of rice and other crops required investment in irrigation, but this was not provided by the early historic state in the region. Instead, these were facilitated by the *saṅgha*, which played a central role in the development of the Bodhgayā region. The *saṅgha* and the settlements together constructed a new domain, of which tanks and shrines were major constituents. The *āhar-pynes* and tanks helped in generating wealth and transforming the region into a self-sustainable agricultural zone whereas the settlement shrines played a crucial role in creating social order and religious affiliation among the settlements in the region.

Apart from the emergence of the regional/satellite monastic centres in the early historic period, we have no material evidence of the activities of the monks within the settlements. However, from the second half of the sixth century CE, the linkages become more apparent with the emergence of various shrines/temples along these settlements, especially from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, as evidenced by the sculptural richness of these shrines. The closer links are also reflected in the growth of development of several other early monastic sites such as Kurkihar, Hasra-kol, Dharawat, Dubba, and Burha. New structures and sculptures were added to all these monastic centres in this period. Therefore, I argue that the Buddhist *saṅgha* played a key role in the development

of the Bodhgayā region by introducing and spreading methods of irrigation in the early historic period. This role of the Buddhist *saṅgha* was a new socio-economic innovation, which, in turn, ensured the sustenance of the *saṅgha* itself in the region. The economic progress of the region also attracted other early contemporary religious orders to the region, as represented by the numerous Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva shrines in chapter three. Their growth challenged the supremacy of Buddhism in the region. The interaction and challenges which Buddhism faced from the 'other' religious orders will be taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter-5 Negotiating Dominance: Inter-Religious Dynamics and Religious Transformations

This chapter aims to examine the inter-religious dynamics due to the emergence of other religious orders in the Bodhgayā region in the early historic and early medieval periods. Particularly, this chapter will explore the appearance of two Brāhmaṇical religious orders, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, which emerged and grew in the region between the sixth and twelfth centuries CE. These developments meant that the existing socio-religious dynamics in the region underwent a major transformation. In this period, not only did Gayā become an important centre of the Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage, but a Śaiva tradition also developed there. Buddhism was already an established and the dominant tradition at the time of appearance of these two Brāhmaṇical orders in the region. And despite the challenges and competition from these two orders, Buddhism continued its dominance of this region. The key focus of this chapter, therefore, is to study the inter-religious dynamics and analyse the impact of these new religious developments on Buddhism and the subsequent Buddhist responses to these developments.

I. Historiography

While studying inter-religious dynamics, scholars have frequently produced a generalised picture of the beginning of the decline of Buddhism from the early medieval period.¹ Most of these works have failed to study the developments within a specific regional context and relied exclusively on a scholastic frame.² The consensus view generates a picture of stagnancy within Buddhism, which is based on a mono-dimensional reading of the textual sources, taking them on their face value without analysing their contexts. For example many scholars have uncritically accepted the

¹ A full discussion of the decline of Buddhism is beyond the scope of this chapter. Many scholars have studied the issue of decline such as R. C. Mitra, L. M. Joshi, P. S. Jaini, G. Verardi and G. Omvedt. All of these scholars agree on the reasons attributed for the decline of Buddhism. The major reasons for the decline can be broadly categorised as internal and external factors. The internal factors included insufficient cultivation of the laity, moral decay, and internal corruption within Buddhism, increasing sectarianism, growth and dominance of Tantricism and Vajrayāna schools with profound impact. The external factors were the emergence and growth of Brāhmaṇism, growing hostility and challenges from the *Purāṇic* Brāhmaṇical orders, often violence and persecution from the royalty, decline of royal support and patronage, the arrival of Islam and its violent destruction of Buddhist institutions and Brāhmaṇical assimilation and appropriation.

² There are a few exceptions such as the Anne E. Monius in the context of Tamilnadu. Anne. E. Monius, *Imagining a Place for Buddhism* (New York, 2001).

accounts of the Chinese and other monk pilgrims as authentic historical documents without considering each author's intent or specific agenda, which must certainly have influenced their perspectives. These studies overlook the fact that these Buddhist monks subscribed to very specific ideologies and philosophies.³ At another level, the pilgrim accounts have guided the scholastic studies, shaping the framework within which they place all other available sources such as archaeological data and others. For example, almost every scholar uses Xuanzang's account to present a gloomy picture of Buddhism in the mid-seventh century without investigating the context more fully by comparing his account with contemporaneous sources.⁴ This is further illustrated by another example below.

Many scholars cite the poor condition of monasteries - as mentioned in the accounts of Xuanzang - to support an argument about the decline of Buddhism in early historic cities. Despite repeated citation of this account of Xuanzang, no attempt has been made to study these facts in relation to the models explaining new socio-political formations in the early medieval period. The feudal model, one of the dominant models to explain the transition in the north of India from the early historic to the early medieval period and proposed by R. S. Sharma, suggests the decline of cities in the early historic period, which many scholars have linked with the decline of Buddhism. However, these two events were two completely different phenomena. Moreover, the theory of the decline of urban centres and cities has itself been questioned. It is true that many of the cities that were dominant in the early historic period--such as Sravasti and Vaishali--did lose their economic and political importance in the early medieval period. Buddhist monasteries and religious structures continued to exist at these cities, and indeed Xuanzang also writes about the growth of other religious orders there. The proponents of this model offer no insight into this parallel development, nor make any attempt to connect these two phenomena.

The second model used to explain the new socio-political formations in the early medieval period, and which enjoys wider acceptance is best represented by the

³ G. Omvedt, *Buddhism in India* (London, 2003) p. 142. Omvedt mentions that Xuanzang was a careful observer who made 'faithful efforts' to record his observations and the geographical details. Given the paucity of historical sources on Indian life, his observations gain even greater significance. However, Xuanzang, being a follower of Mahāyāna, clearly records details about the *Vinaya* and sectarian affiliation of Buddhist groups, attested by the mention of *Sihavira* monks at Bodhgayā.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

work of B. D. Chattopadhyaya and H. Kulke.⁵ They argue that the emergence of new cities and political groups arose in response to local developments in various regions. However, there has hardly been any attempt to link the changes within Buddhism to this model of socio-political transformation in early medieval India.

Very few studies adequately explore the linkages between socio-political developments in the early medieval period and the response of Buddhist monastic institutions. Did the Buddhists make any effort to gain inroads into these newer centres of political and economic importance? How did Buddhist groups respond to the regional challenges that they faced? The study of these questions, which have not previously been investigated at all in the south Bihar region, can help us develop a nuanced view of the dynamics of Buddhism as it developed between the sixth and the twelfth centuries CE.

II. Trajectories of Religious developments

Based on the problems enumerated in the above (section I) on historiography, this chapter focuses specifically on the Bodhgayā region to foster a clearer and more detailed understanding of the intertwined development of politico-religious dynamics. In doing so, the chapter is divided into six sections. The second section examines the emergence and growth of the Buddhist, Vaiṣṇava, and Śaiva orders, particularly in the early medieval period because of the availability of textual and rich sculptural data from the region. Following on, the third section examines the interaction between these orders and their responses to each other's presence. The fourth section attempts to examine the role of early medieval polity, particularly the Pāla state, in the inter-religious dynamics whereas the fifth section discusses the politics of negotiation. The last section will conclude the finding.

II.1 Buddhism

Buddhism grew tremendously in the region between the second century BCE and twelfth centuries CE. The emergence and development of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā and its monastic establishment has been discussed in Chapters Two and

⁵ B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *The Making of the Early Medieval India* (New Delhi, 1994).

Three. The Mahānāman inscription mentions the construction of a *Gandhakuṭī* and confirms that the Mahābodhi temple was constructed in the last decade of the sixth century CE.⁶ A large number of inscriptions and donated sculptures found within the Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* complex indicate a prolific construction activity at the site.⁷ This is further attested by the account of Xuanzang, who has provided a vivid description of the *mahāvihāra* and also mentions the existence of a large Mahābodhi *sanghārāma* (monastery) built by a former king of Sinhala.⁸

The analysis of archaeological data from the region also attests to the early historic origin of a few monastic sites, such as Kurkihar, Hasra-kol, Dharawat, Burha, Dubba, Yasthivana, and their subsequent evolution as prominent monastic centres during the early medieval period, attested also by Xuanzang's account.⁹ He has also provided details of other monastic and shrine sites of the region, such as Gunāmati *vihāra* (identified at Dharawat), Śīlabhadra *vihāra* (identified at Kauwa-dol), Yasthivana (identified as Jethian), Kukuttapada-giri shrine (identified at Gurupa), Gayāśīrṣa, Dungeshwari, Bakror *stūpa*, and Tapoban. All of these have been examined and substantiated by the archaeological survey of the region in chapter three. Along with these monasteries, there also emerged many new monastic centres (four new monasteries) and settlement shrines (twenty-eight shrine sites) in the region in the early medieval period (Fig. 5.1).

The material advancement and progressive development of these monastic and shrine sites can be seen in the sculptural and other available remains that have been reported. Many new sculptures and miniature stone *stūpas* were installed within the Mahābodhi temple complex as well as other monasteries of the region such as Kurkihar, Hasra-kol or Dharawat. This is evidenced by the increasing number of sculptural and other donations to the monasteries and is confirmed by the epigraphic data. For example, Kurkihar has ninety-three donative inscriptions, Bodhgayā has

⁶ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 71, pp. 277.

⁷ Eighteen inscriptions of the early medieval period were found from the temple complex. Inscriptions and travel accounts indicate growing popularity and massive growth of the site. Chapter three provides a list of all the sculptural and monastic sites in the region and discusses the emergence and growth of the Buddhist sites in and around Bodhgayā.

⁸ S. Beal, *SI-YU-KI: Buddhist Records of the Western World* (Calcutta, 1958, rpt.), pp. 359. The details of the *mahāvihāra* and other sacred sites within Bodhgayā have been examined in the chapter two.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 359. The origins of these sites through their archaeological remains and later additions through sculptural remains have also been presented in the section IV of the Chapter Three.

eighteen and other sites, such as Dharawat, Guneri, Hasra-kol and others, also have a few. Simultaneously, the region also witnessed the establishment of these settlement shrines, which meant that the laity could worship the Buddha in their immediate neighbourhood in these shrines rather than going to regional monastic centres or to Bodhgayā. The establishment of new shrines along settlements also demonstrates a higher lay fellowship and a growing patronage of Buddhism.

The sculptural assemblage from the early medieval period also indicates the evolving nature of religious practices in the region in the early medieval period. A diverse range of religious imagery was found from the monasteries and settlement shrines such as that of Tārā, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Jāmbhala, Vajrapāṇi, and many others. The popularity and worship of these sculptures suggested the impressive spread of Mahāyāna tenants in the Bodhgayā region. The travel accounts have suggested pre-dominance of *Sthaviravāda* school at Bodhgayā; however this claim has been studied and analysed in section IV. 4 of Chapter Two. The possibility of borrowing and mixing of doctrines and religious practices between these two Buddhist schools may have occurred in the region, thus redefining the nature of Buddhist religious practices, a point attested by the descriptions of Xuanzang, Dharmasvāmin as well as other texts composed at Nalanda and elsewhere in the region.¹⁰

It can therefore be seen that Bodhgayā and other monastic sites in the region received large-scale patronage and grew tremendously in this period as can be evidenced by the sculptural and inscriptional remains. This development also encompassed matters of doctrine and religion; it was in other words a signifier of vibrant and flourishing Buddhism which in turn ensured the continuation of a broader social following of Buddhism in the Bodhgayā region from the early historic to the early medieval period. It also facilitated the emergence of monastic sites like Kurkihar into a dominant Buddhist centre, which attracted visits from monks and donations

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion on the interaction between various sects of Buddhism and the nature of Buddhism after the emergence of Mahāyāna, see D. S. Ruegg, 'Aspects of the Study of the (earlier) Indian Mahāyāna,' *JIAS*, vol. 27, no.1 (2004), pp. 1-62. Ruegg has also discussed the distinction between the Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna Schools. In addition, he has also explored the terminology and how these different sects interacted and influenced the ever-evolving Buddhism. See B. Bhattacharya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography: Mainly based on the Sādhana-mālā and Cognate Tantric Texts of Ritual* (Calcutta, 1958).

from various other regions of India and other countries during the early medieval period.

II.2 Emergence of Vaisnavism in the Bodhgayā region

Gayā emerged as a smārta centre of *śrāddha* in the early centuries of the Common Era. The earliest reference to Gayā as a place of *śrāddha-tīrtha* in the textual tradition comes from *Vaṣiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*, a *Dharmasūtra* text dealing with the rules of behaviour on social and religious issues for early historic society and dated closer to the beginning of the Common Era, or even in the first century CE by Patrick Olivelle.¹¹ The text clearly mentions that ‘When someone offers food to his ancestors at Gayā, they rejoice, just as farmers rejoice at fields that have received abundant rains; in him, his ancestors are blessed with a true son.’¹²

A number of early historic texts, compiled between the third and fifth centuries CE, provide references to the emergence and growth of the *śrāddha* ritual at Gayā. These texts include the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, and both the epics of India – the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. Of these texts, the *Rāmāyaṇa* refers cursorily to the ritual of *śrāddha* at Gayā.¹³ The *Viṣṇusmṛti* refers to the performance of the *śrāddha* ritual at two places within Gayā.¹⁴ The verse reads as ‘May that foremost of men be born in our progeny who shall do *śrāddha* unto us at Gayāsīrṣa, or at Vaṭa.’¹⁵ Similarly, the *Mahābhārata* also refers to these two places where one should perform *śrāddha*.¹⁶ Of

¹¹ Patrick Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras The Law Codes of Apastambha, Gautama, Baudhayana, and Vaṣiṣṭha* (New York: 1999), p. xxiii. The absolute dates of these texts are very hard to establish. Scholars have generally tended to agree with Kane’s dating who placed *Vaṣiṣṭha* between c. 300 - 100 BCE. Olivelle considers them at best, educated guesses as Kane’s estimates are based on assigning rather early dates to the Vedic texts, especially the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads*. Olivelle cites a number of reasons to provide a more realistic date for the text. For details, see p. xxxiii.

¹² *Ibid.*, I. 42, p. 392. The section on ancestral offering is discussed in pp. 390-393.

¹³ For *Rāmāyaṇa*, see Sheldon Pollock, *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki Ayodhyākāṇḍa: An Epic of Ancient India*, Vol. II, ed. Robert Goldman (Princeton: 1986), verses 99.11-13, p. 298.

¹⁴ Kane dated the text to the fifth century CE though parts of the text were composed as early as circa 300-100 BCE. See P. V. Kane, “*History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. I (Poona, 1930), pp. 67-70.

¹⁵ M. N. Dutt (Shastri), *Viṣṇusmṛti: With an Introduction, Original Sanskrit Text and Literal Prose English Translation*, ed. K. L. Joshi (New Delhi, 2006), chapter 85, verse 67, p. 264.

¹⁶ J. A. B. Van Buitenen, *The Mahābhārata*, Book 2 and 3 (Chicago, 1975), p. 390. A number of other places are mentioned such as the lake of the Brahmā, Brahmāsaras, the sacrificial pole of Brahmā in the lake, the hoof-prints of a cow and her calf at Dhenukā (?), Gr̥dhraṇḍa, a sanctuary of the wise God, rivers Phalgu, Mahānadī, Kauśikī, and *Dharmapṛṣṭha* and ford of the Brahmā (Brahmā-tīrtha). There is another lake called *Gayāsīras* next to the main sacred mountain and the name given for the mountain is *Udyanta*. The historicity of all these places has been discussed by Jacques in his study of the *Gayā-Māhātmya*. Jacques has provided a detailed discussion of all of these places while examining the

these two places, Gayāśīrṣa has been identified earlier in the Buddhist literature as well whereas Vaṭa is very difficult to identify because of a lack of any definitive information about its location.¹⁷

The above cited textual references suggest that Gayā emerged as a place of *śrāddha* ritual between the first and fifth centuries CE. In fact, there exists an almost similar verse in the *Vaśiṣṭha Dharmasūtra Viṣṇusmṛti*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* expressing that 'one should wish for many sons, if one may go to Gayā'. This reflects that this particular idea about the performance of *śrāddha* at Gayā became an established tradition by the fifth century CE.

The *śrāddha* tradition of early historic Gayā began to be restructured around Viṣṇu during the early medieval period. This transformation of Gayā as a Vaiṣṇava *śrāddha* centre, drawn over several centuries, was directly linked to the spread of Vaiṣṇavism in the south Bihar region, which took place from the Gupta period onwards as a result of politico-religious developments.¹⁸ Gupta seals and inscriptions demonstrated Vaiṣṇava commitments of Gupta and the later Gupta kings.¹⁹ The Gupta and later Gupta kings affiliated with Vaiṣṇavism and actively patronised it for almost four centuries in the Magadha region. This may have contributed, though not directly, to the spread and growth of the order. Vaiṣṇavism continued to grow in the Pāla period in the south Bihar region due to support from a number of Pāla feudatories and ministers.²⁰

historiography to establish correct identifications of these places. He has discussed a chronological establishment of these places. His identifications are based on his personal explorations as well as all textual and archaeological data. Jacques study can be relied upon for the historicity of the religious shrines within Gayā town area. Therefore I would skip repeating the discussion here. For Jacques' study of *Gayā-Māhātmya*, see C. Jacques, *Gayā-Māhātmya* (Pondicherry, 1962).

¹⁷ For a discussion on Gayāśīrṣa and its importance within Buddhist tradition, see chapter Two, section III.1.

¹⁸ The availability of the earliest stone image of Vāsudeva, Balarāma and Ekaṇaṣṭā from Devangarh in Nawada from the Gupta period supports this contention. Asher has analysed the iconographic details of these pieces and revised the date of these three sculptures from the Kuṣāṇa to the Gupta period. See Asher, *Eastern India*, pp. 18-19.

¹⁹ The availability of Gupta seals and inscriptions (such as the Gayā and Nalanda copper plate inscriptions of Samudragupta, the Damodarapur inscription of c. 448-449 CE of Kumāragupta I and the Bihar pillar inscriptions of Skandagupta), and a number of clay seal inscriptions from Nalanda with Vaiṣṇava emblems such as the *Garuḍa*, and name and genealogy of the Gupta and later Gupta kings indicate the direct control of the region by the Gupta monarchs. In addition, there are a number of inscriptions at the Vaiṣṇava shrines which were constructed by the later Gupta kings, such as Apsad and Mandar hill shrine. These inscriptions prove their affiliation and commitment towards Vaiṣṇavism in the south Bihar region.

²⁰ Two inscriptions of the eighth and the ninth centuries CE indicate growing support for Vaiṣṇavism from the ministers of the Pāla kings. The Khalimpur charter of Dharmapāla mentions the construction

The spread of Vaiṣṇavism in the Bodhgayā region and the emergence of Gayā as a Vaiṣṇava centre were directly connected to such growth in the larger south Bihar region. A precise dating of the Vaiṣṇava reformulation of Gayā is a challenging task due to three factors. Firstly, there is the impossibility of archaeological excavations at Gayā, and this denies us the ability to date the Vaiṣṇava shrines there. Secondly, sculptures from neighbouring regions were brought to Gayā and were either added to the existing shrines or placed within newly constructed ones at Gayā in the last two centuries. This fact, emphasised repeatedly in earlier works, makes it difficult to establish the provenance of newly added sculptures in many shrines. The third factor relates to the use of the textual account of the *Gayā-Māhātmya* (*GM* hereafter) from *Vāyu Purāṇa*, a text roughly dated to the eleventh-twelfth centuries CE. The *GM* extols the sacrality of Gayā and provides an account of the legends/history relating to Gayā.

The extensive reliance on the textual account of the *GM* for the study of the Vaiṣṇava reformulation of Gayā has been another major obstacle because the text exists in several recensions and has no clear date for its compilation.²¹ The *GM* was originally an independent text, written most likely by the Gayāwala Brāhmaṇas (known for performing *pinḍadāna* and *śrāddha*) to promote the Gayā *tīrtha*. It was added to the *Vāyu*, *Garuḍa* and other *Purāṇas* at a much later period because the text claimed to be 'part' of these *Purāṇas*.²² For this study, I have used the *Vāyu Purāṇa*

of a Vaiṣṇava shrine at Subhasthali, to which the king donated four villages for worship and other rites whereas the Badal pillar inscription of Gaurava Miśra, a fourth generation minister of the Pāla kings at the time of the Nārāyaṇapāla, mentions erection of a *Garuḍa* pillar. For the Khalimpur charter, see *EI* 4 (1896-97), no. 34, p. 254; and for the Badal pillar inscription, see, *EI* 2 (1894), no. 10, pp. 167. This is further demonstrated in the mid-eleventh century CE text *Rāmacarita* of Sandhyakar Nandin which begins with an invocation to Viṣṇu and Śiva. For details, see H. P. Shastri, (trs.) *Ramacarita of Sandhyakara Nandin* (Calcutta, 1903).

²¹ For the genre of *Māhātmya*, Jacques writes that these texts have a clear popular character: the simplicity of legends and the type of arguments for establishing the superiority of the *tīrtha* testify to it. In spite of a certain external appearance in their composition, they are not works of a single author, except for the *māhātmya*'s from the recent period. They are rather compilations of 'slogans' and common sayings combined with legends and rules on the rites to be observed. Under these conditions, trying to fix the time of *māhātmya* has no great relevance. Details and additions have grafted along the centuries on a core which is possibly very ancient. The *GM* does not escape these rules of the genre. See C. Jacques, *Gayā-Māhātmya* (Pondicherry, 1962), p. 1. R. C. Hazra and Jan Gonda have dated the text to pre -1400 CE. See Ludo Rocher, *The Purāṇas* (Wiesbaden, 1986), p.245 & Jan Gonda, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit* (Wiesbaden, 1977), p. 279. However, the text has layers of oral tradition, which has been emphasised by Susan Huntington in her work, see Susan Huntington, *The "Pāla-Senā" Schools of Sculpture* (Leiden, 1984), p. 93. For the *Gayā-Māhātmya*, see G.V. Tagare, trs., *The Vāyu-Purāṇa* (Delhi, 1987), chapters 106-114.

²² The text, given at the end of the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, had also become famous despite the fact that it usually does not occur in the same manuscript. See C. Vielle, 'From the *Vāyuprokta* to the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*: Preliminary Remarks towards a Critical Edition of the *vāyuprokta*

version of the *GM*, which is considered a complete text with a distinct Vaiṣṇava character. The reason for choosing this version is that it presents a number of legends to justify the establishment of the Vaiṣṇava and other shrines at Gayā, and some of these shrines can be dated on the basis of sculptural and epigraphic remains. Despite these limitations, an attempt has been made to date the Vaiṣṇava reformulation of Gayā. The method adopted for this study is to combine the analysis of the chronological and historical development of the shrines and their sculptures within Gayā with that of the *GM*. To resolve the problem of provenance while analysing the sculptures, only shrines containing inscriptions, and inscribed sculptures have been included here.²³ This Vaiṣṇava development of Gayā will be further combined with a study of the relevant sculptures from the Bodhgayā region to present a coherent picture of the spread of Vaiṣṇavism in the region.

The earliest evidence of Viṣṇu worship in Bodhgayā region comes from the Maukharī inscription of Anantavarman (c. 550-600 CE) at the Lōmaśa Rishi cave at the Barabar hills where he announced the installation of an image of the god Kṛṣṇa.²⁴ Though the image has not been found, the inscription indicates the existence of a Vaiṣṇava shrine in the mid-sixth century CE. Moreover, the earliest image of Viṣṇu reported in the region comes from Konch, dated to the second half of the sixth century CE.²⁵ There are just two sites which have thrown up Viṣṇu images of the seventh century CE - Davthu and Nasher. However, the number of Viṣṇu images grew tremendously at Gayā and in the larger region in the eighth century CE (Table D in Appendix). I will begin by examining Gayā here.

The eighth century explosion of Viṣṇu sculptures at Gayā has been explained by the *GM*, which re-defined the sacredness of Gayā by referring to a number of Vaiṣṇava legends to justify the presence of Viṣṇu.²⁶ The authors of the *GM* adopted or referenced narratives from earlier texts, often the Epics, and reworked them with

Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa, in P. Koskikallio, ed., *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures* (Zagreb, 2005), p. 537.

²³ Regarding the other non-inscribed sculptures from these shrines, almost all of them have been dated on the basis of stylistic grounds and included in the analysis as they still represent the popularity/spread of Vaiṣṇavism in the region.

²⁴ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 48, p. 223. The image was not found in the cave. There is a possibility that it might have been installed in some other shrine in the region.

²⁵ Asher, *Eastern India*, p. 45. Asher has provided a copy of this image.

²⁶ For a detailed history of all the shrines and their historicity, see Jacques, *Gayā Māhātmya*. I have used the English translation by G. Bonazzoli.

greater detail to establish a sacred zone. They also created new ones to embroider the pre-existent traditions of holy places or shrines. The *GM* description of the sacred geography of Gayā reflects this assertion, which will be examined in tandem with the sculptural and epigraphic remains in the following sub-section.

II.2.1 The *GM* and the Emergence of the Vaisnava Gayā

The *GM* defines a precise sacred geography of Gayā, 'Let it be declared, for the benefit of all men that (there is a distance of) two-and-a-half *krośa* in all directions from Muṇḍapṛṣṭha. The *Gayākṣetra* is five *krośa*; the *Gayāsīras* covers one *krośa*. In their midst are all the *tīrthas*'.²⁷ The verse demarcates the sacred zone of Gayā by mentioning the boundary of *Gayākṣetra*. This demarcation of the *tīrtha* is followed by a narration of various legends to emphasise the sacred importance of Gayā in the *GM*, the most important and defining one being that of the *Gayāsūra*.

A careful examination of the *Gayāsūra* legend suggests that the *GM* was a product of a slow process of acculturation and accumulation of various stories and legends over several centuries. The multi-layered *Gayāsūra* legend, emphasising the predominant role of Viṣṇu, brought a number of stories together such as the stories of *Gayāsura*, the killing of *Heti* by the Viṣṇu, *Brahmā* and his curse to the local *Brāhmaṇas*, *Dharmavratā* and *Marīci*, and the *śrāddha* tradition, weaving them into a single legend. This delineated the eternal sacredness of Gayā, which was not just attributed to the presence of the Viṣṇu and his forms (*Janārdana*, *Adi-gaḍādhara* and *Rāma*), but also included the presence of several other gods and goddesses such as *Brāhmā*, *Maheśvara*, *Sūrya*, *Lakṣmī*, *Sītā*, *Gaurī*, *Gāyatrī*, *Savitrī*, and *Sarasvatī*.²⁸ This is justified in the *GM* in varied contexts, one of which I will present here.

The first context is when the donated body of *Gayāsura* trembled while *Brahmā* was performing the *yajña* to it. At that point, *Brahmā*, shaking, said to *Dharmarāj*:

By my command, bring the *dharmasīlā* from your house without questioning and quickly fix upon the *daitya*'s head

²⁷ *GM* II. 57 & I. 22-23.

²⁸ I am not discussing the legend and story here and their validity. Instead, I would focus on the establishment of shrines and the validity as provided by the *GM* and other sources.

Yama heard and, with the aim of (making the *asura*) motionless, he fixed the stone upon (the *asura*'s) head. Even when the stone was fixed, the *asura*, along with the stone, moved.

Then he (Brahmā) said to Rudra and the other gods, 'Let all the gods, the goddesses, and the *munis* stand motionless upon the stone.'

The gods marked it with their feet. Even then the *asura* moved.²⁹

These verses explain the necessity of the presence of all the gods within and hence their footprints including that of the Brahmā, Indra, Sūrya, and the Śiva in Gayā.³⁰ A few other verses in chapter seven of the *GM* justify the performance of *śrāddha* at the footprints of other gods and their benefits.³¹ For example, the gods Śiva, Brahmā, and Sūrya were already present which meant that they were accommodated within Gayā, and the other gods and goddesses were included as they were considered important in the existing religious traditions.³² Moreover, this attempt to also present Vaiṣṇava Gayā as a place for worshipping other Brāhmaṇical gods, reflected the theistic practices adopted by the Gayā Brāhmaṇas. This is also illustrated by the presence and ritual usage of a large stone carved with the footprints of sixteen gods in the Viṣṇupada temple complex in Gayā, though we cannot give it a precise date because of a lack of evidence. In addition, a number of shrines dedicated to the other gods confirm their worship in Gayā in the early medieval period.

In theistic practice Viṣṇu was the supreme god in an attempted hierarchical order. This is apparent in the Gayāsūra legend when the presence of all the gods, (except Viṣṇu), was not enough to stop the body of Gayāsura from trembling, and forced Brahmā to finally appeal to Viṣṇu for help.³³

²⁹ *GM* II. 36-42.

³⁰ See Jacques, *Gayā*. He mentions a stone within the Viṣṇupada complex, which has sixteen footprints of gods and goddesses. The numbers keep changing even in the text *GM* and its various recensions. In chapter three of the *GM*, the story of Dharmavrāta, the daughter of Dharma, and Marīci, the mind-born son of Brāhma, is narrated. In the story, Dharmavrāta is cursed by her husband Marīci to become a stone (*śilā*). This leads her to do *tapas*, which resulted in a boon from the Viṣṇu. The boon stated that she will become a *śilā*, an auspicious purifier in the universe (*brāhmāṇḍa* on which will permanently stand all the gods and the divine *munis*). It is this *śilā*, which was used by the Brahmā initially and later all the gods including Viṣṇu in his various forms stood upon to calm the body of the Gayāsura. For details, see *GM* III. 42-52.

³¹ *GM* VII. 52-64.

³² The *GM* also emphasises the presence of Rāma, Sītā, and Bharat as Rāma performs *pinḍadāna* at the footprint of Rudra (Śiva) in Chapter seven (IV.74-75). A number of other gods are also present within Gayā along with *munis*, Vedic saints and epic heroes such as Yuḍhiṣṭhira, Bhīṣma and others.

³³ *GM* II. 43-47.

Hearing this (plea), Viṣṇu gave a statue (*mūrti*) to Brahmā but even the installation of that statue could not make the body of Gayāsura immobile. Finally Brahmā summoned Viṣṇu again: 'Viṣṇu came from his lake of milk and stood on the stone with the name Janārdana, and with the name Lotus-Eyed (Kamalnayana).' Gadādhara himself (stood) on the stone to make (Gayāsura) immobile. He took on five forms on the stone to make him immobile: the Great-grandfather, the Grandfather, the lord of Phalgu, the (Lord) of Kedāra, and Lord of Kanaka.....³⁴

And since Hari made the *daitya* immobile with the first mace (Ādigadā), saying, 'he is still.' Therefore (Hari) is (called) Ādi-gadādhara.³⁵

These verses demonstrate the supremacy of Viṣṇu and his capability to assume any incarnation, at the same time citing the various emerging forms such as Ādi-gadādhara and Janārdana in which Viṣṇu can be worshipped at Gayā. They also assert that Viṣṇu assumed other incarnations of Phalgunātha, Kedāranātha and Kanakanātha. However, in contrast to the textual descriptions, the epigraphic and sculptural data present a different picture.

The earliest forms in which Viṣṇu was worshipped at Gayā were Lokaikanātha, Murārī and Nṛsimha. An inscription, dated to c. 864 CE, is dedicated to this form of Viṣṇu and mentions the construction of an *āśrama/nivāsa/matha* for ascetics. Verses one and two of the inscription mention:

that it was Viṣṇu, the sole Lord of the universe who healed the wound of suffering human beings by overpowering Murā, the demon and thus became famous as Murārī. It was he who in his Nṛsimha form pierced the demon with the sharp-tip nail of his finger.³⁶

Based on this inscription, the first Vaiṣṇava shrine at the Muṇḍapṛṣṭha hill (present Viṣṇupada complex) can be dated to the ninth century CE. Clearly, the *avatāra* forms were becoming popular as indicated by the installation of this inscription in a shrine with Nṛsimha Viṣṇu in the ninth century CE. Viṣṇu's presence at the Muṇḍapṛṣṭha hill in the forms of Ādi-gadādhara and Janārdana is attested only in the mid-tenth century CE by two inscriptions, reported from the Viṣṇupada complex. Viśvarūpa donated both the inscriptions in the fifteenth regnal year of Nayāpāla (c. 1053 CE) while constructing two shrines respectively for Gadādhara, and Sūrya and Lakṣmī. Another

³⁴ GM II, 48-49.

³⁵ GM II, 52.

³⁶ EI 35 (1963-64), no. 32, p. 227.

inscription of the Viśvarūpa found from the Kṛṣṇa-Dwarka temple at Gayā mentions the erection of another shrine for the Janārdana. The fact that the *GM* emphasised these two forms which were installed only in the mid-eleventh century CE, seems to suggest a post eleventh century date for the *GM*. Nevertheless, the primacy and worship of Viṣṇu at Gayā is proved by the ninth-century inscription as well as nine other sculptures of Viṣṇu (including one of the Nṛsimha form) in the modern Viṣṇupada complex as all of these sculptures were made between the ninth and twelfth centuries CE.

This reworking of Gayā as a Vaiṣṇava pilgrimage centre was accompanied by the addition of new meaning to sites considered sacred in the Buddhist tradition. These claims can be read from the accounts provided in the *GM*. Though the text is completely silent about Buddhism, it still acknowledges its presence when it presents the Gayaśrīṣa hill as a sacred place to perform *śrāddha*. Similarly, the Bodhi tree at Bodhgayā is presented as an important marker of the presence of Viṣṇu in the region to construct a Vaiṣṇava landscape.

The *GM* describes Gayāśrīṣa hill as the place where the Buddha preached the fire sermon, a fact already established in the early Pāli literature as well as in the various versions of the biography of the Buddha. This site was claimed by the Brāhmaṇical followers in the early centuries of the Common Era as the place of the footprint of Sāvitrī.³⁷ In the early medieval period, Xuanzang refers to this hill (Mount Gayā) as the place where sovereigns and kings come after their anointment to declare their succession with religious ceremonies. He further writes:

On the top of the mountain is a *stūpa* about hundred feet high, which was built by Aśoka-rājā. Divine prodigies are exhibited by it, and a sacred effulgency often shines from it. In the old days Tathāgata here delivered the *P'ao-yun* and other *Sūtras*.³⁸

Whether there was a *stūpa* at the top of the mountain is difficult to confirm because of the lack of archaeological evidence. Nonetheless, the *GM* text repeatedly refers to the hill as an important geographical indicator of the site of Vaiṣṇava Gayā. 'Let it be declared, for the benefit of all men that, 'The *Gayākṣetra* is five *krośa*; Gayāśrīṣa is

³⁷ Van Buitenan, *Mahābhārata*, p. 390.

³⁸ Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, p. 343.

one *krośa*. In their midst are all *tīrthas*.³⁹ Besides this, a number of other verses mention Gayāśīrṣa in the contexts of *pinḍadāna* at Brahmyoni.⁴⁰ There exists no archaeological evidence at the top of the hill to ascertain the nature and control in the period under discussion. However, the lack of any Buddhist remains within Gayā, including this hill, and the constant emphasis of the *GM* on the Brahmyoni and Gayāśīrṣa as a place of *pinḍadāna* indicates instead its takeover by the Gayāwāl Brāhmanaṣas.⁴¹

Xuanzang mentioned three more Buddhist *stūpas* in the vicinity of Gayāśīrṣa. 'To the south-east of Mount Gayā is a *stūpa*. This is the spot where Kaśyapa (Kia-she-po) was born. To the south of this *stūpa* are two others. These are the spots where Gayākaśyapa (Kia-ya-kia-she-po) and Nadīkaśyapa (Nai-ti-kia-she-po) sacrificed as fire-worshippers.'⁴² This account of the existence of Buddhist *stūpas* in Gayā again cannot be proved, again because of a lack of archaeological evidence. However, if Xuanzang was correct in mentioning the existence of these three *stūpas*, then seventh-century Gayā did contain a few Buddhist structures and at least a small monastic establishment to look after and perform daily rituals at these *stūpas*.⁴³ Despite this, the *GM* completely disclaims the presence of either Buddhism or any Buddhist shrine at Gayā, which raises questions about the negotiation of space within Gayā between the Buddhist and Vaiṣṇava orders.

The *GM* also attempts to assign new meaning in accordance to its Vaiṣṇava leanings to the place of the Bodhi Tree at Bodhgayā. I will briefly cite Xuanzang to encapsulate the Buddhist perception of this site in the early medieval period:

In the middle of the enclosure surrounding the Bodhi Tree is the diamond throne (*Vajrāsana*). In the former days, when the *Bhadra-kalpa* was arriving at the period of perfection (*vivarita*), when the great earth arose, this (throne) also appeared. It is in the middle of the great chiliocosm; it goes down to the limits of the golden wheel (the gold circle), and upwards

³⁹ *GM* I. 57.

⁴⁰ For geographical indicator in the *GM*, see I. 22; for Brahmyoni, see IV. 35; for *pinḍadāna*, see IV. 43.

⁴¹ The hill-top now has a temple complex, which was constructed in the eighteenth century. The conversion and capture of the site, considered important in the Buddhist tradition, is duly reflected in the above discussion.

⁴² Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, p. 343.

⁴³ I do not know of any other account, which mentions either the erection of these three *stūpas* at Gayā or the exact places of fire-worship or the birth place of Kaśyapa. In previous literary accounts, all the sacred places in the region are directly linked to the actions of the Buddha himself, except Gurupa which is linked to the life of Kaśyapa. This account of Xuanzang, however, indicates a different trend.

it is flush with the ground. It is composed of diamond. In circuit it is a hundred paces or so. On this, the thousand Buddhas of the Bhadra-kalpa have sat and entered the diamond-samadhi; hence the name of the diamond throne. It is the place where the Buddhas attain the holy path (the sacred way of Buddhahood). It is also called *Bodhimāṇḍa*.

This description tallies with a number of other textual and pilgrim accounts in this period, including Dharmasvāmīn. All consider the Bodhi Tree shrine at Bodhgayā as the centre of the Buddhist world (see Fig. 2.3, 2.4).

The *GM* presents a completely different account of the place:

After bowing to *Dharma* and Dharmeśvara, he (a pilgrim) should bow to the Mahābodhi tree (*Mahābodhitaru*), (with this mantra), “reverence to the tree whose leaves tremble (*caladdalāya*), where Viṣṇu stands eternally, to the truth of awakening (*bodhittatvāya*), to sacrifice, and to the *Aśvattha* (tree). You are the eleventh of eleven, and also the eighth of eight; you are the Nārāyaṇa of the Gods, you are the Pippala, the King of trees. Since Nārāyaṇa stands in you for all time, *Aśvattha* King of trees, you are perpetually auspicious among trees; you are fortunate; you are the destroyer of bad dreams. I revere Hari, the divine wielder of the conch, discus, and mace, in the form of *Aśvattha*, the Lotus Eyed, having the shape of a branch (*śakhārūpadhara*).⁴⁴

These verses clearly attempt to identify the Bodhi tree as a Vaiṣṇava place, a claim also reflected in contemporary Purāṇic literature. This is an attempt by Vaiṣṇava followers to claim the most important Buddhist sacred site, by arguing that the place itself is significant because of the Viṣṇu’s presence there. These claims of the *GM* were made much later, probably after the mid-eleventh century CE.⁴⁵ However, much before these claims over the Buddhist shrines a similar trend is noticeable in the Vaiṣṇava reformulation of a number of *śrāddha* shrines within Gayā. New Viṣṇu sculptures were added to a few shrines and new rituals were invented around Viṣṇu. I will illustrate this by giving an example.

Two Viṣṇu sculptures of the eighth century were found within the shrine of Dharmāraṇya, a site located two kilometres east of Bodhgayā and mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* and the *GM*. The *Mahābhārata* refers to the Dharmāraṇya as a place,

⁴⁴ *GM* VII. 33-36.

⁴⁵ The Buddha is increasingly being identified as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu in a number of *Purāṇas*, from the eighth century CE onwards. For a detailed discussion, see John C. Holt, *The Buddhist Viṣṇu: Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture* (New York, 2004), pp. 14-19.

where Yudhiṣṭhira, the Pāṇḍava prince, performed sacrifice during his pilgrimage to Bodhgayā.⁴⁶ Though there are no references to the presence of the Viṣṇu at the site in the accounts of the *Mahābhārata*, the presence of two Viṣṇu sculptures suggests the reframing of the shrine as a predominant Vaiṣṇava shrine in the eighth century CE. Additionally, the text mentions the Mātāṅgavyāpī tank and the Mātāṅgeśa (temple) as important Vaiṣṇava centres of *śrāddha*.⁴⁷ These are located in close proximity to the Bakror Buddhist *stūpa*. The *GM* suggests a conscious attempt to establish new shrines in the near vicinity of the Buddhist shrines.

The *GM* also mentions new shrines such as Maṅgala-Gauri, Rāmagayā, and Rāmaśilā in Gayā which all contained Viṣṇu sculptures. For example, a Balarāma, dated to the eighth century, was found within the Maṅgala-gauri temple. Another Viṣṇu sculpture, dated to the eighth century CE, was found from Rāmagayā, whereas two Viṣṇu-*daśāvatāra* panels were found within the shrine at the foot of Rāmagayā hill. Two others of the same period, reported from an unknown shrine at Gayā, are kept in the Gayā museum. The availability of these sculptures from specific shrines in Gayā indicates that the reframing of existing shrines and the construction of new Vaiṣṇava shrines were concurrent processes between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE. In addition to Gayā, fifteen other Viṣṇu sculptures were documented from a number of sites in the Bodhgayā region between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE. These sites include Kabar, Barabar, Bodhgayā, Silonja, Kespa and others (Fig. 5.2). Two of these represent Viṣṇu in Varāha and Nṛsiṃha forms, whereas the rest represent him in his classic Viṣṇu form.

The worship of various forms of the Viṣṇu in the region hinted at the growing popularity of *avatāra* / reincarnation theory there. Moreover, the presence of various forms of Viṣṇu is evidenced from textual and epigraphic details and sculptural remains. Three of them have already been discussed above. One set of ten *avatāra* sculptures, dated to the ninth/tenth century CE, was found from Konch whereas another panel, dated to the tenth century (proved by the epigraphic data), was found from the shrine at the foot of the Rāmagayā hill, where there is also another

⁴⁶ Van Buitenen, *Mahābhārata*, p. 391.

⁴⁷ *GM* VII. 28. A few other Buddhist places in neighbouring Rajgir such as Gr̥dhakūṭa peak (Gr̥dhakūṭa) are also mentioned as Śaiva places for performing the *śrāddha*.

daśavatāra panel.⁴⁸ Besides these, a few sculptures in the Varāha and Nṛsiṃha forms also suggest the prevalence of the Viṣṇu's popular forms in the region.

To summarise, Vaiṣṇavism made its appearance in the fifth / sixth century CE Gayā and in the Bodhgayā Region, as evidenced by the presence of Gupta and later Gupta seals, the Barabar cave inscription and the Konch sculpture. It spread rapidly in the seventh / eighth century CE, as reflected in the sculptural distribution and emergence of Vaiṣṇava shrines in the region. The early historic tradition of *śrāddha* was reformulated into a predominantly Vaiṣṇava framework in the early medieval period and the most important place to perform *śrāddha* was the Viṣṇupada. In addition, people could perform *śrāddha* at the footprints of several other gods and goddesses who were part of the Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

This reformulation also introduced new meaning for the ritual of *śrāddha* and the Gayā pilgrimage as the *GM* extolled the new benefits accruing from these acts. These new benefits included immunity from diseases such as leprosy; acquiring wealth, grain, a good life, fame, and fortunate occurrences such as a wife, a son, a grandson, and others.⁴⁹ This addition for worldly (*laukika*) gains was a new development in the *GM*, which may have been added to broaden their support base.

In the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, Gayā was probably ruled by the Brāhmaṇa chiefs (Table E in Appendix). These rulers marked the landscape of Gayā by constructing numerous Vaiṣṇava shrines in the mid-eleventh century CE and became permanent indicators of the sacredness of the Vaiṣṇava landscape of Gayā. However, the *GM* also indicated the presence of other gods in Gayā, particularly Śiva, as evidenced by the shrines of Prapitamaheśvara and Vaṭeśa erected by Viśvarūpa/Viśvāditya.⁵⁰ This is further corroborated by the presence of a number of sculptures, mostly depicting Umā-Maheśvara, from the eighth and the ninth centuries CE, in the Akṣayaṭa complex and a ninth-century *liṅga* within the Prapitāmahā temple.

⁴⁸ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, p. 142.

⁴⁹ *GM* V.36-38. There is another verse explaining how performing *śrāddha* at Gayā dissolves one of the sin of a Brāhmaṇicide, drinking alcohol, theft or sleeping with the wife of one's guru. Also see I.14.

⁵⁰ *GM* IV. 40-41. 'A Banyan, the lord of banyans (Vaṭeśvara), is there; the Prapitāmahā (temple) stands there, and in front of that is Rukmiṇi kuṇḍa. To the west is the Kapīla river; the Kapileśa (temple) is on the bank of the river.' Apart from this, two other verses (87 and 92) in chapter seven also refer to the Akṣayaṭa. The mention of the Prapitāmahā temple in the verse does indicate the existence of this shrine from an earlier date, which was reconstructed by Viśvarupa.

II.3 The spread of Śaivism in the Bodhgayā region

Śaivism emerged in the Bodhgayā region during the Gupta period. The earliest reference to the presence of Śaivism in the region comes from one solitary reference in the *Mahābhārata* about the presence of Rudra/Lord Pinaka in Gayā. The earliest archaeological evidence was found from an old temple site, called Baiju-bigha, where a Śiva-liṅga, roughly dated to the Gupta period, has been unearthed recently. The availability of a shell-inscription in the vicinity of the temple ruins indicate the Gupta date of the Śaiva-shrine.⁵¹ In order to examine its spread and development, it is necessary to provide a brief background of its emergence at Vārāṇasī and its subsequent spread into south Bihar.

Bakker, based on a study of archaeological, sculptural, and literary sources, specifically the *Vārāṇasī Māhātmya* of the *Skanda Purāṇa*, has argued for the emergence of Śaivism in the Varanasi from the fourth century CE.⁵² The original *Skanda Purāṇa* was probably composed in the sixth century, or maybe the first half of the seventh century.⁵³ Bakker argues that the spread of the *Pāśupata* order towards the east, to Varanasi and Magadha (south Bihar), had originally taken off from Kānyakubja.⁵⁴ The link between the Kānyakubja and south Bihar region is also proved by the presence of Maukhari and Vardhana dynasties in both the regions in the sixth and seventh centuries CE. Moreover, the *Skanda Purāṇa* also mentions about eight places in the country of south Bihar where Lagudīśvara (Lakulīśa, the founder of

⁵¹ Van Buitenen, *Mahābhārata*, p. 408. Another sculpture of Śiva, presently worshipped within the Viṣṇupada temple, is also a Gupta period product. The sculpture has been dated on stylistic grounds.

⁵² Hans Bakker, *Skanda Purāṇa* (Groningen, 2003), pp. 1-86. Bakker uses archaeological remains to make this claim and substantiates this by using epigraphic and textual data, particularly the account of the *Skanda Purāṇa* text. A number of Śaiva remains have been found from the Gupta period onwards in the region such as sculptures, heads, seals and sealings. This emergence of the Śaiva order was followed by remodelling of the city into a prominent *Pāśupata* Śaiva place from the late Gupta period.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 16. The text describes the town of Vārāṇasī, on the one hand, as a meeting place of *yogis*, in particular of the *Pāśupata* variety, and on the other hand also as a place where one should wish to die, as this promises immediate release. The text testifies to the establishment of a *Pāśupata* community of ascetics and *ācāryas*, who may well, have been in charge most of the sanctuaries described in the text. Being united in the kingdom of Kanauj by the time *Skanda Purāṇa* was composed, the Vārāṇasī *Pāśupata* may have entertained manifold relations with their brothers in the Kānyakubja and Magadha.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 41. Bakker discusses this development of the Vārāṇasī between *circa* 500-1100 CE, based on a study of four textual versions of the *Vārāṇasī Māhātmya*. A precise date of the text was established on the basis of a dated manuscript of *Skanda Purāṇa* (810 CE) and Lakṣmīdhara's *Tirthavivekanakāṇḍa* (second quarter of the twelfth century CE). This description of the Vārāṇasī as a *Pāśupata* centre is supported by a number of travel accounts such as the Xuanzang's account in the early seventh century CE or the Korean pilgrim Hye Ch'o, a century later. Bakker has also discussed these accounts. See p. 36. The first mention of the *Pāśupata* school occurs in the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of *Sānti Parvan* of *Mahābhārata* along with four other systems.

Pāśupata Śaivism) roamed about with his pupils, indicating the emergence and spread of *Pāśupata* Śaivas in the region.

The Maukhari rulers emerged as feudatories of the Gupta kings in the sixth century CE in the Magadha region.⁵⁵ Śaivism, being the preferred religion of the Maukhari kings as reflected by their royal charters and inscriptions, spread widely into the South Bihar and Bodhgayā regions. Similarly, the Vardhana dynasty emerged in the early seventh century CE and exercised control over parts of south Bihar. They were also closely involved with Śaivism, and their rule over the region influenced the religious dynamics of the region. Śaivism grew rapidly over the next four centuries in the south Bihar region, and its growing importance is affirmed by the construction of many Śaiva shrines, as corroborated by a number of inscriptions during the Pāla period.

The earliest example of Maukhari involvement with Śaivism in the Bodhgayā region comes from two inscriptions at the Nāgārjunī hill, dated roughly to the first half of the sixth century CE. Both inscriptions record the establishment of Śaiva shrines by the Maukhari king Anantavarman. The first commemorates the installation of an image of Śiva in the form of Bhūtapati or 'the Lord of beings' and his wife Pārvatī, under the name of Devī.⁵⁶ The second records the installation of an image of the goddess Pārvatī, under the name of Kātyāyanī, at the Gopi cave on the Nagarjuni hill and also mentions the donation of a village to the goddess under the name of Bhavānī.⁵⁷ Interestingly, the construction and dedication of Śiva and Pārvatī images along with the donation of a village to the goddess in the region indicating direct control of the region by the Maukhari rulers. The grant of a village to the Goddess Bhavānī, for the maintenance of the temple, indicated the existence of priests of the Śaiva order, who received and regulated the grant to perform their ritual obligations. This also demonstrated the growing roots of the Śaiva groups in the region.

The epigraphic and sculptural evidence suggests the spread of Śaivism in the region in the seventh century CE. The number of shrines dedicated to Śiva increased in this period, as indicated by the huge number of Śaiva sculptures from the surveyed

⁵⁵ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 48, p. 223. The term used to denote the position of the king Sardula of the Maukhari dynasty in the Lomaśa Rīṣi cave inscription is '*sāmanāta-chūḍāmaṇih*'. The term has been translated as 'the best of the chieftains'.

⁵⁶ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 49, pp. 225.

⁵⁷ *CII* 3 (1888), no. 50, pp. 228.

sites. For example, the Siddheśvara shrine at the top of Surjan-giri, the highest hill in the Barabar range, is dated to the seventh century CE. The name of the shrine as Siddheśvara has been noted in two inscriptions, which were found in the Vāpi cave at the Nagarjuni hill. Both the inscriptions are paleographically dated to the seventh-eighth centuries CE, and one of them mentions an individual with the name Yogānanda bowing to the Siddheśvara: ‘*Āchārya Śrī Yogānanda praṇamati Siddheśvara*’.⁵⁸ This confirms the name and existence of the shrine from the seventh century CE onwards, which is further substantiated by the rock carvings of *liṅga*, Gaṇeśa and a number of other sculptures from the site such as two pieces of Umā-Maheśvaras and one of Sūrya, all dated to the same period.⁵⁹ The site has a number of other sculptures of gods such as a Viṣṇu, Pārvaṭī, Cāmuṇḍā, Gaṇeśa and Varāha, which were later added to the shrine, between the ninth and eleventh centuries CE.

A number of Śaiva shrines were also constructed in the settlements of the region from the seventh century CE onwards (table 4). The sites which seemed to have a prominent Śaiva shrine were Pali, Kabar, Konch, Baiju-bigha Utren and Jethian. Of all these, Konch emerged as a prominent *Pāśupata* Śaiva centre with the shrine of Konchesvar Mahādeva. This shrine also contains a sculpture of Lakuliśa and *ekamukhi liṅga* of the seventh century CE, indicating its *Pāśupata* affiliation. Similar affiliation can also be suggested for Pāli which also contained an eleventh-century Lakuliśa image (currently in Gayā Museum). The architectural fragments and pillars found in the Koncheswar Mahādeva complex confirmed the construction of the Śaiva shrine in the seventh century CE. Later, another *liṅga* and a number of Umā-Maheśvara and Vaiṣṇava sculptures were added to the site.

Similarly large *liṅgas* and a number of other Śaiva sculptures from Jethian, Utren, Pali and Kabar confirm the existence of important Śaiva shrines at these sites during the Pāla period (see Fig. 5.2). Moreover, the presence of Umā-Maheśvara sculptures from almost every site confirms the popularity of Śaivism in the region. The major Śaiva shrines within Gayā were the Śiva-Mahādeva-Phalgiśvara temple inside the Viṣṇupada complex, Prapitāmaheśvara temple and Vaṭeśa-liṅga within

⁵⁸ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, p. 298.

⁵⁹ Huntington, *Pāla-Sena*, pp. 90-92. Huntington has dated the sculptures on stylistic grounds. Some of the sculptures have been collected from the nearby hills and so may have lost provenance. Based on the available sculptures at the present shrine, Huntington argues for a local workshop with two active periods of productions: the seventh to ninth centuries and the ninth to eleventh centuries CE. She calls the earlier phase as the ‘pre-Pāla Brāhmaṇical style’, a style which was widely prevalent in the region.

Akṣayavāṭa (eleventh century CE), Pātāleśvara Mahādeva on Rāmaśilā hill (c. 1014 CE), Śaiva temple at Rāmagayā hill (ninth-tenth centuries CE).⁶⁰

The growing influence of Śaivism is also reflected in an inscription from Bodhgayā temple complex, which was dedicated by Kesava in the twenty-sixth regnal year of the Pāla king Dharmapāla. This inscription is incised on a lintel with representations of Śiva, Sūrya, Lakulīśa and Viṣṇu. The inscription reads:

In the pleasant Campaśāyatana, a four-faced Mahādeva was consecrated by the son of the sculptor Ujjavala, Keśava by name, for the (spiritual) benefit of the chief Mallas dwelling at Mahābodhi.⁶¹

To summarise, the above discussion of inscriptions, sculptures and archaeological sites suggests the dissemination of the *Pāśupata* Śaivism in the Bodhgayā region in the early medieval period, organised by *Pāśupatas* ascetics, who established Śaiva monasteries and shrines.⁶² Like Buddhist monks, they also received royal patronage from the Maukharis, Vardhanas and other dynasties. These developments led to the construction of numerous Śaiva shrines within a number of early historical settlements.

II.4 Analysis

The above discussion has demonstrated that the growth of Buddhism was accompanied by the emergence and spread of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in the Bodhgayā region during the early medieval period. This Buddhist growth is evidenced by epigraphic and sculptural remains and the construction of Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* and sculptures in numerous other shrines and monasteries. Simultaneously, Gayā was re-worked as a place of Vaiṣṇava *śrāddha* pilgrimage centre as Vaiṣṇavism cultivated a sizable social following. Similarly, *Pāśupata* Śaivism also gained substantial ground within the settlements.

The growth of these three different orders in the Bodhgayā region resulted in a new religious phenomenon. There were a number of Vaiṣṇava shrines that also

⁶⁰ Patil, *Antiquarian Remains*, pp. 128-143.

⁶¹ Huntington, *Pāla-Sena*, pp. 205-206. She has collected three different translations of the inscriptions.

⁶² The Bāngaḍh inscription mentions the construction of a Śaiva monastery whereas the Bhagalpur charter mentions a council of *Pāśupata* Śaiva teachers. Obviously, a council would exist in a monastery like contemporary Buddhist sites.

contained Śaiva sculptures like those of Umā-Maheśvara, Śiva-liṅga, and Gaṇeśa. Similarly, some Śaiva shrines also contained sculptures of Viṣṇu and Buddha such as Konch, and Kabar. Similarly, a number of Brāhmaṇical sculptures (Viṣṇu, Śiva, Mahākāla, Lakulīśa, Uma-Maheśvara) were found at the Mahābodhi temple complex and the Kurkihar monastery from the eighth century CE onwards. All over the region this phenomenon of Buddhist shrines intermingled with Hindu sculptures was observed, and all such mixtures of sculptures have been explained as a result of 'syncretism' (Fig. 5.3).

The 'syncretism' model, as widely argued in the Indian context, fails to explain the processes that led to the placing of sculptures of different deities within a single monument complex.⁶³ Presenting the placing of the Buddha along with other Hindu gods as syncretism also ignores the contextualised understanding of how this was brought about or what it meant to the religious communities, in this case, the Buddhist *saṅgha* or the other ascetic groups. By ignoring these communities, the workings of power and agency are obscured. It has to be kept in mind here that the *saṅgha* did play a role in the socio-political set up from time to time, and therefore, it is necessary to question the 'syncretic' model to explain 'synthesis' or factors responsible for the beginning of this new phenomenon, and the nature of interaction between these three orders in early medieval India.

The nature of interaction between Buddhism and the Brāhmaṇical orders in early medieval India is widely debated. Scholars such as G. Omvedt and L. M. Joshi, citing Xuanzang, point out the tension and competition between the existing religious orders in various regions of India in this period, particularly the challenges from the Brāhmaṇical orders. Omvedt further argues that the poor condition of Buddhist monasteries demonstrates the major setback suffered by Buddhism and the replacement of Buddhist *saṅgha* by forceful means of political conflict and religious repression by the Brāhmaṇical Hindu culture.⁶⁴ Similarly, other scholars argue for the use of political and violent persecution and subsequent appropriation of Buddhism by Vaiṣṇavism in various regions in this period.⁶⁵ On the other hand, scholars such as R.

⁶³ David Gellner, 'For Syncretism: The Position of Buddhism in Nepal and Japan Compared', in David Gellner, ed., *The Anthropology of Buddhism & Hinduism: Weberian Themes* (New Delhi, 2001), pp. 320-321.

⁶⁴ Omvedt, *Buddhism*, p. 153.

⁶⁵ Holt, *Buddhist Viṣṇu*, pp. 12- 15.

C. Mitra and Rama Chatterjee present a picture of religious harmony, of peaceful co-existence, and syncretism.⁶⁶ They also cite the charters and inscriptions of the patronage of Buddhism along with Brāhmaṇical orders by the kings of major dynasties from various regions. These two sets of explanations for the religious interactions of these orders are at two extremes and fail to explain the complex nature of interaction between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇical orders within the Bodhgayā region.

The fact that these three religious orders co-existed in the same geographical realm indicates that there must have been interaction between them. In the following section, therefore, in order to examine the nature of such interaction, the responses of each of these orders to the presence and influence of 'the other' will be examined by investigating the religious literature and the material remains from the region.

III. Inter-religious Dynamics: Buddhist Responses to the Brāhmaṇical challenges

The accounts of Xuanzang and Tārānāth suggest that Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism posed a serious challenge to Buddhism in the region. Xuanzang mentions the cutting of the Bodhi Tree and the replacement of the Buddha's image by that of the Maheśvara in the main Mahābodhi shrine on the orders of king Śaśāṅka in the early seventh century CE.⁶⁷ Similarly, Tārānāth specifically mentions three periods of hostility and repeatedly referred to the debates with the Śaivas.⁶⁸ According to his account, the eighty-four temples of the centres of Buddhism, including Nalanda, were destroyed

⁶⁶ R.C. Mitra, *The Decline of Buddhism in India* (Santi Niketan, 1954); see also Rama Chatterjee, 'Religion in Bengal during the Pāla and Sena Times', (Phd disst., Calcutta University, 1967).

⁶⁷ For the story of king Śaśāṅka and destruction of the Bodhi Tree and installation of a Śiva image within the chamber of the Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* particularly in the accounts of Xuanzang, see Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, pp. 346-349. Besides Xuanzang's account, the coins of the king Śaśāṅka bearing the image of Mahādeva or his mount Nandī seem to indicate support for Śaivism. The story, being a Buddhist account, narrates how the officer with the help of Buddhist laity had to construct a wall in the shrine-chamber of the *mahāvihāra* in front of the statue of the Buddha to save the replacement of the statue, which would have meant desecration of the shrine. Instead, an image of Maheśvara was drawn on the wall. Once the king heard this news and died because of his miserable act, the wall with Maheśvara imagery was removed. This story definitely indicates the growing importance of Śaivism in the region, though the king Śaśāṅka was presented as the principal actor in the story. This, being a Buddhist account, also maintains a diplomatic stance by avoiding any instance, which can actually prove desecration of the shrine or the statue of the Buddha.

⁶⁸ Lama Chimpa and A. Chattopdhyaya, trs., *Tārānāth's History of Buddhism in India* (Delhi, 1970) contents page. Chapters 16, 19 and 20 provide the episodes of hostilities. The story of Māṭrçeta is particularly interesting in this context. He was a follower of Mahādeva and vanquished many Buddhists in debates earlier. Finally, he was defeated by the Buddhists at Nalanda and went on to become a legendary teacher and composer. This story also indicates the prevailing hostility between the Buddhists in various regions such as Oḍiśā, Gaudā, Tirahuti and Magadha. See pp. 130-133.

by the miraculous fire produced by a *tīrthika* in the early medieval period.⁶⁹ A *tīrthika* may be explained as a Buddhist term for the ascetic-followers of non-Buddhist orders, and in this case refers to ascetics engaged in *Sūrya-sādhana*. These descriptions show a very close competition often leading to tensions and hostilities in this region.

However, in the historiography of the inter-religious dynamics, the emphasis has been on the appropriation of Buddhism by Vaiṣṇavism.⁷⁰ This has been studied within a peculiar narrative structure, in which the Buddhist agents have been considered as static/non-participating actors. The result of this is a tendency to negate the social context that Buddhist monastic establishments constituted and reconstituted at different times due to the development of new thought, currents and religious practices within Buddhism. The following sub-section will attempt to identify the responses of the Buddhists to check the growing influence of Brāhmaṇical orders, firstly Śaivism and later Vaiṣṇavism, as Buddhism pre-dates these two Brāhmaṇical orders in the region.

III.1 Buddhist Response to the Śaivism

The strategies devised by the Buddhist establishments in the Bodhgayā region to check the influence of their competitors were multifold. Xuanzang cites two instances of debate between the Brahmanical orders and the Buddhist monks, which form the background of the construction of the Guṇamati *vihāra* (identified at Dharawat) and Śilabhadra *vihāra* (identified at Kauwa-dol).⁷¹ In both the stories, the heretics, probably Śaivas, are defeated in debates by the Buddhist monks at Guṇamatī and Śilabhadra respectively. These victories lead to the appreciation of the wisdom and intellect of the Buddhist monks on the part of local kings, who then request that these two monks establish a monastery each. In fact, the kings also donate villages to support the sustenance of the new monastery. These two stories do not just indicate the fierce competition between the ascetics/monks of both these orders but also the stakes involved. A victory in debate ensured the establishment of new monasteries and land grants for their sustenance whereas a defeat led to the loss of face and no royal support for the Śaiva order. The fact that both these instances were noted by a

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

⁷⁰ Holt, *Buddhist Visnu*, p. 12.

⁷¹ Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, pp. 336-342.

Buddhist monk suggests the fierce competition. In fact we have to rely exclusively on the Buddhist texts in both cases as no Śaiva texts were produced in the Bodhgayā region which could be used to examine their claims. Nevertheless, given the reactions and active response of the Buddhists, one can easily comprehend the existing threads of tension.

The Buddhist response to the influential presence of Śaivism can also be read from another instance noted in the accounts of Xuanzang and Dharmāsvāmin. They both mention the story of the construction of the Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* by a follower of Maheśvara. According to the accounts, the small Aśokan shrine at Bodhgayā was reconstructed into the Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* (Mahābodhi temple) by two Śaiva Brāhmaṇas brothers who were guided by none other than the god Maheśvara himself, who instructed them to construct the *mahāvihāra* to acquire extensive religious merit in a superior field.⁷²

There is a meta-narrative within this account, which through its emphasis on the superiority of Buddhism is attempting to create a hierarchy to generate merit. At another level, it also emphasises the importance of the place of the Bodhi Tree in generating merit by donations and constructions at the site, which was much more beneficial than visiting abodes of Śiva. The achievement of the Brāhmaṇa's desire to become minister as narrated in the account signified the importance of merit generation for material gains or worldly ambitions within contemporary Buddhism. The story suggests a dialectical response of the Buddhist *saṅgha* which constructed this new model for including and converting the followers of Śaivism towards Buddhism. This model was necessitated because Śaivism was spreading fast into the region, also exhibited by the wider popularity of Umā-Maheśvara sculptures, Śivaliṅga and other Śaiva remains. In addition, the construction of the *mahāvihāra* (Mahābodhi temple) the most important shrine at the paradigmatic site, at the Bodhi Tree by a Śaiva convert, was meant to create a hierarchy amongst the existing religious orders. The enduring popularity of this legend is proved by its mention by Xuanzang and Dharmasvāmin, who visited Bodhgayā in the seventh and thirteenth centuries CE.

Another example of the tensions and Buddhist responses can be read from the concept of *Trailōkyavijaya* in the textual traditions and sculptures. The story of

⁷² Beal, *Si-Yu-Ki*, pp. 347-348.

Trailōkyavijaya is found in three texts of the Mantrayāna/Vajrayāna tradition: the *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha*, *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra*.⁷³ Of these texts, *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha*, the summary of All Tathāgata's Reality, was codified in the ninth-tenth century in Bihar.⁷⁴ Chapter six of this text, entitled *Trailōkyavijaya*, gives the story of the subjugation of the Śiva/Rudra by Heruka, a myth discussed in a number of secondary works. In a nutshell, the story narrates the emanation of one of the Bodhisattvas, Vajrapāṇi, as Heruka, who gets angry with Maheśvara and destroys him. Following on, Maheśvara accepts his defeat and submits to the Heruka. After the submission of Maheśvara, Heruka resurrects the Umā-Maheśvara couple as Buddhist followers, gives them the new name 'Bhairava-Bhairavi' and admits them into the Buddhist fold as powerful members. One particular paragraph from this story needs a detailed examination:

When Maheśvara heard Vajrapāṇi, he again became incensed and violent, displaying his form as Mahāraudra, saying, "I can endure death, but I will not do as you command!"

With that Vajrapāṇi uttered the appropriate mantras, and while the world laughed, Maheśvara and his consort, Umā, were both dragged stark naked feet first before Vajrapāṇi, who stepped on Maheśvara with his left foot, while standing on Umā's breast with his right. Then he uttered the mantra.... And Maheśvara started beating his own thousand heads with his own thousand arms, while all his minions outside the palace gave a great roar of laughter and said, "Look at our lord being disciplined by this great being!"⁷⁵

This stark description from an eighth-century text has also been depicted in sculptures from the south Bihar region. One particular depiction of the *Trailōkyavijaya* of the tenth century CE has been found in the *Mahant's* compound at Bodhgayā.⁷⁶

The *Trailōkyavijaya* sculptures have been interpreted in two ways. One set of scholars argue for their value in the sectarian conflict and Buddhist-Śaiva rivalry,

⁷³ R. M. Davidson, 'Reflections on the Maheśvara subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sa-skya-pa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka', *JIAS*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1991), pp. 197-234.

⁷⁴ Isshi Yamada, ed., *Sarva-Tathāgata-Tattva-Saṃgraha* (New Delhi, 1981), p. 5. Yamada writes that the manuscript is written in Brahmi-like script and according to the expert opinion of John Brough and David Snellgrove, this Sanskrit manuscript originated in ninth-tenth century Bihar.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

⁷⁶ Huntington, *Pāla-Senā*, p. 101. According to Huntington, these sculptures are very rare in the art of eastern India. Two stone pieces were also found at Nalanda apart from several small metal works, measuring approximately 20 Cms or less. This sculpture represents the conqueror of the three worlds, who is a Vidayarāja and belongs to the *Jina* family of Mañjuśrī.

whereas other scholars make a case for their importance in terms of esoteric Buddhism at metaphysical and soteriological level.⁷⁷ Leoshko, while indicating the esoteric practice at the site, has suggested a minor role for *Trailōkyavijaya* in the religious practice at Bodhgayā.⁷⁸

Linrothe has also emphasised the metaphysical importance of the sculptures, as these images were embedded in a rich context of Buddhist doctrines and texts. He has argued that these sculptures were not set up for the general public in temples and were shown only to converts. He further argues that these images were to be understood primarily within the framework of esoteric Buddhism, not Hindu-Buddhist rivalry though the latter may have been a secondary factor. But if the purpose of these sculptures was confined to esoteric practices, what was the need to emphasise this particular form, construct the image and then install the image in a temple complex with open access to everyone? Secondly, Linrothe's claim about the limited access to the *Trailōkyavijaya*'s sculpture cannot be proved.

Furthermore, the Buddhist conception was definitely disputatious, which is proved by the *dhāraṇī* used to subdue Maheśvara. In the *dhāraṇī*, *Trailōkyavijaya* calls on Śumbha and Niśumbha to advance and seize Maheśvara.⁷⁹ The two *asura* brothers – Śumbha and Niśumbha – are also part of the story of Cāmuṇḍā/Kālarātri, an emanation of Umā. In this story, these two *asura* brothers are killed by the Śiva's consort, Cāmuṇḍā/Kālarātri emanation of Umā. However, in this Buddhist story, they are called upon by the Vajrapāṇi to subdue Maheśvara. This turned the legend upside down to prove a Buddhist point instead, at the same time showing the Buddhist condemnation of the legend. Therefore, the concept of *Trailōkyavijaya* needs to be grasped as signalling an eristical relation and dialectical response of the Buddhist *saṅgha*. This response is reflected in the second part of the account:

Then Vairocana, taking pity on Maheśvara and the touch of Vajrapāṇi's feet, became the consecration which allowed him to attain the level of *Tathāgata*. Abandoning his form of Mahādeva, Maheśvara passed beyond

⁷⁷ See Rob Linrothe, 'Beyond Sectarianism: Towards reinterpreting The Iconography of Esoteric Buddhist Deities Trampling on Hindu Gods', in B. P. Parishad, *Art, Archaeology and Culture of Eastern India* (Patna, 1999). Linrothe has also referred to the scholars arguing for sectarian conflict and has proposed another interpretation of these sculptures.

⁷⁸ Leoshko, 'Iconography', p. 265, 280. See also footnote 138, p. 265.

⁷⁹ These two *asuras* are seemingly represented as the shadowy demons on the backdrop of the *Trailōkyavijaya* fragment in the Nalanda museum. One attacks Maheśvara whereas the other threatens Umā. See Linrothe, 'Beyond', p. 198, see footnote details 23.

countless world systems and was reborn into the world known as Bhasmācchanna as the Tathāgata Bhasmeśvara-nirghoṣa.

At that point, Vajrapāṇi, commanded all the other gods, 'Friends, enter into the great circle of the adamantine assembly of all Tathāgatas and protect that assembly!' And they replied in assent, 'As you inform us, so we will perform!' Then all the gods and goddesses - Maheśvara, Umā, and the others - were given new names and positions in the mystic circle.⁸⁰

After his submission, Maheśvara is given a new name and admitted into the Buddhist fold as a powerful protector. Therefore, the tension and conflict, as reflected in the trampling figures, remains the first step towards a final inclusion/appropriation within the Buddha fold. Hence, Davidson's argument that at the socio-historical level, we should understand the Maheśvara myth in the *Tattvasaṃgraha* as a straightforward defensive technique of the Buddhists to establish the superiority of their gods over Maheśvara, Brahmā, Viṣṇu is much more agreeable and seems to represent historical reality more accurately.⁸¹ On the other hand, a dialogical analysis suggests this is also an aggressive technique employed by the Buddhist *saṅgha* to challenge the growing influence of Śaivism in the region. This technique unfolds when Śiva is included within the Buddhist pantheon as a minor deity.

The inclusion of Śiva is also revealed by the installation of a four-faced Mahādeva in the Mahābodhi complex, mentioned in an inscription dated to the twenty-sixth regnal year of the Pāla king Dharampāla (c. 775-812). The inscription was found on a lintel with representations of Sūrya, Lakuliśa and Viṣṇu. The inscription clearly mentions:

In the pleasant Campaśāyatana, a four-faced Mahādeva was consecrated by the son of the sculptor Ujjavala, Keśava by name, for the (spiritual) benefit of the chief Mallas dwelling at Mahābodhī. A very deep tank, sacred as the Ganges (born of the feet of Viṣṇu) was also excavated by him at a cost of three thousand dramas.⁸²

Studies have failed to analyse the inscription's context or its implications for the Buddhist-Śaiva relations. Why did the monastic centre at Bodhgayā allow the installation of a four-faced Mahādeva and a lintel with other Brāhmaṇical gods within

⁸⁰ Davidson, *Reflections*, p. 207.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁸² Huntington, *Pāla-Senā*, pp. 205-206. She has collected all three different translations of the inscriptions.

the Mahābodhi complex? This question can only be answered by a dialogical and contextual reading of the inscription. Such a reading suggests that the Buddhist *saṅgha* attempted to appropriate Śiva and Śaivism within their order to counter the growing influence of Śaivism in the region. The installation of the panel also suggests that these responses were widely practised at the ground/local level. In fact, they also installed the statues of Umā-Maheśvara within the Buddhist shrines to prove their superiority. This is duly reflected in the reporting of Umā-Maheśvara sculptures from every Buddhist monastic site. It also demonstrated the conscious involvement of monks at major and minor monastic centres in initiating and regulating the installation of Umā-Maheśvara sculptures within the Buddhist shrines. The Buddhist order, therefore, actively competed and responded to the challenges from Śaivism in the region, a pattern also manifested in their interaction with the Vaiṣṇava order.

III.2 Buddhist Response to Vaisnavism

The Buddhist reaction to Vaiṣṇavism was very similar to its response to Śaivism. The responses can be examined from the claims made in some of the texts such as Sāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, *Bhūtaḍamara*, and *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* as well as the sculptural and epigraphic remains from monastic sites. The above-mentioned texts were composed in the south Bihar region during this period.⁸³

The Buddhist texts such as *Bhūtaḍamara* and *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* show existing tensions and attempts to appropriate Viṣṇu. In the text *Bhūtaḍamara*, Vajrapāṇi, at the request of Śiva, instantly slaughters all the other gods (Indra, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and other deities). Later, he revives them with an enormous passing of gas from his anus: a hilarious transformation of the gods into an object of farce. Davidson rightly opines here that taking such statements as necessarily metaphorical is a questionable position.⁸⁴ This is a clear attempt to humiliate the Brāhmaṇical gods including the Viṣṇu. Indeed, later they are incorporated within the Buddhist pantheon as minor deities.

In a similar context, the account of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is quite useful as it states that Viṣṇu and Śiva are merely the *upāya*-bodies of Mañjuśrī functioning to

⁸³ Sāntideva lived between *circa* 685 and 763 CE. He was also based at Nalanda. The institution of *sattra* was well known to the Buddhists in the early Pāla period.

⁸⁴ R. M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism* (Delhi, 2004), p. 333.

start people on the path.⁸⁵ This is again an attempt to appropriate and include Brāhmaṇical gods within the Buddhist pantheon. Another attempt can be read from the appropriation and redefinition of a Vaiṣṇava practice. The Bodhisattva is described as a *satrapati* in Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.⁸⁶ The institution of *sattra* was a charity house attached to the Viṣṇu temples. And Viṣṇu as *satrapati* was established in the Gupta period.⁸⁷ The Buddhist attempt to appropriate this term and redefine the Bodhisattva as a *satrapati*, pictured as the embodiment of perfect compassion in Śāntideva, may be read as a contest about who has the most worthy *sattra*, and thus who gets the most merit.⁸⁸

The appropriation of Viṣṇu within the Buddhist order is also manifested in the installation of a lintel panel with depictions of Viṣṇu, Lakulīśa, Sūrya and a four-faced Mahādeva within the Mahābodhi shrine in the eighth century CE. Similarly, three Viṣṇu sculptures (dated to the eighth and ninth centuries CE) found within the Mahābodhi complex also indicate the attempt to accommodate Viṣṇu within the Buddhist shrine and hence pantheon, as with other Brāhmaṇical gods. Similar attempts can also be read in the inscribed sculptural donations at Kurkihar. According to the inscriptions, the Āpaṇaka *mahāvihāra* at Kurkihar accepted an image of Viṣṇu, donated by a cobbler Tiyaśhache of Thisavī in the ninth century CE.⁸⁹ There are three more instances of such donations of images of non-Buddhist gods by the Buddhist monasteries at Kurkihar: a ninth-century Balrāma; a tenth-century Nāga; and another tenth century Umā-Maheśvara.⁹⁰ The question is why a Buddhist monastery should accept donations of images of Brāhmaṇical/Hindu deities? The answer lies in the dialogical analysis of the inscriptions and sculptural donations, which suggests that these were strategies employed by the Buddhist monasteries to counter the increasing influence of Vaiṣṇavism by including them within their own fold.

⁸⁵ See Linrothe, *Beyond*, p. 194.

⁸⁶ K. Crosby and A. Skilton, *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Oxford: 1995), I.36, p. 29.

⁸⁷ For details on the institution of *Sattra* and its emergence in the Gupta period, see Michael D. Willis, *The Archaeology of Early Hindu Ritual: Temples and the Establishment of Gods* (Cambridge, 2009, forthcoming).

⁸⁸ A similar case has been dealt in section II.3 while discussing the emergence of Śaivism in the region. The discussion is based on the account of Xuanzang about the construction of Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* by a Śaiva follower.

⁸⁹ Huntington, *Pāla-Senā*, p. 211. The inscription is no.16a on the list and the sculpture is presently kept in the Gayā museum.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 208, 213 & 216. Inscription numbers are 10, 20 and 23.

III.3 Discussion

The Buddhist responses to competition from the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva orders were not a simplistic or straightforward process of appropriation within the Buddhist order. This was instead a long drawn-out and complex process. In order to appropriate the Brāhmaṇical gods and justify this act, the Buddhist order had to redefine its existing tradition (and metaphysical position). To explain the 'redefined Buddhist tradition' as a result of interaction with two other orders, I intend to draw from R. Inden's usage of Collingwood's idea of 'a scale of forms' in his study of the *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*, which he uses to explain the process of formation of this text. Inden argues that the complex authors of this text redefined Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavism and re-worked the other existing religious traditions to accommodate them within the redefined Pāñcarātra framework in the seventh-eighth centuries CE in Kashmir. By employing the idea of 'a scale of forms', he demonstrates and provides a succinct discussion of the multiple layers (and voices) that were redefined and coalesced to formulate the text *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*.⁹¹

Studying the overlapping agents within the scale of forms helps clarify all the discourses (or contents) within a text/tradition. These discourses are connected by various relations, not only opposition but also of distinction, by differences not only of kind but also of degree. Although these overlapping portions within a text (or tradition) may belong to heterogeneous traditions, nevertheless, the agent (as an author or reader), may try to reduce this heterogeneity to a coherence by means of a dialectical process of reworking of materials through discussions, arguments, debates, or by using lies, threats, deceptions, and misstatements in case of eristical relations.

Articulating this coherence in a scale of forms is an ongoing process, which is dependent on the existing situation and context, and which may explain the 'redefined Buddhist tradition' in an effective way, including Viṣṇu, Śiva and other Brāhmaṇical gods apart from the Buddhist ones. It also reworked some of the existing Vaiṣṇava practices, one example being the institution of *sattra*, and incorporated them within the Buddhist fold, which involved multiple layers of action. Firstly, the *saṅgha*

⁹¹ I have relied here on Ronald Inden's discussion of 'a scale of forms'. Inden has discussed and succinctly summed up Collingwood's idea of a scale of forms. He has also effectively employed this framework to analyse the text *Viṣṇudharmottarapurāṇa*. For details, see Ronald Inden, J.S. Walters and Daud Ali, *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*, (Oxford: 2000), pp. 29-98.

questioned the existence of these Brāhmaṇical gods and the utility of worshipping them. Secondly, it degraded and insulted them by considering them the source of all evils, and often had them killed by a minor Buddhist deity. And lastly, a Buddhist deity would then revive them, and accord them a respectable position within their own pantheon. Individually these strategies potentially were very different or even at cross purposes, but together they reveal more complex negotiations. These three layers are apparent in the above discussion of Buddhist responses in the previous sections.

These layers are also visible in a Buddhist *dhāraṇī* text, *Āryatahāgatoṣṇīṣasītatapatre aparājītamahāpratya-gīraparamasiddhanāma dhāraṇī*.⁹² This *dhāraṇī* was composed and written in the eighth century south Bihar region, which later travelled to the Tibet and was translated. The *dhāraṇī* texts were generally meant for the general laity and widely circulated. This text mentions that this *dhāraṇī* was to be written on cloth or birch-bark and suspended on the body or the neck, or recited to ward off all diseases and harm. In this text, Brāhmaṇical gods such as Garuḍa, Skanda, the Mātṛkās, Revatī, Yamarāja and others are represented as causes of all kinds of fears, diseases, troubles, monsoon failures, earthquakes, premature deaths, and other ills. This attempt to portray Brāhmaṇical gods as the source of evil reveals the first two layers/strategies in suggesting the reasons why people worship such gods. However, the text also invokes suggesting Brāhmaṇical gods such as Rudra, Umā, Mahākāla, Brahmā, Indra, and many others after first appealing to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas for helping people get rid of these problems. This then manifests the third layer, as these gods are worshipped along with the Buddhist gods. These three layers reveal the Buddhist reworking of Brāhmaṇical gods as new 'Buddhist' gods as well as new adjustments within their own order/tradition. These represent the juxtaposition of conflicting strategies, which were employed by the *saṅgha* to redefine their order.

By using the idea of 'a scale of forms', we may examine the Buddhist tradition and religious practices (as they evolved) in the Bodhgayā region. In this way, one can see the Buddha at the apex of a newly reconstituted 'inclusive' Buddhist order. Śiva and Viṣṇu, like other Brāhmaṇical gods, are part of this order, though at a much lower position (in terms of ritual power and ability). This is further demonstrated by the

⁹² T. Skorupski, *A Catalogue of the stoa Palace Kanjur, Bibliographia Philologica Buddhica, Series Maior IV* (Tokyo: 1985), p. 270.

above-cited *dhāriṇī* text *Āryatathāgatoṣṇīṣasītatapatre aparajītamahāpratyagīraparamasiddhanāma dhāraṇī*. The text begins by invoking the Buddha, who is followed by the Bodhisattvas and minor Buddhist deities and lastly, invokes Śiva and Viṣṇu along with other Brāhmaṇical gods. The lower position of Brāhmaṇical deities is also manifested in the way the Brāhmaṇical statues and sculptures were placed in relation to the central shrine within a Buddhist complex. For example, the central Buddhist shrine at the Kauwa-dol, a Buddhist monastic site, contained a sculpture of the Buddha, and was surrounded on three sides by rock-cut sculptures of Brāhmaṇical deities. Similarly, other monastic sites also contained sculptures of Viṣṇu and Umā-Maheśvara in subsidiary shrines within a Buddhist complex. Therefore, the idea of scale of forms provides a useful framework for the historical process that resulted in the presence of sculptures of the Viṣṇu, Umā-Maheśvara and other Brāhmaṇical gods at the Buddhist monasteries and shrines. Other examples include Kespa, Amethi, Guneri, and Dharawat – all of which contained a major Buddhist shrine with a number of Umā-Maheśvara and Viṣṇu sculptures.

The idea of the ‘scale of forms’ also explains the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva responses to each other. The prominent Śaiva shrine in the region, Konch, included sculptures of Viṣṇu and a *daśavatāra* panel within its precincts. Similarly, the Vaiṣṇava response to the growing importance of Śaivism can be read into the establishment of minor Śaiva shrines or the placing of Śaiva sculptures within the Vaiṣṇava shrines in the region. This is also emphasised in the accounts of the *GM*, which argues for establishing a number of places associated with Śiva within Gayā’s sacred area to include and subsume Śaivism within the Vaiṣṇava order. For example, the footprint of Śiva is also imprinted in the Gayāsūra legend. The last verse of the seventh chapter of the *GM* affirms this idea: ‘Since in the kali-age (*yuga*) the people were Maheśvarites, Gadādhara took on the form of a *liṅga* and became him. I praise the Śrī Prapitāmaha (temple).’⁹³ Another verse in the text mentions that the Visnu takes the form of Kedārnāth and Phalgunāth, epithets that were used for Śiva. These two examples show how the *liṅga* and other popular forms of the Śiva were subsumed within the Vaiṣṇava order in a hierarchical ‘scale of forms’ at Gayā. This is doctrinally justified by a number of verses in the *GM* which hint at the supremacy of

⁹³ *GM* VII. 96.

Viṣṇu by indicating the presence of Śiva in a subordinate position.⁹⁴ In contrast to this, the *GM* maintains a complete silence on Buddhism. Nor do we see any Buddhist sculpture in the Vaiṣṇava shrines. In fact, in the three Viṣṇu-*daśāvatāra* sculptural panels, the Buddha is replaced by Balarāma. This silence in text and exclusion in practices along with active Buddhist responses suggest the dominance of Buddhism in the region, particularly between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE, which will be taken up in the following section.

IV. Early Medieval State and Inter-Religious Dynamics

The dominance of Buddhism is represented by the massive growth of Buddhist monasteries and shrines as well as their aggressive strategy of hierarchic inclusion in the region. The question then is how did Buddhism manage to negotiate this dominance, which helped them appropriate the Brāhmaṇical gods within their order? What was the role of the early medieval polity in the inter-religious dynamics? Did the contemporary political powers in any way help the Buddhist *saṅgha* in negotiating their superior position in the Magadha region? To answer these questions, one has to examine the history of the larger south Bihar region during this period, specifically the religio-political dynamics at the regional imperial centre and its role in shaping the religious tradition of the region. Particularly relevant in this context is the role of the Pāla kings between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE, whose commitments towards Buddhism seems to have played some role in the inter-religious dynamics of their time. Therefore, the following section will attempt to examine the religio-political factors during the reign of the Pāla Kings in the south Bihar region and their affiliations with Buddhism. This link between the Pāla kings and Buddhism remains inadequately explained and hence requires a critical examination.

Inden argues that the religio-political order is negotiated through the actions of royalty in an ordered and symbolic fashion. After all, the *dharma* that a king was supposed to establish in early medieval India was not a vague notion of rightness among people or a shared sentiment of goodness or propriety. It was a very specific ordering of people, places, and things - an ensemble of relationships. The major object of an ordinary king with respect to this order was to establish the proper hierarchic

⁹⁴ *GM* has a number of instances in which Viṣṇu is the only one of capable of resolving a crisis.

relationships of the constituents of his domain as a kingdom.⁹⁵ The highest level in this hierarchy was itself a hierarchy of gods. Considering the existence of many religious orders in this period and their claims for superiority, the king alone was considered able to determine which of the contending *dharma* (worldly ordering) of his time was truest for them and accord it the precedence it deserved. Though the independent king was not the master of special knowledge, he still was a 'supreme master of knowledge' (*paramabhaṭṭarka*) in general.⁹⁶ Following a long established precedent dating from the Gupta times, the Pāla kings are also represented (and called) as a *paramabhaṭṭarka* in their royal charters, which meant that they also chose the truest *dharma* and established a hierarchy of religious orders to construct religio-political order within their domain. And they chose Buddhism, a fact which is reflected in their adoption of the Buddhist symbols and their subsequent involvement with Buddhism.

IV.1 The Buddhist Affiliation of the Pāla Kings

In the historiography, the Pāla kings are represented as 'secular' kings with no preferred religious order.⁹⁷ Readings of the Pāla inscriptions have led scholars to focus either on the intent of the grant or other factual details, mostly linked to political and economic history. These readings have failed to analyse the repeated symbolic and other royal statements, made in the Pāla charters. An analysis of the royal charters suggests the Pāla's preference for Buddhism and that they centred their religio-political order on the Buddhist ideals.⁹⁸

The royal symbol adopted by the Pālas was the device of the *dharmacakra*, turning the wheel of law with one antelope on each side. This memorialised the deer park at Sarnath, emphasising the importance of the event of first sermon as well the sermon itself. The royal copper plate charters (*praśasti*) of the Pāla kings use titles which provide another set of evidence. Every king is termed as a *paramasaugata* (supreme follower of the Saugata/ the Buddha). This epithet *paramasaugata* is

⁹⁵ R. Inden, 'The Temple and the Hindu Chain of Being', in R. Inden with an Introduction by Daud Ali, ed., *Text and Practice* (New Delhi, 2006), p. 199.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁹⁷ Rama Chatterjee, 'Religion in Bengal'.

⁹⁸ Though not the primary concern here, why they chose Buddhism is not difficult to guess, considering the strong presence of Buddhism in the south Bihar region, where the early Pāla kings established their rule and constructed their capital, Sri Mugdagiri (Munger).

emphasised in every royal charter from the first to the last Pāla king. The repeated use of this term categorically reflected that the Pāla kings conceived of themselves as Buddhists and followed Buddhist ideals.

In fact, the adoration of the Buddha is uniformly present in the benedictions of these charters. I will cite an example from a charter, 'may the ten powers of *Vajrāsana*, who has firmly attained, as to fortune, to omniscience, (those powers) which, cherished by his consort – great compassion, conquer the regions where many hosts of the Evil one are seen, protect you.' The first verse of this Mirzapur grant of Śūrapāla, a grant for the Śaivas at the request of the Queen Mother, hails the victory of the *Sarvārthsiddha-Jinavara* (the Buddha). Despite being a grant for the Śaiva followers, the charter began by invoking and hailing the Buddha. The question then is: why didn't the grant invoke Śiva. The answer lies in the fact that the Pāla kings probably were followers of Buddhism. This is further elucidated by another example.

This verse from the Bhāgalpur grant of the Nārāyaṇapāla has been quoted verbatim in every Pāla charter that was issued after him.⁹⁹

Om Hail! Victory to the illustrious Gopāla-dēva, who with his heart gladdened by the jewel of compassion, held love (for his subjects) higher (than any other thing), who had washed away the mud of ignorance (of the people) by the pure water of the stream of his perfect understanding and knowledge, who had ordained perfect peace (for his kingdom) by defeating the attacks (of princes) who were led by (their own) passions, (and who therefore was) like another *Daśabala* (Buddha), who with his heart expanded by the jewel of compassion held *Maitrī* to be dearer than others, who washed away the mud of ignorance by the pure water of the stream of knowledge of the perfect enlightenment, (and) who had obtained eternal peace by having defeated the attacks made by the *Kāmaka* foe (Māra) (*Kāmakariprabhavamabhibhavam*).

The emphasis on love (*maitrī*) compassion (*karuṇa*) joy (*mudita*) and indifference (*upekkhā*) is noticeable in the above verse, which indicates the adoption of Mahāyāna ideals by the Pāla Kings. Similarly, a graphic description of the Buddha's enlightenment at the Bodhi tree, and his struggle to defeat Māra are repeatedly emphasised. The use of terms such as *Samyak-Sambodhi* (Munger grant of Devapāla), and *Vajrāsana* (Khalimpur grant of Dharmapāla) were equally important reminders of the Buddhist ideal as well as of the importance of Bodhgayā. The above examples

⁹⁹ E. Hultzsch, 'The Bhāgalpur Plate of Nārāyaṇapāla' *IA*, vol. 15 (1886), p. 307.

clearly attest the Pāla preference for Buddhism and Mahāyāna ideals. But, how did the Pālas construct a religio-political order based on Buddhism?

IV.2 Pāla Patronage to Buddhism

This section will examine the Pāla's patronage of the order and their paramount commitment to Buddhism, by studying the politico-religious actions of the Pāla kings based on the epigraphic, textual and other available sources. This section draws from the information provided in the account of Tārānāth, who was not a contemporary witness and wrote his account in the sixteenth century. He, being a Buddhist monk from a major monastic tradition, probably had access to a number of Buddhist texts from the south Bihar region, and therefore provides a detailed account of the history of the region. Nevertheless, his account provides us with numerous details, which needs to be carefully examined and substantiated with other available sources.

Gopāla I, the founder of the dynasty, built a new city Odantpuri, present day Bihar-sharif in the close neighbourhood of Nalanda. In this city, he also established the Srī Odantapuri *vihāra* with a large temple and four large colleges.¹⁰⁰ In fact, Tārānāth attributed Gopāla I with the establishment of several monasteries in the Magadha and praised him for his extensive service to the order.

The next Pāla king Dharmapāla, in addition to giving a grant to the Nalanda *mahāvihāra*, also established two major centres of Buddhist culture – the Vikramaśilā *vihāra* in the Bhagalpur district and the Somapura *vihāra* at Pahārpur. Tārānāth praises the contribution of Dharmapāla: 'This king built in all about fifty centres for the Doctrine, of which thirty-five were centres for the study of the Prajñā-pāramitā. He also built the Srī Vikramaśilā *vihāra*.'¹⁰¹ The construction of the Vikramaśilā *mahāvihāra* by Dharmapāla is also supported by other literary sources such as the commentary of Jinamitra on the *Śragdhara stotra* of Sarvajñāmitra where the colophon mentions '*Śrīmad Vikramaśiladeva mahāvihārāya*'.¹⁰² Yet another supporting piece of evidence comes from the manuscript of *Aṣṭasahasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā* copied in the reign of Gopāla II, where the name of Vikramaśilā

¹⁰⁰ Tārānāth has attributed the construction of the Nalendra *vihāra* near Odantpuri to Gopāla I. See Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tārānāth*, p. 258, also Rama Chatterjee, 'Religion in Bengal', p. 318.

¹⁰¹ Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tārānāth*, p. 274.

¹⁰² Rama Chatterjee, 'Religion in Bengal', p. 316.

mahāvihāra is termed as *Vikramaśīladeva vihāra*. These references confirm that Dharmapāla wore the title of Vikramaśīladeva.¹⁰³

The construction of the Somapuri *vihāra* by Dharmapāla is attested by the evidence of inscribed terracotta seals, which mention *Śrī-Somapura- Śrī-Dharmapāladeva- Mahāvihāriya- Āryabhikṣu-saṅghasya* and *Dharmapālamahāvihāra*.¹⁰⁴ This means that 'the great *vihāra* of Somapura built by Dharmapāla is to be possessed by the community of monks'. The other monasteries attributed to the Dharmapāla were the Vikramapurī monastery in Vikramapura in eastern Bengal and Traikuṭa monastery.¹⁰⁵

Dharmapāla was succeeded by Devapāla, to whom the construction of Vikramaśīlā, Somapura and Śrī-Trikaṭuka *vihāra* has also been attributed. However, it is now established that the Vikramaśīlā and Somapura monasteries were established by his predecessor. The Jagjībanpur plate of Mahendrapāla also mentions construction of a temple for *Saugata* and *Gaurī* by Devapāla.¹⁰⁶ The Mirzapur plate of Śurapāla represents the Pāla monarch Devapāla not only as the conqueror of the earth but also as one who built a temple of gold (i.e. covered with gold plating) for the *Jinā* (Buddha).¹⁰⁷ However, the inscription does not mention the place of the temple. It is likely that the temple was either in his capital city or at Vikramaśīlā, where the royal family was directly involved. Besides, his grant of villages and construction of a monastery at the Nalanda *mahāvihāra*, on the request of king Bālaputradeva from Suvarṇadvīpa, also reflected his commitment.

The Jagjībanpur plate of Mahendrapāla confirms that he established a monastery known as Nandidīrghika-*vihāra* in Kundālakhātaka-*viṣaya* in Puṇḍravardhana *bhukti*.¹⁰⁸ The details of the grant were recorded in the charter, and the construction of a monastic site has been confirmed following excavation. Another

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 315. See, Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tārānāth*, pp. 266-267. Though Tārānāth attributes the construction of Somapuri *mahāvihāra* to Devapāla, the inscribed seals from the site have proved beyond doubt its construction by Dharmapāla. Tārānāth's account is also inconsistent as it places Devapāla before Dharmapāla, which is now established based on a number of inscriptional and other evidence. Therefore, one has to be careful in the examination of the claims made by Tārānāth and substantiate it with other available sources.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

¹⁰⁶ *EI* 42 (1977-78), no. 2, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Sircar, *Surāpāla*, pp. 135-136, verses 11-12. The term used in the inscription is Jina-āyatana.

¹⁰⁸ *EI* 42 (1977-78), no. 2, p. 26.

Pāla king, Rājyapāla, also constructed a monastery at the Vikarmaśilā *mahāvihāra*, which was documented in a later inscription.¹⁰⁹ Yet another Pāla king Mahipāla I, probably Mahāpāla from Tārānāth's account, also was a Buddhist patron. Tārānāth mentions him as a worshipper of the *Śrāvaka sangha* in the Odantapuri *vihāra* and provides a detailed account of his activity:

He maintained at Odantapuri five hundred *bhikṣhu-s* and fifty preachers of the Doctrine. As an annexe to this (*vihāra*), he built a *vihāra* called Uruvāsa. Here also he provided five hundred Śrāvaka-senḍhavas (followers of Hinayāna) with livelihood. Though allowing Vikarmaśilā to retain its previous position, he made this the centre of great veneration. He established some centres for the Doctrine also in Śrī Nalendra (Nalanda) and many centres for the Doctrine also in Somapuri, Nalendra and Trikaṭuka monasteries.¹¹⁰

King Mahipāla is described as a *Paramasaugata* in both his royal charters – Bangadh and Belwa.¹¹¹ Two members of the Pāla royal family Sthirapāla and Vesantapāla took ordination as Buddhist monks in the reign of Mahipāla I.¹¹² The epithet for them in the inscription is '*saphalakṛita paṇḍitau vodha-vadhanivarttinau*'. This means that following the path of supreme knowledge they attained success because they never turned back to the way of austerity out of fear or trouble in acquisition of *Sambodhi*.¹¹³

Another major king of the Pāla dynasty, Rāmapāla, constructed the capital city of Śrī-Rāmāvati.¹¹⁴ He also established Jagaddala *vihāra* in this city, dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. An image of the god with Mahal-Tāra was installed in the monastery by the king himself.¹¹⁵ Tārānāth also provides a detailed account of his involvement with Buddhism: 'Shortly after Rāmapāl became the king, the great *ācārya* Abhayakaragupta was invited to act as the *upādhyāya* of *Vajrāsana* (Bodhgayā). And

¹⁰⁹ D. C. Sircar, 'Three East Indian Inscriptions of the Early Medieval Period', *JIAH*, vol. 1 & 2 (1971-72), pp. 39-59.

¹¹⁰ Chimpa & Chattopadhyaya, *Tārānāth's*, p. 289.

¹¹¹ For Belwa plates, see *EI* 29 (1951-52), no. 1, p. 7. For Bangadh plates, see *EI* 14 (1917-18), no. 23, p. 327.

¹¹² E. Hultzsch, *The Sārnāth Inscription of Mahipāla*, *IA*, vol. 14 (1885), p. 140.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹¹⁴ Shastri, *Ramacarita*, III.29.B. Rāmpāla constructed this capital city of Rāmavati, after recovering the lost parts of the Pāla kingdom from the local tribal chief, Bhīma. A detailed account of the loss and subsequent recovery of the Pāla kingdom is narrated in the *Ramacarita* of Sandhyākara Nandi, a minister at his court.

¹¹⁵ Rama Chatterjee, 'Religion in Bengal', p. 319.

the king also provided resources for the maintenance of forty Mahāyāna followers and two hundred Śrāvaka *bhikṣu-s* at *Vajrāsana*.¹¹⁶ Considering that Dharmasvāmin mentioned the existence of twelve monasteries at Bodhgayā at Bodhgayā in c. 1235 CE, this account seems fairly plausible. The above cited evidence attests the Buddhist affiliation of the Rāmapāla as well as his involvement with Buddhist institutions. In addition, the installation and consecration of the Buddhist *vihāra* and shrine in his newly established capital city suggested the preferred order of the king, in tune with the dynastic policy. All the above examples indicate Pāla patronage of and preference for Buddhism, irrespective of their grants to the other orders.

IV.3 Discussion

The above discussion has demonstrated the direct involvement of the Pāla kings in the construction, reconstruction, addition, and maintenance of Buddhist institutions for almost four centuries. The question, then, is why did they choose Buddhist symbols and construct new monasteries or temples. As Inden has argued, the institution of a temple was something no ordinary king could do because it was an act that presupposed the successful conquest of the quarters. Indeed, the construction of a temple was the crowning glory of a king's conquest of the quarters, the act that completed it. Only a king who had made himself a lord of other kings, who had established the kings around him into a proper hierarchy, was competent to serve the cosmic overlord by erecting his image in a great temple and instituting his liturgy there.¹¹⁷ This argument of Inden provides a framework within which we can analyse the Pāla constructions of Buddhist monasteries and temples.

The reign of Dharmapāla saw the regional expansion and consolidation of Pāla power in the Bihar and Bengal regions. The king established three monasteries in the heartland of Pāla power which were a big financial drain both for him as a new ruler and for his successors as well. It meant that he had to ensure the availability of resources through grants. Despite this, Dharmapāla established and supported these three monasteries in his kingdom, a policy which was also followed by his successors. These constructions cannot merely be viewed as isolated instances of religious faith,

¹¹⁶ Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya, *Tārānāth*, p. 313. However, the account also mentions the large number of monks during ritual congregations and occasional offerings.

¹¹⁷ R. Inden, 'Hierarchies of Kings in Early Medieval India', in R. Inden with an Introduction by Daud Ali, *Text and Practice* (New Delhi, 2006), p. 156.

but rather must be analysed in a larger frame of interaction between the political establishment and the *saṅgha* during the time of Dharmapāla.

Tārānāth particularly mentions that the monk Buddhajñānapāda became the preceptor of the king Dharmapāla. He also mentions that Buddhajñānapāda also consecrated the Vikramaśilā *mahāvihāra* and was appointed the *Vajrācārya* (chief abbot) there later. Reading between the lines of Tārānāth's account, it is apparent that this monastery was constructed on the advice of the royal preceptor with a specific purpose, which is reflected in the constructional pattern of the *mahāvihāra*:

It was built in the north of Magadha on the bank of the Ganga on the top of a hillock. The central temple in it had a human-size statue of the Mahābodhi. Around it, there were fifty-three smaller temples of *Guhya-Tantra* and fifty-four common temples. Thus he built the monastery with a total of one hundred and eight temples and the boundary walls. He lavishly provided with food and clothes one hundred and fourteen persons, namely one hundred and eight paṇḍita-s and the Bali-ācārya, Pratiṣṭhāna-ācārya, homa-ācārya, Mūṣika-pāla, Kapota-pāla and the supervisor of the *deva-dāsa-s*. For each of them he made provisions that were sufficient for four. Every month he organised a festival for those who listened to the doctrine, and also made excellent gifts to them.

The account hints at a number of developments during the time of Dharmapāla. Firstly, the king constructed a huge Buddhist *mahāvihāra* next to his capital city of Sri Mugdāgiri. Secondly, the *mahāvihāra* was constructed on the advice of his royal preceptor, Buddhajñānapāda, who was also appointed as its head. And lastly, within this *mahāvihāra* complex, the prime importance was accorded to the central shrine of the Buddha (Mahābodhi), which was surrounded by fifty-three Buddhist *tantra* temples and fifty-three other temples.

Relevant at this point is Inden's argument that the establishment of a temple in the capital city by a king was not simply an act of piety or a gesture of ecumenical patronage. In fact, it was an integral part of the paramount king's efforts to fashion a new chain of being, one that stretched out below him on the earth and reached up into the heaven above.¹¹⁸ Therefore, Dharmapāla's construction of this monastery and temple next to his imperial capital indicates his attempt to establish himself as a paramount king, who was capable of establishing a new imperial capital as well as a new religious monument (*mahāvihāra*/temple). This policy had a precedent as Gopāla

¹¹⁸ Inden, 'The Temple and the Hindu Chain of Being', pp. 198-199.

I had also constructed a large monastery inside his new capital at Odantapuri. This policy of Gopāla I and Dharmapāla was also followed by the Rāmapāla, who constructed Jagaddala *vihāra* at his newly established capital Rāmāvātī. These three examples reflect an attempt by the Pāla kings to centre their political order on Buddhism.

The fact that all three kings constructed a *mahāvihāra* in their capital also indicate the presence of Buddhist preceptors at their courts who played a major role in the planning, construction and installation of these monasteries, demonstrating their involvement with the royal family and the court. Tārānāth provided us with the names of the preceptors of Dharmapāla and Rāmapāla but unfortunately, we do not have any reference to the preceptor of Gopāla I.

Lastly, the prime shrine at the Vikramaśilā *mahāvihāra* was surrounded by fifty-three *tantra* temples on one side and fifty-four common temples on the other, suggesting a hierarchy at work in the planning and construction of the complex. It is noteworthy that these common temples included Brāhmaṇical gods, sculptures of which have also been found from the site of the Vikramaśilā *mahāvihāra*. In a similar manner, Rāmapāla's capital also contained three other Viṣṇu and Śiva temples.¹¹⁹ The hierarchy is further substantiated by the Mirzapur copper plate inscription of Śūrapāla which represents Devapāla not only as the conqueror of the earth but also as one who built a temple of gold (i.e. covered with gold plating) for the *Jina* (Buddha).¹²⁰ It is said that the temple appropriated the grandeur of the rival temples, which only had their top part made of (i.e. covered by) gold and other precious metals. An analysis of these examples, along with the Pāla's preference for Buddhist symbols and patronage, elucidates the constitution of a new hierarchised religio-political order, centred on Buddhism. This new order was further concretised and spread into various parts of their domain by the Buddhist monasteries which were actively patronised by the Pāla kings. This link between the Pāla polity and Buddhism also helps explain the tremendous development of the Buddhist order between the eighth and twelfth centuries CE.

¹¹⁹ Ray, *Rāmacarita*, III.32.B & III.41.B, pp. 72, 75. Nandi also mentions the establishment of a shrine of Viṣṇu and the temples of Śiva in a group of three.

¹²⁰ Sircar, *Surāpāla*, pp. 135-136, verses 11-12.

However, there also existed many other religious orders within the Pāla kingdom during this period. The following section will examine their position and relevance in the constitution of the religio-political order within the larger framework of early medieval polity and courtly practices.

V. Politics of Negotiation

V.1 The Pāla King and his Ministers

Like Buddhism, these orders also attempted to attract royal/courtly patronage. A number of the *praśastis* of the ministers/counsellors or feudatories of the Pāla kings indicate patronage of Brāhmaṇical orders. Three inscriptions are particularly important here. Firstly, the Badal pillar inscription of the Gauravamiśra is a *praśasti* issued by a minister of the Pāla king Nārāyaṇapāla.¹²¹ The object of this inscription is to record the erection of a pillar, bearing on its top a figure of Garuḍa (Tārkkśya, the foe of serpents and dear friend of Hari). The inscription attests to the Vaiṣṇava faith of the minister and his family.

The second inscription is the Bhaturiya inscription of Yaśōdāsa, a minister at the court of the king Rājyapāla.¹²² Its main purpose is to record the construction of a huge Śaiva temple complex by Yaśōdāsa, which was surrounded by eight shrines. The Pāla king also dedicated a village for the maintenance of the god Vṛṣṇabhadhvaja (Śiva-līṅga) at this shrine. Another example is the Rājghāt stone inscription of Bhīmadeva, which was installed to commemorate the construction of a Śaiva temple at Vārāṇasī.¹²³ The inscription states that 'Bhīmadeva constructed with many stones this big temple of Bhāva here, an ornament at the river-front of Avimukta, astounding the minds of his many enemies.'¹²⁴ Similarly, Sandhyākara nandī, a fourth generation minister of Rāmapāla and Madanapāla, was also a follower of Vaiṣṇavism. All these

¹²¹ *EI* 2 (1894), no. 10, p. 166. The inscription also informs us that the last four generations of the minister Gauravamiśra were the ministers of four previous Pāla kings: Dharmapāla, Devapāla, Śūrapāla and Nārāyaṇapāla. Though the inscription mentions the name of these four kings, there were six kings between Dharmapāla and Nārāyaṇapāla. Since the inscription was translated in 1894, it is plausible now to think that this family actually served six kings.

¹²² *EI* 33 (1959-60), no. 28, p. 153. Yaśōdāsa was appointed a *mantri*, then a *saciva* and finally a *tantrādhikārī* by Rājyapāla.

¹²³ Vasu, *Manahali*, p. 73. Bhīmadeva was the *sandhivigrahika* of Madanapāla. This fact is proved by the Manahali copper-plate of Madanapāla in which Bhīmadeva was the *dataka* as well.

¹²⁴ *EI* 32 (1957-58), no. 32, p. 282.

examples demonstrate that the court of the Pāla kings consisted of ministers who followed and promoted different religious orders, which they were free to do, as long as they did not come under conflict with the preferred order of the kings themselves.

V.2 The Pāla Kings and Their Feudatories

Like other early medieval polities, the Pāla kingdom was also divided into various regions controlled by their feudatories. Given this political structure, the Pāla kings also followed, what Inden calls, a 'policy of internal autonomy' as a conscious policy. The conquered king who recognised the superiority of the true king of kings and submitted to him as his overlord was allowed to retain his domain more or less intact. Such a conquest was known as a conquest of *dharma* and contrasted with two other kinds – those of 'greed' (*lobha*) and of 'demon' (*asura*).¹²⁵ Therefore, the feudatories of the Pāla kings exercised internal autonomy and were free to follow their own religious beliefs. In a manner similar to the Pāla kings, they also constituted their own religio-political order within their area of control.

There are many examples of this, and I will briefly cite the Khalimpur copper plate of Dharmapāla. This plate records the donation of four villages by the king on the request of one of his feudatories, who established a shrine of Nunna-Nārāyaṇa (possibly, Viṣṇu) and hence was a follower of Viṣṇu. Another example comes from the Jagjibbanpur plate of Mahendrapāla, where the *praśasti* of the local feudatory is also mentioned. The last seven verses of the charter provided a detailed description of the feudatory, who was appointed chief of the Darḍarayamaṇḍala region. The grant, made in the region directly under this feudatory, proved his Buddhist affiliation as well. These examples showed that the courtiers and feudatories of the kings belonged to varied religious orders and freely followed their precepts. The ministers established shrines for which they requested grants from the kings, who being the ruler of the earth owned all the land.

This also meant that the king was more concerned with the larger political framework, which subsumed the existing political and religious orders. As the king's sovereignty subsumed that of the feudatories, the king's faith also did the same. This was represented by the accommodation of Brāhmaṇical shrines within or along the

¹²⁵ Inden, 'Hierarchy of Kings', p. 146.

major Buddhist shrines such as Vikramaśīla *mahāvihāra* near Mugdāgiri or Jagddala *mahāvihāra* at Rāmāvātī. In addition, even within the preferred religious order, the other gods were accommodated and given a respectable place, as a king accommodated all his courtiers and feudatories within his court. Thus, the policy followed by the Pāla kings was one of hierarchic inclusion in the constitution of their religio-political order, which explains the process that facilitated the existence of all these orders within the Pāla domain.

V.3 Political Dynamics within the Bodhgayā Region

Within this larger framework of the Pāla political framework, the growth of Gayā as a Vaiṣṇava centre could be examined by analysing the inscriptions of the local Brāhmaṇa ruling family in the mid-eleventh century. These were Śūdraka, his son Viśvarūpa or Viśvāditya, followed by his son Yakṣapāla.¹²⁶ The Śītalā inscription of Yakṣapāla mentions that Śūdraka was recognised as a ruling chief by the contemporary Pāla emperor of Gauḍa. Śūdraka and his successors constructed a number of Vaiṣṇava shrines in Gayā, which shows their preference for Vaiṣṇavism.¹²⁷

At the same time, Magadha was under the rule of a line of chiefs termed as Pīṭhīpati (lord of *Pīṭhī* or the *Vajrāsana-pīṭha* at Bodhgayā), who belonged to the Chhinda dynasty. This is explained in the commentary on Sandhyākar Nandin's *Rāmācarita* as *Magadhādhipa* (Lord of Magadha or south Bihar) which states that they had their headquarters at Bodhgayā.¹²⁸ The political dynamics of the region, which comprised two separate rulers at Gayā and Bodhgayā respectively, explains the separate trajectory of the development of Vaiṣṇava Gayā and Buddhist Bodhgayā. Each of these kings in the hierarchy of kingship, like the king of kings himself, possessed a kingdom in his domain. Furthermore, each was supposed to be able to

¹²⁶ Apart from the reference to these three rulers at this time, we do not have any evidence for the earlier period. Therefore, it is difficult to be certain about the political dynamics in the preceding period.

¹²⁷ The construction of the Vaiṣṇava shrines has been discussed earlier in the section II.2. These are based on four inscriptions. See *EI* 36 (1965-66), no. 11, pp. 81-94, particularly the numbers 1, 2 & 4, 5.

¹²⁸ For a detailed discussion of the reconstruction of the political history of the south Bihar region in the mid-eleventh century at the time of the Rāmapāla and the succession of Pīṭhīpatis, ruling from Bodhgayā, see *EI* 36 (1965-66), no. 11, pp. 82-83. Another inscription, found at Bodhgayā, records donation of the Pīṭhīpati Buddhasena to the Ceylonese monks at Bodhgayā. For details, see D. C. Sircar, 'Three East Indian Inscriptions of the Early Medieval period', *JAIH*, vol. 1-2 (1971-72), p. 21.

exercise kingship and the personal enjoyments or prerequisites, which its proper exercise brought.¹²⁹

Based on the epigraphic and textual evidence, Sircar has concluded that the Pīṭhīpatis were far more powerful than the minor chiefs of Gayā. Considering the fact that Gayā and Bodhgayā are only about seven miles apart, it is plausible to argue that the Brāhmaṇa rulers of Gayā were directly under the Pīṭhīpatis of Bodhgaya.¹³⁰ Within this hierarchy of kingships, the supremacy of Buddhist Bodhgayā could easily be located due to the higher political position and the importance of the Pīṭhīpatis in the region.¹³¹ This argument also explains why sculptures of the Viṣṇu and Śiva were placed within the Mahābodhi *mahāvihāra* as this reflected the subsumation of Vaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇa Gayā rulers within the sovereignty of the Buddhist Pīṭhīpatis of Bodhgayā. Furthermore, the Pāla religio-political order at the highest level subsumed the authority of all the feudatories within their domain, including the Pīṭhīpatis. Thus, this logic of the inclusive religio-political order shaped the socio-politics and the religious interactions of the period.

VI. Conclusion

The early medieval Bodhgayā region witnessed the existence of three religious orders – Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism. This meant that for the next seven centuries all these orders attempted to prove their supremacy by fiercely competing with each other in the soteriological, religious, and societal domains, as reflected in the literature and material remains of the time. Vaiṣṇavism responded by including Śiva and Śaivism within its order while excluding Buddhism completely. This exclusion was reflected in the three panels of Viṣṇu *daśāvatāra*, from the region in which the Buddha was missing. Buddhism, by contrast managed to dominate the region and responded emphatically by attempting an inclusive approach. This ‘*hierarchical-inclusion*’ approach helped them appropriate the Brāhmaṇical gods within their order. The Buddhist appropriations led to the creation of a new hierarchised divine pantheon, as visible in the *Trailōkyavijaya*’s narrative and other accounts. These

¹²⁹ Inden, ‘Hierarchies of Kings’, p. 146.

¹³⁰ See *EI* 36 (1965-66), no. 11, p. 83.

¹³¹ See Inden, ‘Hierarchies of Kings’, p. 147. Inden, while explaining the hierarchies of kingship, argues that the relationship of command and obedience signified by the act of prostration also obtained between the lesser kings of the various grades themselves.

developments, in fact, induced many transformations within the Buddhist order, which showed the vibrancy within early medieval Buddhism in the region.

This dominance of Buddhism was facilitated by the religio-political order of the Pāla kings and Pīṭhipatis of Bodhgayā region. They centred their religio-political order on Buddhism. This chapter therefore demonstrates that the '*hierarchic-inclusion*' policy of Buddhism was successfully negotiated because of the royal proclivity and political dynamics of the region. The Pāla propensity towards Buddhism may have helped the Buddhist *saṅgha* in holding on to their dominant position in the south Bihar region, and also explained their profound growth in terms of art, architecture, sculpture, and the emergence of multiple monastic and shrine centres.

Chapter-6 Conclusions

The emergence and development of Bodhgayā has been studied and written about for almost two centuries now. Because of its paradigmatic importance, it has attracted attention from scholars working in the disciplines of Religion, History, Art and Architectural history and Archaeology. Despite this attention, the study has remained confined to the Mahābodhi temple complex due to the legacy of early research at the site. In particular, Cunningham's legacy has continued to exert influence on later research as Leoshko rightly mentions 'that the focus on the early remains of Bodhgayā and the Mahābodhi temple has dominated investigations of the site throughout the twentieth century.'¹ Indeed, the emphasis on the early historic remains such as the Bodhi seat, railing pillars and temple has continued and the study of the developments at the site ends with the beginning of the early medieval period. The loss of the archaeological context of the site due to early clearances and excavations in the nineteenth century has further complicated the study of the early historic and later remains. This has led to the analysis of the remains from the site within the framework emerging from textual study, in common with the study of other Buddhist sites and of the religion itself in general, as pointed out by Schopen in his seminal article.²

The emergence of Buddhism at Bodhgayā is attributed to King Aśoka in the third century BCE, but the subsequent growth and development has to be studied in relation to the existing monastic community (*saṅgha*) at the site. In fact, the development of Bodhgayā itself reflects the ongoing changes within the institution of *saṅgha*, and Buddhist practices as evident in the appearance of a sacred landscape around Bodhgayā, which has been discussed in the chapter two.

Chapter two examines the development and transformation of Bodhgayā over the course of almost 1500 years. The key focus here has been to survey the sacred sites and shrines located in the vicinity of Bodhgayā such as Bakror, Mora hill and Gayāśrīṣa hill and study them in relation to the remains within Mahābodhi temple complex. The chapter demonstrates that the sacrality of Bodhgayā was not confined to

¹ Leoshko, 'Construction of a Buddhist Pilgrimage Site', p. 575.

² G. Schopen, 'Archaeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism', in *Bones, Stones and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in Indian* (Hawaii, 1997), pp. 1-22.

the Bodhi tree complex but consisted of a constellation of sites. This sacrality of the landscape of Bodhgayā was based on the understanding and articulations of the Buddhist monastic community, which developed an ideological framework drawing from the biographies of the Buddha.

The chapter argues that the emergence and multi-phase development of this sacred landscape was linked to the perception of the Buddha as articulated in the biographical accounts in the Pāli canon and Sanskrit biographies. The 'ideological component' that guided the construction of this sacred landscape is examined by bringing together the textual and archaeological sources. In this process, the chapter also charts out a chronological development of the sacred structures in and around Bodhgayā. It is therefore seen that this landscape is not a static one and that the meanings attached to the Bodhi seat and other remains also evolved over time. For example, the chapter clearly brings out the changes in the conceptualisation of the Bodhi seat, which became the centre of the Buddhist universe. At the same time, the shrine also evolved as the seat was reconstructed thrice. Similarly, the construction of a new Mahābodhi temple in the sixth century meant that the Buddha seating on the extension of the Bodhi seat (now termed as *Vajrasāna*) in the new *ganḍhakuṭī* became the focus of rituals at the site instead of the Bodhi seat or the tree itself. The construction of the temple was followed by installation of miniature stone *stūpas* and multitude of sculptures of the Buddha and Buddhist deities such as Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara, Khasarpaṇa, Tārā, Marīchī, Yamāntaka and others. The construction of miniature *stūpas* and rich inscriptional and sculptures remains showed vibrant nature of religious practices at the early medieval Bodhgayā. Therefore, the chapter traces the multi-phased spatial and temporal reformulations of the sacred landscape of Bodhgayā and highlights the necessity to examine the wider social context and its role in those reformulations.

After examining the emergence and growth of sacred Bodhgayā, the dissertation attempts to examine the wider social, economic and religious setting of Bodhgayā. This wider contextualisation of Bodhgayā is necessary to develop a comprehensive understanding of the matrix of development and growth of the Buddhist *saṅgha* between the third century BCE and twelfth century CE. Toward this aim, the dissertation has identified a larger area in and around Bodhgayā, which has been termed as the 'Bodhgayā region'.

The region was identified and defined in accordance to the goals of the project to examine the settlement history and spread of Buddhism, as reflected in the distribution of monastic sites. Given the necessity to cover a larger area rather than the neighbouring villages of Bodhgayā, the ambit of the region was extended in all four directions. Taking a cue from the location of Bodhgayā along a river and the dependence of its surrounding Taradih settlement on this topographical feature, it was appropriate to cover the villages along the main rivers of the region. Since the line of drainage in the district runs from south to north, the rivers of the Gayā district - the Phalgu (formed by Mohane and Niranjana), Morhar, and Paimar – divide the district into a number of parallel strips. As all of these rivers pass through the length of the Magadha region to meet the Ganga or its tributaries, the villages along these rivers formed part of the Bodhgayā region. The National Highway 2 was demarcated as the southern boundary for the Bodhgayā region. The northern and eastern part of the district consists of flat flood plains interspersed with a few notable low-rise hills such as Maher, Hasra range, Jethian, Barabar range and other. Taking these topographical features into consideration, the area surrounding Hasra and Jethian hills (falling under Wazirganj subdivision) were demarcated as the eastern and northeastern boundary of the region. Similarly, the Barabar range of hills (falling under Makhdumpur block) formed the northern border of the research area. The decision of choosing these hills as boundaries was also influenced by the previous archaeological surveys along these hills which had led to reporting of sculptural and architectural remains. Due to lack of a clear topographical demarcation on the western side, the current district boundary was demarcated as the boundary (leaving out the area south of NH2).

By breaking the region into four quadrants and presenting the surveyed data in maps (Figs 3.12, 3.30, 3.36 and 3.51), this work shows the distribution of the settlements and its linkages with topographical features in all quadrants. Similarly, the Fig 3.76 shows the distribution of early Buddhist *saṅgha* in all four quadrants and their linkages with hills and rivers of the region. As every quadrant is marked by rivers and hills, they do reflect a pattern of distribution along these geographical indicators. The maps also inform us about constantly evolving nature of man-land relationship and the modifications introduced to the landscape by the settlers of the region in the early period (Figs. 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8). Similarly, the distribution pattern also shows the spread of Buddhist ideas and *saṅgha*, as reflected in the existence of monastic and sculptural sites in all quadrants. The analysis of sculptural

remains also indicates inter-connectivity and the exchange of ideas and practices within the region.³

Each quadrant was defined chiefly by the course of local rivers and other natural and geographical landmarks. In the northern quadrant of the Bodhgayā region, parts of Gayā town and a number of villages were surveyed and they highlighted the location of settlements along the river Phalgu and other sources of water whereas monastic sites were located on hills. In the southern quadrant, all fifteen sites were located along the rivers Niranjana, and Mohane and their streams such as Gulshakri and Chajya. A further eastward survey of the Paimar River led to the discovery of a mound and sculptural remains at Jagannathpur. The eastern quadrant of the Bodhgayā region led to the survey of the villages along the foothills of the Rajgir range, and the Kurkihar, Hasra and Dhongra and Mora hills. Fifteen sites were surveyed and a number of new archaeological features and sculptural remains were reported. In the western quadrant, twenty two sites were surveyed, many of which were located either along the Morhar river or in its close proximity. The area west of this river had a major concentration of sites whereas the survey of the three hills Pahara, Manda and Chalho also led to the discovery of structural and sculptural remains.⁴

As noted in the chapter three and four, the south Bihar region is a relatively dry zone with a long history of recurrent monsoon failures. This fact provides explanation for the emergence of settlements along the rivers and hills (tanks or lakes at their bases). As the Taradih excavations have revealed fishing equipments as well as fish bones from the Neolithic and Chalcolithic levels, the early settlers were probably dependent on these rivers and tanks of the region for their food supply. The river banks and tanks may also have been places for the wild growth of various crops including rice and therefore, may have played an important role in the growth of agriculture in the region. The later growth of settlements in the plains reflects the modification and optimisation of the topographical features for the growth of settlements and agriculture. Similarly, the emergence of the monastic sites on top of hills of the region may also indicate the *saṅgha*'s understanding and manipulation of

³ We see settlements along rivers, and hills initially, probably because of the dependence of the early settlers on these natural features for food and daily necessities. Reason may be attributed to the availability of water-bodies along the hills. They may have been dependent on the rivers for food and agriculture.

⁴ A major early historic site, Sonpur, was reported and later excavated along the Yamuna river in the region. See, B. P. Sinha and B. S. Verma, *Sonpur Excavations* (Patna, 1977).

the landscape for its optimum utilisation. Lastly, the survey of the quadrants also revealed many sites such as Kurkihar, Hasra-kol, Amethi, Punawa, Dungeshwari and many others, which were located on an old route along the foothills from Rajgir to Bodhgayā. This route further extended westward to the Amas block at the western edge of the Bodhgayā region.

The above details suggest that the Buddhist *saṅgha* of Bodhgayā did not emerge in a vacuum and provide a clear description of the wider context of Bodhgayā. The examination of wider archaeological and social setting included reported monastic sites such as Kurkihar, Hasra-kol, Dharawat and Kauwa-dol as well as other categories of sites. The survey revealed a number of new settlement and monastic sites. Based on the analysis of collected data, a seven-phase chronology was suggested for the region against which, the nature of all the surveyed sites - whether settlement, monastic, or sculptural - was established.

The analysis of the collected data suggested a massive growth of settlements in the early historic I period (c. 650 – 200 BCE), indicating an exponential growth of population. Most of these settlement sites turned out to be rural, which continued until the twelfth century CE. Lack of excavation of all these sites made it difficult to examine the exact size of settlement at any one point of time and to guess their population figures. The survey of reported monastic sites (as well as unreported ones such as Dubba, Burha and others) also revealed the settlement, and spatial settings of the monastic sites of the region. It also confirmed the spread of Buddhism in the Bodhgayā region in the early historic period as revealed by the analysis of ceramic evidence from Kurkihar, Hasra-kol, Dharawat, and Dubba. All four were located at a proximate distance from the settlements as reflected in the case of Kurkihar and Malikpur or Dharawat Kunwa Hill and Dharatwat Village site. This proximate location of monastic centres and settlements conformed to the rules prescribed in the *Vinaya* texts about the spatial location of monasteries. All the settlement and monastic sites continued through the early historic and early medieval periods. The region witnessed a new phenomenon in the early medieval period with the emergence of a local sculptural tradition in the form of new shrines and temples either at the periphery or within settlements. Most of these were Buddhist shrines, which represented the existing linkages between the settlements and Buddhism, thereby affirming the early spread of Buddhism in the larger Bodhgayā region.

By studying the emergence and growth of the Buddhist *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā within the larger regional context, this work suggests a paradigm shift in the study of Buddhist sites in the Ancient India. By analysing the wider context of a Buddhist site, this dissertation attempts to raise questions about the interaction between settlements and the *saṅgha* and its impact on the landscape, issue of patronage and the sustenance of the *saṅgha*, and the linkages between different religious orders/sects.

With regards to the first issue about the interaction between the *saṅgha* and settlements, the discussion in the third chapter has shown a clear link between the settlements and spread of Buddhism in the region. It has also exhibited that the early *saṅgha* also spread along the villages, and many of these monastic centres did not immediately were marked by embellished structures in the early historic period. It also demonstrated that it was not necessary for every early historic monastic centres to have sculptural and inscriptional remains. Further, this dissertation also shows how the linkages between settlements and *saṅgha* led to the modification and manipulation of the landscape of Bodhgayā region. This point is further substantiated in the fourth chapter.

The survey of the region revealed that the Bodhgayā region was not as developed as other parts of the Magadha region such as the area around major urban centres like Rajgir or Pataliputra. The region did not have a major concentration of settlements in the pre-early historic period. However, the survey reflected an increase in the number of settlements from the early historic period. This increase in the number of settlements may not have been possible without the growth of a substantial agricultural base.

The study of the geographical and geological setting of the region indicated a significant agricultural growth in the early historic period. This growth was a result of the development of the irrigation systems of *āhars* - *pynes* and tanks to utilise optimally the available water resources in this rainfall deficient area. This irrigation system did not just ensure the cultivation of rice and other crops but also totally transformed the agrarian system of the region. This irrigation system was not provided by the early historic state in the region. Instead, these were facilitated by the *saṅgha*, which played a central role in the development of the Bodhgayā region. The fact that the development of irrigation systems and the increase in the number of settlements were coterminous with the spread of Buddhism and the emergence of

monastic centres in the Bodhgayā region indicates a clear link. This link is further substantiated by the analysis of the spatial context of monastic sites as all the early historic monastic centres were located around embankments and around water bodies. This early historic link was further articulated by the construction of shrines around irrigation structures in the early medieval period as sixteen Buddhist shrines were found at the edge of irrigation tanks along settlements.

Though there exists no inscriptional evidence to substantiate this involvement of the *saṅgha* in the irrigation management, the textual and archaeological evidence suggest a crucial role for the *saṅgha* in the spreading of knowledge about the construction, maintenance and regulation of embankments and water bodies in the region. This involvement of the *saṅgha* in the material advancement and development of the region helped them in developing a social sustenance base. The resulting increased agricultural productivity meant that the local inhabitants produced enough surpluses to donate to the *saṅgha*. Mabbet and Bailey note several instances from the Pāli *Vinaya* where there is mention of donations to the monks by individual families in villages.⁵ Indeed, there are many examples of local people bringing food, grains, oil, cloths, and other supplies to the nearby monasteries. Similarly, the *Mahāvagga* refers to a number of resident-monks in villages, who were supported by the local people.⁶ These donations had become a permanent feature by the second century CE when the concept of *akṣaynīvī* (permanent endowment) emerged.⁷ The proximate location to a settlement and water body, and generation of surplus resources, ensured the practice of perpetual endowment by the people in the nearby settlements, and this resulted in the generation of merit for the donor.

This model of the sustenance of *saṅgha* because of its spread in the Bodhgayā region also challenges the issue of royal patronage and the dependence of the *saṅgha* on royalty. Apart from Aśoka, the only inscription that attests to the royal patronage at Bodhgayā comes from the local king of Bodhgayā Jayasena in c. 1268.⁸ The inscription refers to a grant of a village to Vajrāsana, and this inscription does hint at

⁵ Bailey and Mabbett, *Sociology*, pp. 70-75. The donations to monks and monasteries have been a much researched topic and therefore will be skipped here.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-75.

⁷ See *ET* 21 (1929-30), no. 10, p. 61.

⁸ N. G. Majumdar, 'Patna Museum Inscription of Jayasēna'. *IA* 48 (1919), pp. 43-48.

similar practices in the past, as indicated also by the donations of Pāla kings to the Nalanda and Vikramaśilā monastic establishments. Therefore, the possibility of Buddhist *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā receiving royal patronage cannot be ruled out, however no royal inscription has been found from the site itself. This makes it difficult to indicate the dependence of the monastic establishment on royal patronage at Bodhgayā or within the larger region.

Alternatively, the analysis carried out in the fourth chapter of this work shows the networks of patronage which may have emerged out due to the interactions between the *saṅgha* and the local settlements. This link between the *saṅgha* and local settlements is also demonstrated by the spatial context of the early monastic settlements such as Bodhgayā and Taradih, or Kurkihar and Malikpur. Drawing from the Tibetan model, the dissertation delineates the tri-level system mechanism, constituted by the settlement shrines at the lowest level, regional monastic centres such as Kurkihar, Dharawat, Hasra-kol, Burha/Dubba, Guneri and Kauwa-dol at middle level and the Bodhgayā monastic establishment at the top level. The regional monastic centres functioned as nodal centres collecting the donations from settlement shrines as well their immediate settlements in lieu of ritual services and merit and subsequently, sharing the donations with Bodhgayā, which was the paradigmatic centre. The above contention suggests that the *saṅgha* developed a grasp over the local topography and helped the modification of landscape for their optimum utilisation by propagating their knowledge. The *saṅgha* thus played a crucial role in the economic development of the region.

The economic development of the region, as reflected in the growth of the *saṅgha*, also attracted other religious orders, as evident firstly by the emergence of *smārta* ritual experts of *śrāddha* at Gayā and secondly by the growth of numerous Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava shrines. Chapter five begins by tracing the emergence of these different religious orders in the region, and subsequently attempts to study the inter-religious dynamics in the wider surrounding area. The fact that these orders developed in the region meant that the *saṅgha* had to face challenges and compete with these orders in an area previously dominated by Buddhism. In order to understand the challenges and competitions from other orders, we first have to develop an understanding of intra-religious dynamics between the different schools of Buddhism. After all, Buddhism was not a monolithic religious tradition. This will help

understand the approach of the *saṅgha* to competition and challenges as well as the dynamics of Buddhist religious practices. The dynamics of the religious practices can be demonstrated by examining the oft-repeated claims about the conservative nature of Bodhgayā.

On the contrary, the analysis of material remains from the early historic and early medieval Bodhgayā reveals a much more dynamic religious practice. The depictions of *nāga*, Yakṣi, Indra, Sūrya, and Śrī figures on the railing pillars from the early times suggests an ensemble of religious practices, which may have emerged due to the Buddhist interaction with the local practices.⁹ Similarly, the early medieval sculptural and epigraphic remains also suggests a heavy influence of Mahāyāna practices at Bodhgayā (and other Buddhist monastic sites of the region). The diverse sculptural assemblage at the Mahābohi complex included images of Bodhisattvas, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, Khasarpaṇa, Tārā, Marīchī, Yamāntaka, and Jāmbhala. The installation of these images within the complex indicates their ritual usage and worship.¹⁰ Furthermore, there are two inscriptions from the site which contain Mahāyāna formula.¹¹ The first inscription, inscribed on a sculpture donated by Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman in c. 588-89 CE, clearly mentions the Mahāyāna formula: ‘*Yad-atra puṇyam tad-bhavatu sarvasattvānām-anuttara-jñān-āvāptayē-stu*’.¹² The formula can be translated as ‘whatever religious merit (*there is*) in this (*act*), let it be for the acquisition of supreme knowledge of all sentient beings’. This verse is also repeated in the second inscription, which was found on an image donated by *Sthavira* Viryendra from Somapura in the tenth century CE. In fact, Viryendra clearly presents himself as a follower of Mahāyāna (*Mahāyāna-yāyin*).¹³ Even Dharmasvāmin attests

⁹ Robert DeCaroli, *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religions and the Formation of Buddhism* (Oxford, 2004); see also K. K. Chakravarty, *Buddhist Art*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁰ Leoshko, ‘Pilgrimage and the Evidence of Bodhgayā’s Images’, p. 53.

¹¹ Gregory Schopen, ‘Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions’, in Gregory Schopen, ed., *Fragments and Fragments of Mahayana Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers* (Honolulu, 2005), pp. 223-269. Schopen includes these two inscriptions from Bodhgayā in this study of the references to the Mahāyāna formulae and argues for their Mahāyāna nature. He also discusses the validity and emergence of the Mahāyāna formula and argues that these formulae began to be engraved on inscriptions from the fourth century CE onwards.

¹² CII 3(1963), no. 72, p. 279.

¹³ D. C. Sircar, ed., *Select Inscriptions Bearing on Indian History and Civilization* vol. II (New Delhi, 1983), p. 59. The inscription is called Bodhgayā Buddha image inscription of Viryendra and was first published by T. Bloch in the Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India- 1908-09.

to a Tārā temple there.¹⁴ Similarly, the presence of innumerable miniature stone *stūpas* (or burial *ad sanctos*) with bodily remains suggests ‘Mahāyāna’ practices at the site, in contrast to previous held beliefs that these were absent. The above cited evidence indicates a mixed practice at the site and indicates a much broader outlook of the Buddhist *saṅgha* at Bodhgayā.

One of the key reasons for declaring Bodhgayā as a conservative site has been the presence of Sri Lankan monks at Bodhgayā, who have been considered followers of Hīnayāna school. The assertion, that the presence of Sri Lankan *Sthavira* monks from the fourth century CE onwards, is based on the assumption that the Sri Lankan monks were necessarily Hīnayānists. This necessitates an examination of the history of Sri Lankan monastic traditions and its linkages with Bodhgayā. The *Sthaviravādins* at the two main monasteries in Anuradhapura, the Abhayagiri and (after the third century CE) Jetavana, called themselves ‘*Theravāda*’ but followed Mahāyāna ideals, and had clear Mahāyāna leanings, also attested by Xuanzang accounts.¹⁵ It was only the third group of *Sthaviravādins* in Anuradhapura, designated Mahāvihāra *Sthaviras*, who clung to the Hīnayāna. Until the 10th century, they were decidedly marginalised, and certainly not the recipients of royal favour (such as being sent to build and run complexes in Bodhgayā), nor the main type of ‘*Sthavira*’ or ‘Sri Lankan Buddhist monk’ that Indians would think of when they heard those designations.¹⁶ As known from the epigraphic evidence, the construction of the Mahābodhi temple was funded by a Sri Lankan monk Mahānāman and his Mahāyāna leanings are reflected in the donation of inscribed image (with Mahāyāna formula). This fact, when combined

¹⁴ Roerich, *Biography*, p. 74. Tārānāth also attests the installation of a Heruka image within the main Mahābodhi shrine in his account.

¹⁵ J.S. Walters, ‘Mahāsena at the Mahāvihāra’, in Daud Ali, ed., *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1999), pp. 323-366. Walters clearly writes that ‘abundant evidence in the form of inscriptions, archaeological ruins and even the Mahāvihāran sources confirm without doubt the indication given by the Chinese pilgrims that the Mahāyāna Theravadins were the residents of Abhayagirivihāra, and that they dominated Anuradhapura until about the tenth century CE’. See Walters, ‘Mahāsena’, p. 328. See also Peter Skilling, ‘A Citation From The *Buddhavaṃsa of the Abhayagiri School’, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, vol. 18 (1993): pp. 165-175. Skilling also refers to the broader outlook of the Abhayagirivihāravāsī and how they were accused of following Mahāyāna by the Mahāvihāravāsī (p. 168).

¹⁶ J. S. Walters, Pers. Comm., 4 January 2009. See also, R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, *Robe and Plough Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka* (Tuscon, 1979), p. 212. Gunawardana mentions that although there were many successful Abhayagirivihāravāsī and Jetavaniya graduates of Nalanda University, the only Mahāvihāravasi students who attended, in the ninth century CE, were expelled for their belligerent refusal to accept Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna teachings. Of these two schools, Abhayagiri centre, possibly followers of Mahāyāna, continued to dominate the region until the tenth century CE.

with the above description of dominance of the Abhayagirivihāra up to the tenth-eleventh centuries CE, seems to suggest that the Sri Lankan *Sthavira* presence at Bodhgayā was dominated by the Mahāyāna-following Abhayagirivihāravāsī or Jetavaniya Sthaviras. This may also provide an explanation for Dharmasvāmin's interaction with the Sri Lankan Śrāvaka monks, who probably belonged to the Mahāvihāra tradition after the end of the Abhayagirivihāra tradition.¹⁷

Finally, Bodhgayā being the paradigmatic life-event site, was also being visited by numerous Mahāyāna pilgrims over the centuries, some of whom may have led to the appearance of Mahāyāna materials at the site. The above discussion indicates impressive Mahāyāna activity at the site in the early medieval period. Even if there was a local *Sthavira* group at the site, the material remains suggested borrowing and mixing of doctrines and religious practices between these two schools of Buddhism.¹⁸ The intra-religious dynamics indicates a transformation and constantly evolving religious practices within the Buddhist tradition. A similar transformation is visible when we examine the inter-religious dynamics between Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism.

Previous research provides us with two sets of explanations at two extremes - peaceful co-existence or political and religious repression. Neither explains the religious interaction of these orders. By analysing the sculptural and epigraphic remains from Bodhgayā and the wider region, the chapter brings forth the Buddhist responses, which was a long drawn and complex process. Drawing from the use of 'scale of forms' by Inden, the chapter illustrates the complex negotiation mechanism of 'hierarchical-inclusion' employed by the *saṅgha* to appropriate Śiṣya and Viṣṇu within their order.¹⁹ This appropriation is also apparent in the availability of Umā-Maheśvara and Viṣṇu sculptures from monastic sites including Bodhgayā. This also demonstrates that the Buddhist interactions with these two Brāhmaṇical orders had a lasting impact and in fact led to the transformation of the Buddhist *saṅgha* in

¹⁷ Other sources also refer to the presence of Mahāyāna group at Bodhgayā. For example, Tārānāth also mentions the presence of forty Mahāyāna monks at Hīnayāna *Vajrāsana* in his account. See, Lama Chimpa and A. Chattopdhyaya, trs., *Tārānāth's History of Buddhism in India* (Delhi, 1970), p. 313.

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion on the interaction between various sects of Buddhism and the nature of Buddhism after the emergence of Mahāyāna, see D. S. Ruegg, 'Aspects of the Study of the (Earlier) Indian Mahāyāna,' *JIAS*, vol. 27, no.1 (2004), pp. 1-62. Ruegg has also discussed the distinction between the Mahāyāna and Hīnyāna Schools. In addition, he has also explored the terminology and how these different sects interacted and influenced the ever-evolving Buddhism.

¹⁹ Inden, 'Imperial Purāṇas', p. 42.

numerous ways. This transformation process helps comprehend the diversity (and intermixture) of religious practices, such as the installation of the Brāhmaṇical sculptures within the Mahābodhi complex and their subsequent worship. The process actually suggests a much more dynamic and eclectic 'Buddhist tradition' in ancient Bodhgayā, which continued to evolve.

Finally, the dissertation also attempts to examine the role of political dynamics in this complex negotiation. Particularly relevant in this context has been the political dynamics during the time of the Pāla kings, who controlled the Magadha region. The political dynamics and the prevalent religio-political order did influence the ongoing religious negotiations, though not necessarily a causal or direct one. This work therefore demonstrates the transformation processes within the Buddhist *saṅgha* which helped them in maintaining dominance over the Bodhgayā region until c 1200 CE.

Overall, this dissertation attempts to contextualise Bodhgayā by examining its wider social context and delineates a new paradigm to study the emergence and sustenance of Buddhist *saṅgha*. In fact, the work demonstrates that the development of Bodhgayā was linked to the socio-economic and religious history of the wider region. Firstly, the emergence of the *saṅgha* led to the propagation of Buddhism in the larger region, thus providing a wider social context to the order. Secondly, the spread of Buddhism also led to the propagation of a new lifestyle and ethic based on a developed agrarian system, which subsequently led to the modification and manipulation of landscape in the larger Bodhgayā region. Thirdly, this in turn helped the *saṅgha* in developing a number of regional monastic centres, which subsequently emerged as points of contact between the rural settlements and the *saṅgha*. And this interaction resulted in the development of a stable and reliable social sustenance base for the Buddhist *saṅgha*.

The second crucial shift in the approach is reflected in understanding the intra-and inter-religious dynamics. The dissertation demonstrates that the analysis of the material remains suggests much more dynamic religious and ritual practices at the site. This dynamism continued in the Buddhist interactions with various Brāhmaṇical orders such as the smārta ritual experts (*śrāddha*), Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas from the early centuries of the Common Era. The Buddhist *saṅgha* did not just respond to their challenge but managed to continue dominating the region by transforming itself in the

process. This dissertation therefore attempts to relate Bodhgayā to its immediate as well as to its wider social and religious context in order to demonstrate the process of emergence, sustenance and transformation of Buddhism by integrating methods drawn from the disciplines of Archaeology, Religion, Art-history, and History.

The onset of the thirteenth century CE marks a major break in Indian history. This is also the time when many of these monastic centres begin to lose importance. However, this is an important issue which needs to be examined at a later date. Nevertheless, this thesis attempts to examine the processes that helped Buddhism in sustaining and maintaining itself at Bodhgayā and in the larger Bodhgayā region. This work also affirms the recent argument that it was the wider social support and patronage to the *saṅgha* that sustained them at any monastic site. The *saṅgha* managed to not just contextualise itself in the Bodhgayā region but also kept itself informed of its surroundings.

This work, while attempting to examine and contextualise Bodhgayā, presents a good example of how Buddhist archaeology can question the previously accepted notion of religious practices and bring forth new and nuanced understanding of the religion itself. Simultaneously, this study has also shown the initial system developed by the Buddhist *saṅgha* as reflected predominantly from material remains in the early historic period.

Appendices

Table A. Bodhgayā Inscriptions

S. No	Language/ Script	Object Donated	Dedication	Date/Year	Name and place	Reference
1	Lat character/ Brahmi	15 railing pillars	---	---	Kurangi	Barua, pp. 66-67
2	-do-	Railing pillars	---	---	Sirima	Barua, p. 67
3	-do-	-do-	---	---	Kurangi and Sirima/ Indragimit ra's palace	Barua, p. 69
4	-do-	-do-	---	---	NagC/Evi	Barua, p. 68
5	-do-	-do-	---	---	Pratihara	Mitra, p. 183
6	-do-	Rail bars	---	---	Amogha	Barua, p. 68
7	-do-	-do-	---	---	Bodhiraksh ita/Tamrap arni	Barua, p. 68
8	Sanskrit/Brah mi	Stone images	For the benefit of parents	King Trikamala 's reign / 3-4 th century CE	Monk and Buddhist laywoman?	Barua, p. 70
9	Sanskrit/Late Brahmi	---	For the benefit of parents	2 nd century CE.	---	Cunningham, p. 58

10	-do-	Statue and Gandhakuṭī	---	2 nd century CE.	---	Cunningham, p. 58
11	Sanskrit/ Late Brahmi	Building of a temple at Bodhimāṇḍa and a statue	For the benefit of mankind	589 CE Gupta era 268/279	Mahanaman	Sircar, pp. 56-58; Cunningham, pp. 58-62.
12	-do-	Religious gift	-do-	-do-	-do-	Cunningham, p. 58.
13	Gupta character	Statue	For his parents, relations, teachers and inhabitants of Ahavagra	Gupta period	Bodhisena Dattagallah	Mitra, pp. 192-193; Cunningham, p. 62.
14	Gupta character	250 dinaras + 100 cows + water tank (for maintenance of temple and upkeep of monks)	For the merit of parents	----	----	Barua, p. 71
15	Gupta character	Stone railing	---	----	Śramaṇa Prakhyakriti/Lanka	Barua, p. 72
16	---	Statue	---	Pāla period (800-825)	Sri Gopal Deva	Cunningham, p. 63

17	---	Statue and image of the four faced MahāEeva	For the good of the inhabitants of Mahabodhi	Pāla period (850 CE)	Saka	Cunningham, p. 64
18	---	Statue	---	Pāla period (933 CE.)	Narayana Pala Deva	Cunningham, p. 64.
19	---	Gandhakuti with three images	Attainment of supreme knowledge to the whole world	No date	Purnabhadr a / Sindh	Cunningham, p. 65.
20	Sanskrit/-	Statue	For the benefit of parents	1010 CE.	Mahipāla Deva	Cunningham, p. 65; and Mitra, pp. 197-198.
21	Sanskrit/-	Stone slab	---	Date ?	Ramapāla Deva	Cunningham, p. 65.
22	Kutila character	Aromatics and incense(construction of gandhakuti)	---	10 th century CE	Tunga ¹ (king)/Man ipura(Main puri)	Mitra, pp. 194-197.
23	Sanskrit/ Gaudiya	Image	-----	10 th century	Viryendra/ Somapura	Sircar, p. 59.

¹ King Tunga of Raṣṭrakuṭa dynasty took refuge in retired saṅgharaya (*īrtha*) comfortably to the established rule, and died singing hymns in praise of the high merits of Buddha. This inscription talks about the valor and power of father-son duo of Raṣṭrakuṭa race, and also refers to Brāhmanas and Hindu goddess Sri. This inscription is written by Sri Jana-Bhikṣu, Panditaratna, born in island of Siñhala.

					CE	Monastery/ Samatata	
24	Chinese	Eight figures	Pilgrimage		1000 CE.	Chi- I ² /China	Cunningham, p. 73.
25	Chinese	Small sandstone <i>stūpa</i>	pilgrimage		1021 CE.	Yun- Shu ³ /China	Cunningham, p. 71.
26	Chinese	Small sandstone <i>stūpa</i>	pilgrimage		1021 CE.	I-Ching and I- Lin/China	Cunningham, p. 72.
27	Chinese	Stone <i>stūpa</i> + kashaya	pilgrimage		----	Yu- Pin/China	Cunningham, p. 72.
28	Chinese	Stone <i>stūpa</i>	For benefit of Tai Tsong		1033 CE.	Hui-Wen/ China	Cunningham, p. 73
29	Sanskrit/ Gaudiya	Erection of a Buddhist shrine (Vihari) and an image of Buddha	For merit (punya) of mother and father		1230 (Lakshmi- anasena year 51)	Asokachall a (King) and Built by Bhatta Damodar	Sircar, pp. 146- 148.
30	Sanskrit/	Votive	For merit of parents		27 th	Sahanapala	Sircar, pp. 149-

² This inscription mentions three companions of Chi-I named Kwei-Tseil, Chi-I and Kwang-Fung.

³ This inscription eulogises Buddha and his body as manifested in *nirvāṇa-kāyā*, *dharmā-kāyā*, *nirmāṇa-kāyā* and *sambhoga-kāyā*. It also mentions the pilgrimage of two Buddhist priests, I-Ching and I-Lin, who each took with him a gold embroidered Kasyapa to be hung up in the shrine of Mahābōhi, and each set up his own memorial *stūpa*.

	Gaudiya	offering		March 1253		150.
31	Burmese	Repair of temple	For common merit	c. 1305 CE.	King of Burma and Prince Pyutasing	Cunningham, p. 76.
32	Sanskrit/Deva nagari characters	(engraved on old stone railing pillar)	For merit of self by pilgrimages	15 th -16 th century CE.	Jinadasa/Parvata(Mu Itan)	Barua, p. 73.
33	Burmese	--offerings and stone inscriptions	---	1822 CE.	Thiri-Pavara MaharajCE i-raja (Hpagyi-daw)	Barua BM pp. 211-228

Sources:

- 1) A. Cunningham - *Mahābodhi*
- 2) R. L. Mitra - *Buddha-Gayā*
- 3) B.M. Barua - *Gayā and Buddha-Gayā*
- 4) D. C. Sircar - *El*

Table B. List of Sculptures and other Remains from the Surveyed sites

Site-Name	Lat/Lon	Time-frame	Sculptures/other material remains at the site
Suppi-gadh (S)	Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 04' E	Neolithic – Pāla Period	None
Sumera (S)	Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 04' E	Neolithic –Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avalokiteśvara - 8th century CE. 2. Avalokiteśvara - 10th century CE. 3. 2 Pieces of U-M - 10th century CE.
Dharawat settlement site (S)	Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 02' E	Neolithic-Pāla period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 4 Ring-wells – EH I. 2. 2 Terracotta Figurines – EH I.
Kunwa Hill at Dharawat (M & T)	Lat. 25° 02' N; Long. 85° 02' E	EH I- Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Goddess - 6th century CE. 2. 4 Terracotta Plaques – 8-9th century CE. 3. Viṣṇu – 9th century CE. 4. Sūrya – 9th century CE. 5. Avalokiteśvara - 9th century CE. 6. Jambhala – 9-10th century CE. 7. 2 Images of Buddha - 10th century CE. 8. Broken Buddha sculpture - 10th Century CE. 9. Two miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> – 10th century CE. 10. Avalokiteśvara - 11th century CE. 11. 2 Gaṇeśa sculptures – 11th century CE.
Kauwa-dol (M & T)	Lat. 24° 59' N; Long. 85° 01' E	Gupta-Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buddha – 10th century CE. 2. Heavily damaged Avalokiteśvara – 10th century CE. 3. Jambhala – 10th century CE. 4. Rock carvings predominantly of Brāhmanical goddesses (mostly Durga) and gods and Buddhist – 8th-12th century CE. 5. Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>.

Barabar Hills (M)	Lat. 25° 00' N; Long. 85° 03' E	EH-I to Pāla Period	1. Caves 2. Inscriptions
Siddheshvarasthan (Brāhmaṇical Temple)	Lat. 25° 00' N; Long. 85° 04' E	Gupta – Pāla Period	1. Sūrya - 7 th century CE. 2. Viṣṇu – 9 th century CE. 3. 2 Images of Pārvaṭī - 11 th century CE. 4. Chāmuṇḍā- 11 th century CE. 5. Gaṇeśa- 11 th century CE. 6. Varāha- 11 th century CE. 7. Umā-Maheśvara- 11 th century CE. 8. rock carved <i>liṅgas</i> - 11 th century CE.
Mira-bigha (T)	Lat. 25° 03' N; Long. 85° 02' E	Early Medieval Period	1. 2 Images of Sūrya – 7-8 th century CE. 2. 2 Images of Viṣṇu – 7-8 th century CE. 3. 1 <i>Yakṣi</i> - 7-8 th century CE. 4. Chāmuṇḍā – 9 th century CE. 5. Vaiṣṇavī – 9 th century CE. 6. 2 Images of Viṣṇu – 9 th century CE. 7. 2 Heavily damaged images of Umā-Maheśvara
Ghamandisthan (Sc)	Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 84° 59' E	Mughal Period	Śiva-liṅgas and 2 miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> .
Amwan (Sc)	Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 84° 59' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Buddha – 8 th century CE. 2. Architectural fragments and miniature stone <i>stūpa</i> .
Kendua (Sc)	Lat. 24° 43' N; Long. 84° 59' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Viṣṇu - 9 th century CE.
Ghughritand (Sc)	Lat. 24° 44' N; Long. 85° 00' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Umā-Maheśvara – 10 th century CE. 2. Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpa</i> .
South Quadrant			
Bank (S)	Lat. 24° 29' N; Long. 84° 58' E	Gupta-Pāla Period	None
Binda (S)	Lat. 24° 33' N; Long. 84° 58' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Sūrya – 9 th century CE. 2. Miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> and fragments.
Dema (S)	Lat. 24° 36' N; Long. 85° 00' E	Chalcolithic – Pāla Period	1. Bhairava – 8 th century CE. 2. Avalokiteśvara – 9 th century CE. 3. Eroded sculptures and panels.

Atiya (S)	Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 85° 00' E	Chalcolithic- Early Historic II Period	None
Pirasin (S)	Lat. 24° 34' N; Long. 84° 58' E	Chalcolithic- Pāla Period	Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpa</i>
Wari (S)	Lat. 24° 34' N; Long. 84° 57' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	1. Headless image of Viṣṇu - 7 th century CE. 2. Viṣṇu - 8 th century CE. 3. Avalokiteśvara – 8 th century CE. 4. Gaṇeśa- 11 th century CE. 5. Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> .
Gothu (S)	Lat. 24° 38' N; Long. 85° 00' E	Neolithic-Pāla Period	None
Koshila (S)	Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 85° 00' E	Chalcolithic- Pāla Period	None
Lakhaipur (S)	Lat. 24° 35' N; Long. 85° 06' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	3. Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpa</i> . 4. A bronze-box.
Jagannathpur (S)	Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 85° 07' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> and sculptures.
Gurpa (M & T)	Lat. 24° 33' N; Long. 85° 18' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Inscribed Foot-prints. 2. Fragments of 5 miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> .
Khojwati (T)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 58' E	Mughal Period	Śiva-lingas.
Badki-Babhni (Sc)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 57' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Buddha – 9 th century CE. 2. Buddha – 9-10 th century CE (BG Museum/Acc. No. -149). 3. Miniature stone <i>Stūpa</i> .
East Quadrant			
Bhuthra (S)	Lat. 24° 43' N; Long. 85° 08' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	None
Miyari/Maher (S)	Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 85° 09' E	Neolithic – Pāla Period	None
Malikpur (S)	Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 16' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	None
Silaunja (T)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 85° 01' E	Early Medieval Period	1. Viṣṇu – 9 th century CE (BG Museum/ Acc. No.163). 2. Umā-Maheśvara – 10 th

Kurkihar (M & T)	Lat. 24° 49' N; Long. 85° 15' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	<p>century CE.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2 Images of Buddha – 7-8th century CE. 2. Avalokiteśvara- 8th century CE. 3. 5 Images of Buddha- 9th century CE 4. 2 images of Standing Buddha – 9th century CE. 5. Jambhala – 9th century CE. 6. 3 Images of Buddha- 10th century CE. 7. 5 Images of Avalokiteśvara- 10th century CE. 8. 2 Images of Maitreya Buddha- 10th century CE. 9. Eka-mukhi Śiv-linga – 10th century CE. 10. Half-broken image of a goddess. 11. 3 Images of Lalitāsana Buddha- 9th century CE. 12. Ganga/Godess – 11th century CE. 13. 3 More sculptures inside the sanctum of village temple. 14. Remains and fragments of 30-40 miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>.
Murali Hill at Kurkihar (M)	Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 15' E	Early Medieval period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Śiva-linga- uncertain date.
Hasra-kol (M)	Lat. 24° 46' N; Long. 85° 13' E	EH-II – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2 Miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>. 2. Sculptural and architectural fragments.
Harahi-sthan (T)	Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 14' E	Early Medieval Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heavily eroded Avalokiteśvara – 8th century CE. 2. Buddha – 9th century CE. 3. Durga – 10th century CE. 4. Sūrya – 10th century CE. 5. Umā-Maheśvara sculptural fragments - 10th century CE. 6. 2 Inscribed sculptural fragments – 10th century CE. 7. Temple and brick-platform.

Tapoban (T)	Lat. 24° 55' N; Long. 85° 19' E	Early Medieval Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avalokiteśvara - 2. Sūrya - 3. Viṣṇu 4. Fragments of Umā-Maheśvara
Jethian (M)	Lat. 24° 55' N; Long. 85° 19' E	Early Medieval Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sūrya – 8th century CE. 2. Uma-Maheśvara – 9-10th century CE. 3. 2 Images of Buddha – 10th century CE. 4. Heavily damaged Avalokiteśvara – 11th century CE.
Amethi (Sc)	Lat. 24° 50' N; Long. 85° 14' E	Early Medieval Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amoghapāśa – 9th century CE. 2. Maitreya Buddha – 10th century CE. 3. 2 Images of Tara – 10th century CE. 4. Manjuśrī – 10th century CE.
Punawan	Lat. 24° 48' N; Long. 85° 14' E	Early Medieval Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5 Miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>. 2. Fragments of Buddha and Tara sculptures.
West Quadrant			
Sonpur (S)	Lat. 24° 58' N; Long. 84° 58' E	Neolithic - EH-II Period	Terracotta Naga fragments
Ghenjan (S & T)	Lat. 25° 04' N; Long. 84° 54' E	Early Medieval Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avalokiteśvara -9th century CE. 2. Viṣṇu mounted on a Garuḍa- 10th century CE. 3. Tara -10th century CE. 4. Fragments of a Sūrya image and other sculptures.
Tekari (S)	Lat. 24° 55' N; Long. 84° 50' E	EH-I and II.	None
Baiju-bigha (S)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 49' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	None
Mangrawa-gadh (S & T)	Lat. 24° 42' N; Long. 84° 45' E	Chalcolithic-Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3 Images of Viṣṇu – 9-10th centuries CE. 2. Umā-Maheśvara – 10th century CE. 3. Bhairav -11th century CE. 4. Gaṇeśa -11th century CE. 5. Fragments of miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> and other sculptures.

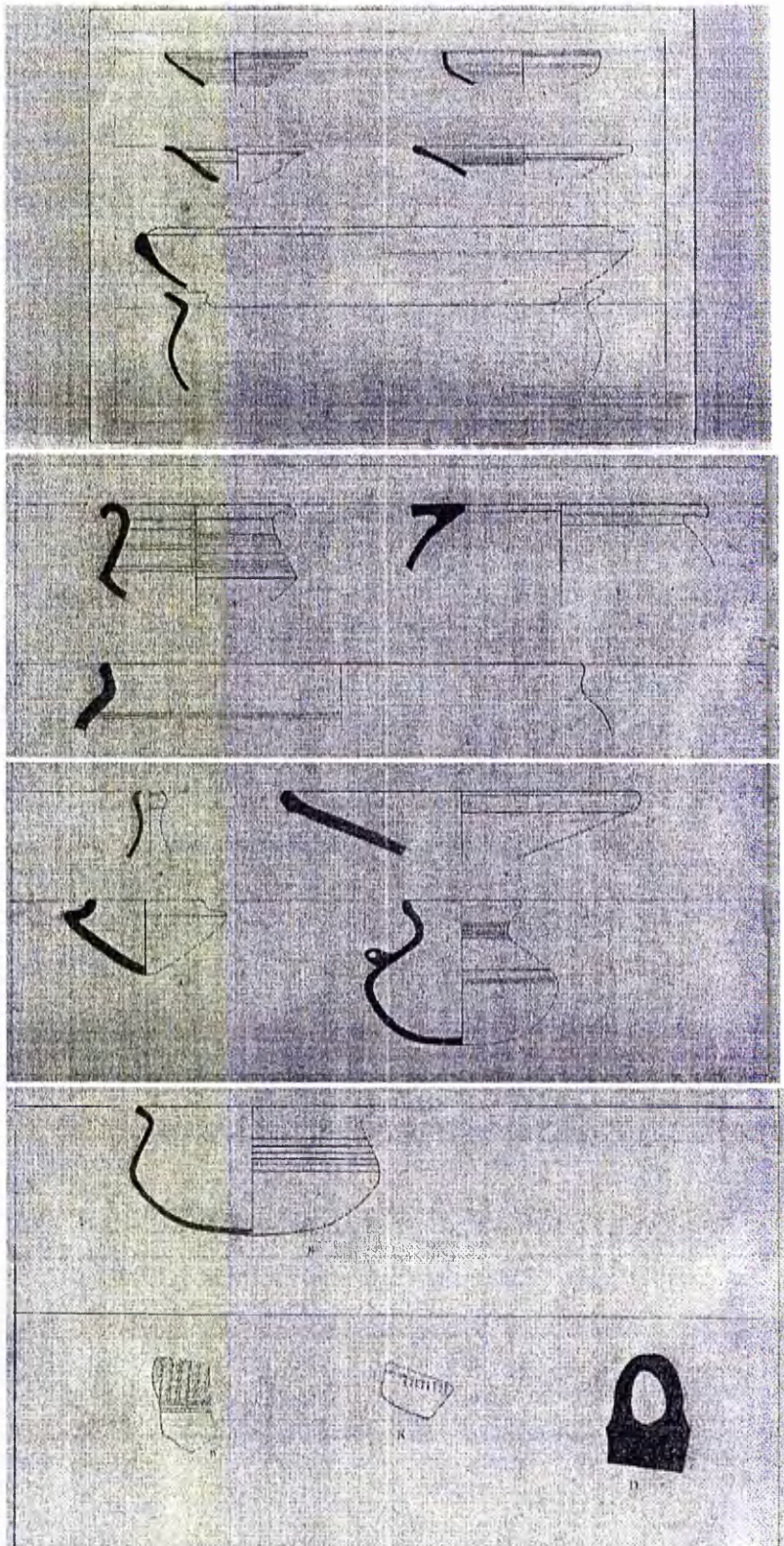
Nasher (S)	Lat. 24° 38' N; Long. 84° 47' E	Chalcolithi – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Avalokiteśvara -7th century CE. 2. Buddha -10th century CE. 3. Navagraha panel - 10th century CE. 4. Śiva-linga – 10th century CE.
Chansi (Sc)	Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 84° 46' E	Pāla Period	Sculptural fragments
Jhikatiya (S)	Lat. 24° 38' N; Long. 84° 46' E	Neolithic – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heavily damaged Viṣṇu – 9th century CE.
Chillaur (S)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 48' E	Neolithic – Pāla Period	None
Nagwa-gadh (S)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 40' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Damaged Buddha statue – 8th century CE. 2. Carved pillar – 8th century CE. 3. Avalokiteśvara -10th century CE. 4. Fragments of sculptures and miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>.
Guneri (M)	Lat. 24° 37' N; Long. 84° 44' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inscribed Buddha – 9th century CE. 2. Heavily eroded and damaged sculptures of Viṣṇu, Durga, Mātrikā-panel, a sati-pillar and miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>.
Kabar (S & T)	Lat. 24° 52' N; Long. 84° 44' E	Chalcolithic – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Śiva-linga 2. 2 Images of Viṣṇu and a partially broken Nṛsimha image – 10th century CE. 3. Heavily eroded images of a Durga, an Umā-Maheśvara and a goddess – 11th century CE. 4. A miniature stone <i>stūpa</i>.
Kespa (T)	Lat. 25° 02' N; Long. 84° 51' E	Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buddha – 9th century CE. 2. Avalokiteśvara – 10th century CE. 3. Viṣṇu - 10th century CE. 4. Lakṣmī (?) – 10th century CE. 5. Viṣṇu mounted on a Garuḍa – 10th century CE. 6. 2 Images of Viṣṇu – 10th century CE. 7. 4 Images of Umā-Maheśvara- 9th-10th

			<p>century CE.</p> <p>8. Gaṇeśa – 10th century CE.</p> <p>9. Four faced Śiva-liṅga – 10th century CE.</p> <p>10. Cuṇḍa -11th century CE.</p> <p>11. Sculptural fragments and numerous sculptural panels.</p>
Makhpa (T)	Lat. 24° 57' N; Long. 84° 50' E	Pāla Period	<p>1. Viṣṇu-Varāha -10th century CE.</p> <p>2. Durga - 10th century CE.</p> <p>3. Sculptural fragments.</p>
Bahelia-bigha (T)	Lat. 24° 57' N; Long. 84° 50' E	Medieval Period	Lakhauri brick temple with a modern Śiva-liṅga.
Misr-bigha (T)	Lat. 24° 56' N; Long. 84° 50' E	Pāla Period	1. Partially damaged Umā-Maheśvar and a broken piece of Viṣṇu- 10 th -11 th century CE.
Utren (T)	Lat. 24° 54' N; Long. 84° 49' E	Pāla Period	<p>1. 2 Partially damaged pieces of Umā-Maheśvara- 10th century.</p> <p>2. Heavily damaged Viṣṇu - 9th century CE.</p> <p>3. Gaṇeśa- 11th century CE.</p> <p>4. Sculptural Fragments</p>
Pali (T)	Lat. 24° 54' N; Long. 84° 49' E	Pāla Period	<p>1. 1 Door-jamb and 5 granite pillars- 9-10th century CE.</p> <p>2. Havily damaged images of an Umā-Maheśvara, a nandi and a Śiva-liṅga – 10th century CE.</p>
Konch (S & T)	Lat. 24° 56' N; Long. 84° 46' E	Gupta – Pāla Period	<p>1. Viṣṇu- 6th century CE.</p> <p>2. Lakuliśa – 7th century CE.</p> <p>3. A Viṣṇu-daśāvatāra – 9th century CE.</p> <p>4. Sūrya – 9th century CE.</p> <p>5. Garuḍa – 9th century CE.</p> <p>6. Umā-Maheśvara – 10th century CE.</p> <p>7. <i>Ekmukhī</i> Śiva-liṅga – 10th Century CE.</p> <p>8. Śiva-liṅga – 10th Century CE.</p> <p>9. 2 Images of Buddha – 10th Century CE.</p> <p>10. Sculptural Fragments.</p>
Baiju-bigha hillock temples (T)	Lat. 24° 40' N; Long. 84° 49' E	Gupta – Pāla Period	<p>1. Śiva-liṅga – Gupta Period.</p> <p>2. Shell Inscription - Gupta Period.</p> <p>3. Temple – 1340 CE.</p>

Burha (T)	Lat. 24° 39' N; Long. 84° 44' E	Early Medieval period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3 Broken Images of Buddha – 11th century CE. 2. 12 miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>.
Dubba (M)	Lat. 24° 39' N; Long. 84° 44' E	EH-I – Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 3 Pillars with <i>Gavākṣa</i> carvings – 7th century CE. 2. 2 Images of Buddha – 10th century CE. 3. Viṣṇu – 10th century CE. 4. 50 Miniature stone <i>stūpas</i>.
Manda hill (T)	Lat. 24° 39' N; Long. 84° 43' E	Pāla Period	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buddha – 10th century CE. 2. Fragments of Umā-Maheśvara, Parśvanātha, miniature stone <i>stūpas</i> and other images.

Abbreviations: S - Settlement site, M- Monastic site, T- Temple site, Sc- Sculptural site

Table C. Main Pottery Types from Bodgavā Region



1. Knife-edged ware, Early Historic-II, Hasra-kol.
2. Shallow bowl, Early Historic –II, Suppi.
3. Lid cum bowl, Early historic – II, Hasra-kol.
4. Plate, Early Historic- I, Bhuthra.
5. Chanelled Bowl, Early historic – I , Suppi.
6. Chanelled Bowl, Early historic – I, Lakhaipur.
7. Carinated *handi*, Gupta Period, Taradih.
8. *handi*, Pāla Period, Taradih.
9. *handi*, Gupta Period, Suppi.
10. Dish on stand/ bowl base, Gupta Period, Baiju-bigha.
11. Plate, Pāla Period, Taradih.
12. Lid cum bowl, Early Historic – I, Gothu.
13. Small pot, *lota*, Pāla Period, Kabar.
14. Carinated *handi*, Pāla Period, Maillpur.
15. Diagnostic sherd, Chalcoithic Period, Kabar.
16. Diagnostic sherd, Chalcoithic Period, Suppi.
17. Handle, Early Historic – I, Baiju-bigha.

Table D: Distribution of Visnu Sculptures in the Bodhgayā Region

Sculpture	Place of Origin	Date	Reference
Krishna	Barabar	500-550	Inscription, CII 3 (1888)
Visnu (broken)	Konch	550-600C	Asher
Visnu	Konch	Early 6 th century CE	Site/tree
Visnu	Davthu	Late 7 th century CE	Huntington - 142
Visnu	Nasher	7 th century CE	Site
Viṣṇu hooded	Dharmaranya	8 th CE	Asher
Viṣṇu	Matangavyapi	8 th CE	Asher
Viṣṇu	Dharmaranya	775-812CE	Asher
Viṣṇu	Konch	DP time/as above	Asher
Viṣṇu	Viṣṇupada Temple, Now Gaya Museum	Late 8 th /early 9 th CE	Asher
Viṣṇu	Krishna-Dwarika/now Gaya Museum	Late 8 th -early 9 th CE	Asher
Visnu	Bodhgayā	Late 8 th -early 9 th CE	Huntington - 100
Visnu 2 pieces /1 single and 1 with 2 other figs	Guneri	8/9 th CE	Site
Visnu	Kawar	8/9 th CE	site
-	Bodhgayā	Early 9 th C	Huntington - 101
Visnu	Siddhesvara/Mahadeva	9 th century CE	Huntington - 97-
Viṣṇu on Garuḍa	Kespa	11 th century CE	At site
Visnu	Kawar	9 th CE	At site
Visnu	Jhikatiya	9 th CE	site
Visnu	Silonja	9 th CE	Bodhgayā Museum
Visnu	Bodhgayā	9 th CE	Bodhgayā Museum
Visnu(m)	Kurkihar	9 th CE	Gayā Museum
Visnu	Dubba	10 th CE	Site temple
Narsingh	Kabar	10 th CE	site
Visnu/varāha	Makhpa	10/11CE	Site temple/mound
Varaha	Siddhesvara Mahādeva Temple	10-11 th century CE	Huntington - 98

Table E. Inscriptions of Gavā

S.no.	Place of find	Date	Nature	reference
1	Mahadeva-shrine at Viṣṇupad	c. 864 CE (time of Nārāyaṇapāla)	Construction of an asrama/nivasa/mathś for the ascetics and Dedicated to the Viṣṇu in the initial part and Nṛṣiṃha, and Lokaikanātha	EI, 35, 1963-64
2	Rāmagayā temple shrine	Pre-990 CE paleographically	Recording gift of a daśāvatar panel by Sahadeva, son of Rīṣi	--
3	Kṛṣṇa-dvārikā temple [Sculpture of Kṛṣṇa & Mahādeva from old site] invocation of viṣṇu and Gayā as a centre of vedic studies and the open door to salvation	15 th year of Nayāpāl- c. 1053 CE	Construction of Janārdana temple by Visvarupa	JASB-1900, no.2, pp.190-195/DCS in EI,36, 1964-65
4	Viṣṇupad courtyard in the small shrine of Nṛṣiṃha	c. 1053 CE	Erection of the temple of God Gadādhara and some other unnamed shrines by Visvarupa	Sircar, EI,36, 1964-65
5	Under God Gadādhara in the Viṣṇupad complex	Probably same as above as donor is the same	Refers to Sūrya and Lakshmi by Visvarupa	Sircar, EI,36, 1964-65
6	Akshaya-vaṭashrine complex	c. 1060 CE - 5 th regnal year of Vighrahapāla	Erection of Prapitamaheśvara and Vaṭeśa and other shrines by Visvarupa/Visvaditya	Sircar, EI,36, 1964-65
7	Sitala-temple shrine	Immediately after Visvarupa as its his son making the grant by Yakshapāla Between 1060-1100 CE	Construction of a temple to house Maunaditya(Sun), Sahasralinga, kamala, Ardhangina, Nārāyaṇa, two Sōmēśvara, Phalgunātha, Vijyādita and Kedāreśvara and excavation of Uttarmānasa ad establishment of Sattra at Akṣayavata	EI, 36, 1964-65

8	Gadadhara temple within Viṣṇupad (mentions Viṣṇu but has siva-linga on its top)	1175 CE/Mentions Govindapāla	Endowment fund for feeding Brāhmaṇas at Gayā by Vidyadhara	EI, 35, 1963-64
9	Gayā Prapitāmaheśvara Temple inscription	24 th May, 1240	<i>Śrāddha</i> by pilgrims- indicates existence of the shrine as Prapitamahevara is invoked as a witness	JAIH- 1971-72, pp.17-29

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

- Bakker, Hans, trs. *Skanda Purāna* Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2003.
- Cowell, E. B. trs. *The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha's former births*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1995.
- Crosby, K. and A. Skilton. *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Oxford: OUP, 1995.
- Davids, T. W. Rhys, trs. *Digha-Nikāya*. London: Pali text Society, 1995, rpt.
trs. *Dialogues of the Buddha*, vol. I London: Pali text Society, 1956, rpt.
- Dutt (Shastri), M. N., trs. *Yajñavalkyasmṛti: with Original Sanskrit Text and English Translation*, Edited by K. L. Joshi. New Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2005.
trs. *Viṣṇusmṛtiḥ or Vaiṣṇava Dharma-Śāstra With an Introduction, Original Sanskrit text and Literal Prose English Translation*. Edited by K. L. Joshi. New Delhi: Parimal Publications, 2006.
- Goswami, B. *Lalitavistāra*. Kolkata: Asiatic Society of Bengal Press, 2001.
- Horner, I. B., trs. *Chronicle of Buddhas, Buddhavaṃsa; and Basket of Conduct, Cariyapīṭaka*. London: Pali Text Society, 1975).
(Trs.), *Mahāvagga: The Book of the Discipline vol. IV*. Oxford: Pali text Society, 1951, rpt.1993.
- Jayawickrama, N. A. *Buddhavaṃsa and Cariyapīṭaka*. London: Pali Text Society, 1974.
- Johnston, E. H. *The Buddha's Mission and Last Journey: Buddhacarita*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1936.
- Jones, J. J. trs., *Mahāvastu*, vol.2. London: Luzac & co., 1949.
- Kane, P. V. *History of Dhamaśāstra*, vol. IV. Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1937.

- Kangle, R. P., trs. *The Kauṭilya Arthaśāstra*, 3vols. Bombay: University of Bombay, 1969.
- Monier-Williams, M. *The Sanskrit English Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1990, rpt.
- Norman, K. R., trs., *Sutta-Nipāta The group of Discourses*. Oxford: Pali Text Society, 2001.
- Olivelle, Patrick, trs. *Dharmasūtras: The Law codes of Apastambha, Gautama, Baudhayana and Vaṣiṣṭha*. Delhi: OUP, 2000. Trs. *The Law Code of Manu*. Oxford: OUP, 2004.
- Pollock, Sheldon I. trs. *The Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki An epic of Ancient India volume II Ayodhyākāṇḍa*. Edited by Robert P. Goldman. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- Rotman, Andy. *Divine Stories Divyāvadāna*. Part I. Boston: Wisdom Press, 2008.
- Strong, J. S. *The Legend of King Aśoka: A Study and Translation of the Aśokāvadāna*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- Vaidya, P.L. *Lalita-Vistāra*. Darbhanga: Mithila Research Institute, 1958.
- Van Buitenen, J. A. B. *The Mahābhārata*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Walshe, Maurice, trs. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A translation of Dīghā Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom, 1987.

Primary Source: Archaeological and Epigraphic Materials

- Akhtar, Naseem. *Patna Museum Catalogue of Bronze and Terracotta*. Patna: Patna Museum, 2001.
- Banerjee-Sastri, A. 'Ninety-Three Inscriptions on the Kurkihar Bronzes.' *JBORS* 26.3 (1940): 236-251.
- Cunningham, A. *Four Reports Made During the Years 1862-63-64-65*. New Delhi: ASI Publications, 2000.

- Reports for the years 1871-72.* New Delhi: ASI Publications, 2000.
- Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80.* New Delhi: ASI Publications, 2000.
- Mahābodhi or The Great Buddhist Temple under the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gayā.* London: W.H. Allen & Co. Limited, 1892.
- Cunningham, Alexander, and H.B.W. Garrick, *Report of Tours in North and South Bihar in 1880-81* New Delhi: ASI Publication, 2000, rpt.
- Epigraphia Indica.* Vols.1-42 (1892-1978). Delhi: ASI Publication.
- Hultzsch, E. 'The Bhagalpur Plate of Nārāyaṇapāla' *IA* 15 (1886): 304-310.
- Hultzsch, E. 'The Sārnāth Inscription of Mahipāla.' *IA* 14 (1885): 139-140.
- Kielhorn, F. 'A Buddhist Stone Inscription from Ghosrawa'. *IA* 18 (1888): 307-312.
- Kuraishi, M. H. *List of Ancient Monuments protected under Act VII of 1904 in the Province of Bihar and Orissa.* New Delhi: ASI Publication, 1931.
- Majumdar, N.G. 'Patna Museum Inscription of Jayasēna'. *IA* 48 (1919): 43-48.
- Prasad, A. K. 'Excavations at Taradih' *IAR* (1991-92): 8-10.
- 'Taradih Excavations' *IAR* (1987-88): 9-11.
- Prasad, A. K and P. K. Chattopadhyaya. 'Proto-historic Copper Objects from Taradih'. In C. P. Sinha, ed., *Art, Archaeology and Culture of Eastern India: Dr. B.S. Verma Felicitation Volume.* Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1997.
- 'Copper-plate Grant of Śūrapāla I'. *JBRIS* 41 (1975): 131-148.
- Sastri, H. *Nālandā and its Epigraphic Material.* Reprint, Delhi: ASI Publication, 1999.
- Sahai, Bhagwant. *Inscriptions of Bihar.* Patna: 1983.
- Sinha B. P. and B. S. Verma, *Sonpur Excavations.* Patna: State Archaeology Directorate, 1977.
- Sircar, D. C. 'Three East Indian Inscriptions of the Early Medieval Period' *JAIH* 1-2 (1971-72): 39-59.

'Three East Indian Inscriptions of the Early Medieval period' *JAIH*, vol. 1-2 (1971-72): 16-22.

Sohoni, S. V. 'Epigraphia Miscellanea' *JBRS* 42.1-4 (1975-76): 190-204.

Srivastava, K. M. 'Excavations at Bakror *Stūpa*' *IAR* (1972-73): 5-8.

Stein, M. A. 'Notes on an Archaeological Tour in South Bihar and Hazaribagh'. *IA* 30 (1904): 66-107.

Secondary Sources:

Agarwal, D. P. and J. S. Kharakwal. *South Asian Prehistory A Multidisciplinary study*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2002.

Ali, D. *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*. Cambridge: CUP, 2004.

Allchins, Bridget and Raymond. *Origins of a Civilization The Prehistory and Early Archaeology of South Asia*. New Delhi: Viking, 1997.

Allen, Charles. *The Buddha and the Sahibs*. London: John Murray, 2002.

Altekar, A. S. *Biography of Dharmasvamin, Chag lo tsa-ba Chos-rje-dpal: A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim*. Delhi: Jainendra Press, 1959.

Archer, Mildred. *Early Views of India*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1980.

Asher, F. M. 'Bodh Gayā Image of the year 64: A Reconsideration' *JBRS* 48.1-4 (1972): 151-158.

The Art of Eastern India Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980.

Ashmore Wendy, and B. A. Knapp, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

Bailey, Greg, and I. Mabbett, *The Sociology of Early Buddhism*. Cambridge: CUP, 2004.

- Bakker, Hans. 'The Footprints of the Lord'. In Diana L. Eck and F. Mallison, eds. *Devotion Divine, Bhakti Traditions from the Regions of India*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1991.
- Bagchi, Jhunu. *The History and Culture of the Pālas of Bengal and Bihar*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1993.
- Balbir, Nalini. 'Jain-Buddhist Dialogue: Material from the Pāli Scriptures'. *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 26 (2000): 1-42.
- Banerjee, R. D. *Eastern Indian School of Medieval Sculptures*. Reprint, Delhi: ASI Publication, 1998.
- Barnes, G. L. 'An Introduction to Buddhist Archaeology'. *World Archaeology* 27.2 (1995): 165-182.
- Barrett, John C., 'Towards an Archaeology of Ritual'. In P. Garwood, D. Jennings, R. Skeates and J. Toms, eds., *Sacred and Profane Proceedings of a Conference on Archaeology, Ritual and Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Committee for Archaeology, 1991, pp. 1 - 9.
- Barua, Beni Madhab. *Gayā and Buddha-Gayā: Early History of the Holy Land* Calcutta: Chuckervertty Chatterjee & co. ltd, 1931.
- Basham, A. L. *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvikas*. London: Luzac, 1951.
The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism. Edited and completed by K.G. Zysk, Oxford: OUP, 1989.
- Bautze-Picron, Claudine, 'Early Buddhist Sculpture at Kurkihār: Images of Bodhisattvas and Tārās', In G. Bhattacharya, ed., *Akṣaynīvi: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Administration of her Scholarly Contributions*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991.
The Art of Eastern India: In the collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin: Reimer, 1998.

- Beal, Samuel, trs. *Travels of Fah-Hian and Sung-Yun*. Reprint, New Delhi: Rupa, 2003.
- trs. *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World Vol. II*. London: Ballantyne Press, 1906.
- Beal, Samuel, trs. *The Life of the Hiuen-Tsian*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1906.
- Beglar, J. D. *Report of the Year 1872-73*. New Delhi: ASI Publications, 2002.
- Beglar, J. D. *Report of the Tour in 1874-75*. New Delhi: ASI Publications, 2000, rpt.
- Bell, Catherine. *Ritual Theory Ritual Practice*. New York: OUP, 1992.
- Benisti, M., *Contribution à l'étude du stupa bouddhique indien : les stupa mineurs de Bodh-Gaya et de Ratnagiri*. Paris : Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient, 1981.
- Bharati, A. 'Pilgrimage in Indian Tradition'. *History of Religions*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963.
- Bhardwaj, S. M. *Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.
- Bhattacharya, B. *The Indian Buddhist Iconography: Mainly based on the Sādhanamālā and Cognate Tantric Texts of Ritual*. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1958.
- Bhattacharya, N. N. *History of Researches on Indian Buddhism*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981.
- Bhattacharya, N. N. *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Early Medieval India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1991.
- Bhattacharya, S. 'Land, Soil, Rainfall, Irrigation-Some aspects of the Backdrop of Agrarian life in the *Arthasāstra* of Kautilya'. *IESHR* 15.2 (1978): 211-219.
- Bhattacharya, T. *The Bodhgayā Temple*. Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyaya, 1966.
- Birnbaum, Raoul. *The Healing Buddha*. Colorado: Shambhala, 1979.
- Bloch, T. *Annual Report of Archaeological Survey of India, Bengal Circle*. Calcutta: ASI Publications, 1902.

- Bose, S. R. and P. P. Ghosh, *Agro Economic Survey of Bihar: A Pilot Study Bihar*. Patna: B.K. Enterprise, 1976.
- Boucher, D. 'The *Pratityasamutpadagatha* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics' *JLABS* 14.1 (1991): 1-27.
- Bowden, Mark, ed., *Unraveling The Landscape: An Inquisitive Approach to Archaeology*. Stroud: Tempus, 1999.
- Bradley, R. *An Archaeology of natural Places*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Braudel, F. *On History*. Translated by Sarah Matthews. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980.
- Brekke, T. 'The Early *Saṅgha* and the Laity'. *JLABS* 19.2(1996): 2-52.
- Bronkhorst, J. *Greater Magadha: Studies in the Culture of Early India*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2007.
- Buchanan, F. H. *An Account of the Districts of Bihar and Patna in 1811-12*. Edited by John F. W. James. Patna: Bihar and Orissa Research Society, 1934.
- Caillat, C. 'Gleanings from a Comparative Reading of Early Canonical Buddhist and Jaina Texts' *JLABS* 26.1 (2003): 25-51.
- Chakrabarti, D, 'Buddhist sites Across South Asia as Influenced by Political and Economic Forces' *World Archaeology* 27.2 (1995): 185-202.
- 'The Archaeology of Hinduism'. In T. Insoll, ed., *Archaeology and World Religion*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 33-60.
- Chakravarti, Uma, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1996.
- Chakravarty, K. K. *Early Buddhist art of Bodh-Gayā*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997.
- Chatterjee, Rama. "Religion in Bengal during the Pāla and Sena Times", (PhD dissertation, Calcutta University, 1967).

- Chattopadhyaya, B. D. *Aspects of Rural Settlements and Rural Society in Early Medieval India*. Calcutta: K. P. Bagchi for the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, 1990.
- The Making of the Early Medieval India*. New Delhi: OUP, 1994.
- Studying Early India Archaeology, Texts, and Historical Issues*. New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.
- Chimpa, Lama, and Alka Chattopdhyaya, trs. *Tārānāth's History of Buddhism in India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970.
- Choudhary, A.K. *Early Medieval Village in North-eastern India, A.D. 600-1200*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1971.
- Coningham, R. *Anuradhapura The British – Sri Lankan Excavations at Anuradhapura Salgaha Watta 2*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.
- 'The Archaeology of Buddhism'. In T. Insoll, ed., *Archaeology and World Religion*. London: Routledge, 2001, pp. 61-95.
- Coleman, Simon, and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage: Past and Present: Sacred Travel and Sacred Space in the World Religions*. London: British Museum Press, 1995.
- Coomaraswamy, A. K. *La Sculpture de Bodh-Gaya*. Paris: Les Éditions d'art et d'histoire, 1935.
- Dasgupta, R. 'Mahābodhi Paving Stone and Later Pāla Paintings'. In C. P. Sinha, ed., *Art, Archaeology and Culture of Eastern India: Dr. B.S. Verma Felicitation Volume*. Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1997.
- Davids, T.W. Rhys. *Buddhist India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971.
- Davidson, R.M. 'Reflections on the Maheśvara subjugation Myth: Indic Materials, Sakyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka'. *JLABS* 14.2 (1991): 197- 234.
- Indian Esoteric Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004.
- DeCaroli, Robert, *Haunting the Buddha*. Oxford: OUP, 2004.

Dehejia, Vidya, 'Aniconism and The Multivalence of Emblems', *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 21 (1991): 45-66.

'The Collective and Popular Basis of Early Buddhist patronage: Sacred Monuments, B. C. 100-A. D. 250'. In B. S. Miller, ed., *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture*. Delhi: OUP, 1992.

ed., *Unseen Presence: The Buddha and Sanchi*. Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1996.

Discourse in early Buddhist Art: Visual Narratives of India. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1997.

Desai, Vishakha, N. *Gods, Guardians, and Lovers: Temple Structures from North India A.D. 700-1200*. New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1993.

Dhammika, S. *Navel of the Earth The History and Significance of Bodh Gaya*. Singapore: Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society, 1996.

Dhavlikar M. K. *Indian Protohistory*. New Delhi: Books & Books, 1997.

Doyle, Tara N. "Bodh Gayā: Journeys to the Diamond Throne and the Feet of Gayāsura". PhD dissertation., Harvard University, 1997.

Dutt, Sukumar. *Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988.

Eck, Diana L. *Darsān: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Chambersburg: Anima Books, 1985.

Egge, James. *Religious Giving and the Invention of Karma in Theravāda Buddhism*. Surrey: Curzon, 2002.

Erdosy, G. 'Early Historic Cities of North India.' *SAS* 3 (1987): 1-23.

Findly, E.B. *Dāna Giving and Getting in Pāli Buddhism*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2003.

Fogelin, Lars. *Archaeology of Early Buddhism*. Lasham: Alta-Mira Press, 2006.

- Frasch, Tilman, 1998 (31st Aug.-4th Sept.) A Remark on the Mahabodhi Temples at Pagan, Paper presented at the Proceedings of the 7th International Conference of the European Association of Southeast Asian Archaeologists Berlin.
- Gellner, D. N. *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual*. Cambridge: CUP, 1992.
- The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism Weberian Themes*. New Delhi: OUP, 2001.
- Ghosh, A. *The City in Early Historical India*. Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1973.
- An Encyclopaedia of Indian Archaeology*, 2 Volumes. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1989.
- Gombrich, R. F. *Theravada Buddhism: a social history from ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.
- Gonda, Jan. *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977.
- Grierson, G.A. *Notes on the District of Gayā*. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1893.
- Gunawardana, R. A. L. H. *Robe and Plough: Monasticism and Economic Interest in Early Medieval Sri Lanka*. Arizona: Arizona University Press, 1977.
- Gupta, P. *Geography from Ancient Indian Coins and Seals*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing House, 1989.
- Guy, John. 'The Mahābodhi temple: Pilgrim Souvenirs Of Buddhist India'. *The Burlington Magazine* 133. 1059 (1991): 356-367.
- Harrison, Paul. 'Is the *Dharma-kaya* the Real "Phantom Body" of the Buddha?' *JLABS* 15.1 (1992): 44-93.
- Hazra, Kanhai Lal. *The Rise and Decline of Buddhism in India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1995.

Heitzman, James. 'Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire'. In K.A.R. Kennedy and G.L. Possehl, eds., *Studies in the Archaeology and Paleoanthropology of South Asia*. Oxford: OUP, 1984.

Gifts of power: Lordship in an early Indian state. Delhi: OUP, 1997.

Hinuber, Oskar Von. *The Handbook of Pāli Literature*. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter & Co., 1997.

Hodder, Ian. 'Interpretive Archaeology and Its Role'. *American Antiquity* 56.1 (1991): 7-18.

Interpreting Archaeology: Finding Meaning in the Past. London: Routledge, 1995.

Reading the Past: Current Approaches to Interpretation in Archaeology. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.

Holm, Jean and John Bowker, eds., *Sacred Place*. London: Pinter Publishers, 1994.

Holt, John C. 'Ritual Expression in the Vinayapitaka: A Prolegomenon' *History of Religions* 18.1 (1978): 42-53.

The Buddhist Viṣṇu Religious Transformation, Politics, and Culture. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Horne, C. H. 'Notes on the Buddha Gayā Temple'. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 34.1 (1865): 132-139.

Huntington, S. J. *The 'Pāla-Sena' Schools of Sculpture*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984.

'Early Buddhist Art and the Theory of Aniconism', *Art Journal*, Vol. 49, no. 4 (1990): 401-408.

'Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems: Another Look', *Ars Orientalis*, vol. 22 (1992): 111-156.

Huntington, John, 'Sowing the Seeds of the Lotus: A Journey to the Great Pilgrimage sites of Buddhism, Part I'. *Orientalis* 16.11 (1985): 45-61.

- Huntingtons, S. L. and John, *Leaves From the Bodhi Tree : The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th centuries) and its International Legacy*. Dayton: Dayton Art Institute in association with the University of Washington Press, 1990
- Inden, Ronald. 'Imperial Purāṇas Kashmir as Vaiṣṇava Center of the world'. In R. Inden, J. W. Walters and Daud Ali, eds., *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*. New York: OUP, 2000.
- Inden, R. *Text and Practice*. New Delhi: OUP, 2006.
- Insoll, Timothy, ed., *Archaeology and World Religion*. London: Routledge, 2001.
Archaeology, Ritual, Religion. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Jacques, C. *Gayā-Māhātmya*. Translated by G. Bonazzoli. Pondicherry: Institut Francais d'Indologie, 1962.
- Jaini, P. S. 'Śramaṇas: Their conflict with Brāhmanical Society'. In P. S. Jaini, ed. *Collected papers on Buddhist Studies*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass 2001.
- Jaini, P. S., ed., *Collected Papers on Buddhist studies*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001.
- Jamuar, B. K. *The Ancient Temples of Bihar*. New Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1985.
'The Koṅcheśvara Temple at Koṅch'. *Journal of Bihar Puravid Parishad 2* (1977):144-153.
- Johnson, M. *Ideas of Landscape*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Joshi, L. M. *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India during the Seventh and Eighth Centuries A.D.* New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977.
Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism: An Essay on their Origins and Interactions. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1970.
- Julien, S. *Memoires sur Les Contress Occidentales*. (Paris, 1858).
- Kadambi, Hemanth. 'Negotiated Pasts and the Memorialized Present in Ancient India: Chalukyas of Vatapi'. In N. Yoffee, *Negotiating the Past in the Past*

- Identity, Memory, and Landscape in Archaeological Research*. Tuscon: The University of Arizona Press, 2007.
- Kejriwal, O. P. *The Asiatic Society of Bengal and the Discovery of India's Past*. New Delhi: OUP, 1988.
- King Richard. *Indian Philosophy An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.
- Orientalism and Religion Postcolonial Theory, India and the Mystic West*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Kinnard, J. N. 'Re-evaluating the Eighth-Ninth Century Pāla Milieu: Icono-conservatism and the Persistence of Śākyamuni'. *JIAS* 19.2 (1996): 281- 300.
- 'When Is The Buddha Not the Buddha? The Hindu/Buddhist Battle over Bodhgayā and Its Buddha Image'. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 66.4 (1998): 817-839.
- 'The Polyvalent Padas of Viṣṇu and the Buddha'. *History of Religions* 40.1 (2000): 32-57.
- Imaging Wisdom: Seeing and Knowing in the Art of Indian Buddhism*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2001.
- Kittoe, M. 'Notes on the Sculptures of Bodh Gyah'. *JASB* 16.1 (1847): 334-339.
- 'Instructions on How to Take Correct Facsimiles of Inscriptions'. In *JASB* 16.1 (1847): 366-370.
- 'Notes on the Caves of Barābar'. *JASB* 16.1 (1847): 401-416.
- 'Notes on the *Vihāras* and *Chaityas* of Bihar'. *JASB* 16.1 (1847): 272-279.
- Kumar, Navin. *Archaeological Excavations in Bihar since Independence*. Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1999.
- Lahiri, Nayanjot. *The Archaeology of Indian Trade Routes up to c. 200 BC: Resources use, Resource access and Lines of Communication*. New York: OUP, 1992.

- 'Bodh-Gaya: An Ancient Buddhist Shrine and its Modern History (1891-1904)'. In T. Insoll, ed. *Case Studies in Archaeology and World Religion*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 1999.
- Lama, Chimpa & Alka Chattopadhaya. *Taranath's History of Buddhism in India*. New Delhi: Motilal Benarasi Das, 1970.
- Lamotte, E. *History of Indian Buddhism from the Origins to the Saka Era*. Translated by S. Webb Boïn. Louvain-la-Neuve: Publications De L'institut Orientaliste De Louvain, 1988.
- Lansing, J. S. *Priests and Programmers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- Perfect Order: Recognizing Complexity in Bali*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Law, B. C. *Geography of Early Buddhism*. London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1932.
- Geographical Essays Vol. I*. London: Luzac & Co, 1937.
- Leoshko, Janice. "The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures of the Pāla and Senā periods from Bodhgayā". PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1987
- Leoshko, Janice, ed. *Bodhgayā: The Site of Enlightenment*. Mumbai: Marg Publications, 1988.
- 'Pilgrimage and the Evidence of Bodhgayā's Images'. In J. Leoshko, ed., *Bodhgayā: the site of Enlightenment*. Bombay: Marg Publications, 1988.
- 'The Implications of Bodhgayā's Sūrya as a Symbol of Enlightenment'. In G. Bhattacharya, ed., *Akṣaynīvi: Essays Presented to Dr. Debala Mitra in Administration of her Scholarly Contributions*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991.
- 'On the Construction of a Buddhist Pilgrimage Site', *Art History* 19.4 (1996): 573-596.
- 'Considering Unusual Images and Their Sites: The Example of Kurukullā from Hasra Kol'. *Journal of Bengal Art* 5 (2000): 29-39.

Sacred Traces: British Exploration of Buddhism in South Asia. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003.

'About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India'. *Archives of Asian Art* 52 (2000/2001): 63-82.

Linrothe, Rob. 'Beyond Sectarianism: Towards reinterpreting The Iconography of Esoteric Buddhist Deities Trampling on Hindu Gods'. In C.P.Sinha, ed. *Art, Archaeology and Culture of Eastern India*. Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1997.

Lopez, D. S. *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

Malandra, G. H. 'The Mahābodhi Temple'. In J. Leoshko, ed., *Bodh Gayā: The Site of Enlightenment*. Bombay: Marg Publication, 1988.

Manne, J. 'Categories of *Sutta* in the Pāli Nikāyas and Their Implications for our Appreciation of the Buddhist teaching and Literature'. *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 15 (1991): 29-87.

Mayer, Robert. 'The Figure of Maheśvara/ Rudra in the rNiñ-ma-pa Tantric Tradition'. *JLABS* 21.2 (1998): 271-310.

Mishra, S. *Irrigation Development and Economic Growth: A Case Study of Bihar Economy*. Delhi: Capital Publishing House, 1988.

Mitra, Debala. *Buddhist Monuments*. Calcutta: Sahitya Samsad, 1971.

'Some Terracotta Plaques and Tablets from Bodh-Gaya in the Patna Museum'. In C.P. Sinha, ed. *Art, Archaeology and Culture of Eastern India: Dr. B. S. Verma Felicitation Volume*. Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1997.

'A Crowned Image of Buddha from Bodh-Gaya in the British Museum'. In C.P. Sinha, ed. *Art, Archaeology and Culture of Eastern India: Dr. B. S. Verma Felicitation Volume*. Patna: Bihar Puravid Parishad, 1997.

Mitra, R. C. *The Decline of Buddhism in India*. Calcutta: Santiniketan Press, 1954.

- Mitra, R. L. *Buddha Gaya the great Buddhist Temple: The Hermitage of Sakya Muni*. Delhi: New Era Offset Printers, 1972, rpt.
- Mitter, P. *Much Maligned Monsters A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Monius, A. L. *Imagining a Place for Buddhism*. New York: OUP, 2001.
- Moore, E.H. *Early Landscapes of Myanmar*. Bangkok: River Books, 2007.
- Morrison, K. D. 'Trade, Urbanism, and Agricultural Expansion: Buddhist Monastic Institutions and the State in the Early Historic Western Deccan.' *World Archaeology* 27.2 (1995): 203–221.
- Mosse, David. *The Rule of Water Statecraft, Ecology and Collective Action in South India*. New Delhi: OUP, 2003.
- Muir, Richard. 'Geography and the History of Landscape: Half a Century of Development as Recorded in the Geographical Journal' *The Geographical Journal* 164.2 (1998): 148-154.
- Myer, P. R. 'The Great Buddhist Temple at Bodhgayā.' *Art Bulletin* 40.4 (1958): 277-298.
- Omvdet, G. *Buddhism in India: Challenging Brahmanism and Caste*. London: Sage Publications, 2003.
- Ohnuma, R. *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2007.
- O'Malley, L. S. S. *Gaya Bengal District Gazetteers*. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1906.
- Pal, Pratpadiya. 'A Forgotten Monastery of Ancient Bihar'. *South Asian Studies* 4 (1988): 80-92.
- Pandey, G. C. *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*. Allahabad: University of Allahabad, 1957.

- Pandey, M. S. *The Historical Geography and Topography of Bihar*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1963.
- Park, Chris C. *Sacred Worlds: An Introduction to Geography and Religion*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Patil, D. R. *The Antiquarian Remains in Bihar*. Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1963.
- Peregrine, P. N. 'Cross-Cultural Comparative Approaches in Archaeology.' *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2001): 1-18.
- Prasad, B. N. 'Major Trends and Perspectives in Studies of Functional Dimensions of Indian Monastic Buddhism in the Past One Hundred Years: A Historiographical Survey.' *Buddhist Studies Review* 25.1 (2008): 54-89.
- Ray, H.P. *The Archaeology of Seafaring in Ancient South Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Monastery and Guilds: *Commerce under the Satavahanas*. Delhi: OUP, 1986.
- ed., *Sacred Landscape in Asia*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2007. pp. 1-17 & 63-80.
- Ray R.A. *Buddhist Saints in India: A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations*. Oxford: OUP, 1999.
- Remusat, A. M., Kalproth and Landresse, *Foe Koue Ki or relation Des Royaumes Bouddhiques*. Paris, 1836.
- Richman, Paula. *Women, Branch Stories, and Religious Rhetoric in a Tamil Buddhist Text*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988.
- Rigg, J., ed., *The Gift of water: Water Management, Cosmology and the state in South East Asia*. London: SOAS, 1992.
- Rocher, Ludo. *The Purāṇas*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1986.
- Roerich, G, trs., *Biography of Dharmasvami A Tibetan Monk Pilgrim*, Patna: K.P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959.

- Roy, Amal, 'Nandadirghi-Vihāra: A Newly Discovered Buddhist Monastery at Jagajibbanpur West Bengal'. In Gautam Sengupta and Sheena Panja, eds., *Archaeology of Eastern India: New Perspectives*. Kolkata: Centre for Archaeological Studies and Training Eastern India, 2002.
- Roy, T. N. *The Ganges Civilization A Critical Archaeological Study of the Painted Grey Ware and Northern Black Polished Ware Periods of the Ganga plains of India*. New Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1983.
- Ruegg, D.S. 'Aspects of the Study of the (earlier) Indian Mahāyāna.' *JLABS* 27.1 (2004): 27-61.
- Salisbury, R. B. and D. Keeler. eds., *Space – Archaeology's Final Frontier? An Intercontinental Approach*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2007.
- Sarao, K.T.S. *Urban Centres and Urbanisation as Reflected in the Pāli Vinaya and Sutta Piṭakas*. Delhi: Vidyanidhi, 1990.
- Sarasvati, S. K. and K. C. Sarkar. *Kurkihār: Gayā and Bodh-Gayā*. Rajshahi: Kshitish Chandra Sarkar, 1936.
- Sarkar, H. *Studies in Early Buddhist Architecture of India*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1966.
- Schober, J. 'Mapping the Sacred in Theravada Buddhist Southeast Asia'. In Ronald A. Lukens-Bull, ed., *Sacred Places and Modern Landscapes: Sacred Geography and Social-Religious Transformations in South and Southeast Asia*. Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 2003.
- Schopen, Gregory. *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1997.
- Sengupta, Nirmal. 'The Indigenous Irrigation Organization of South Bihar.' *IESHR* 17.2 (1980): 157-189.
- A New Institutional Theory of Production: An Application*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2001.

- Sharma, R.S. *Light on early Indian Society and Economy*. Bombay: Manaktala, 1966.
- Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1983.
- Material Culture and Social Formations in Ancient India*. Delhi: Macmillan, 1990.
- Shastri, H.P., trs., *Ramacharita of Sandhyakar Nandin*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1903 & 1969.
- Shaw, Julia. "The sacred Geography of Sanchi Hill: the Archaeological Setting of Buddhist Monasteries in Central India". PhD dissertation., University of Cambridge, 2002.
- 'Naga Sculpture in Sanchi Archaeological landscape: Buddhism, Vaiṣṇavism, and Local Agricultural Cults in Central India, First century BCE to Fifth century CE'. *Artibus Asiae* 64.1 (2004): 5-59.
- Shaw, Julia, and J.V. Sutcliffe, 'Ancient Irrigation works in the Sānchī area: An Archaeological and Hydrological Investigation'. *SAS* 17 (2003): 55-75.
- Sheel, Alok, 'Long-term Demographic Trends in South Bihar: Gayā and Shahabad Districts, 1811–1921'. *IESHR* 29.3 (1992): 323–348.
- 'South Bihar Geography and the Agricultural Cycle: Gayā and Shahabad in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries'. *IESHR* 30.1 (1993): 85–113.
- Shimada, Akira. "A Study of the Amarāvātī *Stūpa*: The Chronology and Social Context of an early historic Buddhist Site in the Lower Krishna Valley". PhD dissertation, University of London, 2005.
- Singh, A.K. *History of the Magadha*. Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1991.
- Singh, P. and Ashok Kumar Singh. *The Archaeology of Middle Ganga Plain New Perspectives Excavations at Agiabir*. New Delhi: Aryan book International, 2004.

- Singh, S.P. 'Archaeological Sites in Gaya: Recent Discoveries'. In U. Thakur, ed., *Glories of Gayā*. Bodhgaya, 1981.
- Singh, R. A. N. *A Brief History of Bodh Gayā Math, district Gayā*. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat press, 1892.
- Singh, R. L. *India: A Regional Geography*. Varanasi: National Geographic Society of India, 1971.
- Singh, Upinder, 'Sanchi: The History of the Patronage of an Ancient Buddhist Establishment', *IESHR* 33.1 (1996): 1-35.
- Sinopoli, Carla M. *Pots and Palaces: The Earthenware Ceramics of the Noblemen's Quarter of Vijayanagara*. New Delhi: Manohar, 1993.
- The Political Economy of Craft Production: Crafting Empire in South India, c. 1350-1650*. Cambridge: CUP, 2003.
- 'Methods, Techniques and Chronology: Introduction'. In H. P. Ray and Carla M. Sinopoli, eds., *Archaeology as History in Early South Asia*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2004.
- 'Beyond Vijayanagara's City Walls: Regional Survey and The Inhabitants of The Vijayanagara Metropolitan Region'. In H. P. Ray and Carla M. Sinopoli, eds., *Archaeology as History in Early South Asia*. New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2004.
- Sircar, D. C. *Cosmography and Geography in Early Indian Literature*. Calcutta: R. D. Press, 1967.
- Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981.
- Select Inscriptions*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983.
- Skilling, Peter. 'Buddhist Sealings : Reflections on Terminology, Motivation, Donors' Status, School- Affiliation, and Print –Technology'. In C. Jarrige and V. Lefevre, eds., *Proceedings of 16th European association of the South Asian Archaeology Conference held in Paris, July 2001*. Vol.2. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilizations, 2005.

- 'Buddhist Sealings and the *ye dharmā* Stanza'. In G. Sengupta and S. Chakraborty, eds., *Archaeology of Early Historic South Asia*. New Delhi: Pragati Publications, 2008.
- Skorupski, T. *A Catalogue of the stoa Palace Kanjur, Bibliographia Philologica Buddhica, Series Maior IV*. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1985.
- Smith, Brian K. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998.
- Smith, M.L. 'Networks, Territories, and the Cartography of Ancient States'. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95.4 (2005): 832-849.
- Smith, V. A. 'The Bodhi Gaya Plaque'. *JBORS* 22 (1936): 267-276.
- Snodgrass, Adrian. *The Symbolism of the Stupa*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992.
- Solomon, Richard. *Indian Epigraphy*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1998.
- Spate, O. H. K. and A. T. A. Learmonth. *India and Pakistan: A General and Regional Geography*. London: Methuen, 1967.
- Spooner, D. B. 'The Bodhi Gaya Plaque'. *JBORS* 22 (1936): 277-286.
- Stargardt, Janice. *The Environmental and Economic Archaeology of South Thailand*. Oxford: B.A.R. series, 1983.
- Strenski, Ivan. 'On Generalized Exchange and the Domestication of Samgha.' *Man* 18 (1983): 463-477.
- Strong, J. S. *Relics of the Buddha*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Tabor, Richard, *Regional Perspectives in Archaeology: From Strategy to Narrative*. London: BAR International Series, 2004.
- Tambiah, S. J. *World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand against a Historical Background*. Cambridge: CUP, 1976.
- The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of Amulets: A Study in Charisma, Hagiography, Sectarianism, and Millennial Buddhism*. Cambridge: CUP, 1984.

- Tarakusu, J., trs., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and the Malay Archipelago A.D. 671-695*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896.
- Thapar, Romila. *From Lineage to State: Social Formations in the mid-First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*. New Delhi: OUP, 1984.
- Cultural Transaction and Early India*. New Delhi: OUP, 1987.
- ‘Dāna and Dakṣiṇā as Forms of Exchange’. In R. Thapar, ed., *The Cultural Past*. New Delhi: OUP, 2000.
- ‘The Renouncer in a Social Context’. In R. Thapar, ed., *The Cultural Past*. New Delhi: OUP, 2000.
- Early India from the Origins to AD 1300*. New Delhi: Penguin, 2002.
- Trainor, Kevin. *Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Trautman, T. *Kauṭilya and the Arthaśāstra: A Statistical Investigation of the Authorship and Evolution of the Text*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1971.
- Trevithick, Alan. *The Revival of Buddhist pilgrimage at Bodh Gayā (1811-1949): Anagarika Dharmapala and the Mahābodhi Temple*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2006.
- ‘British Archaeologists, Hindu Abbots, and Burmese Buddhists: The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya 1811-1877’. *Modern Asian Studies* 33.3 (1999): 635-656.
- Tripathi, Maya Prasad. *Development of Geographic Knowledge in Ancient India*. Varanasi: Bhartiya Vidya Prakashan, 1969.
- Upreti, Kalpana. *India as Reflected in the Divyavadāna*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1995.
- Veer, Peter Van Der. *Gods on Earth*. London: The Athlone Press, 1988.
- Imperial Encounters Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.

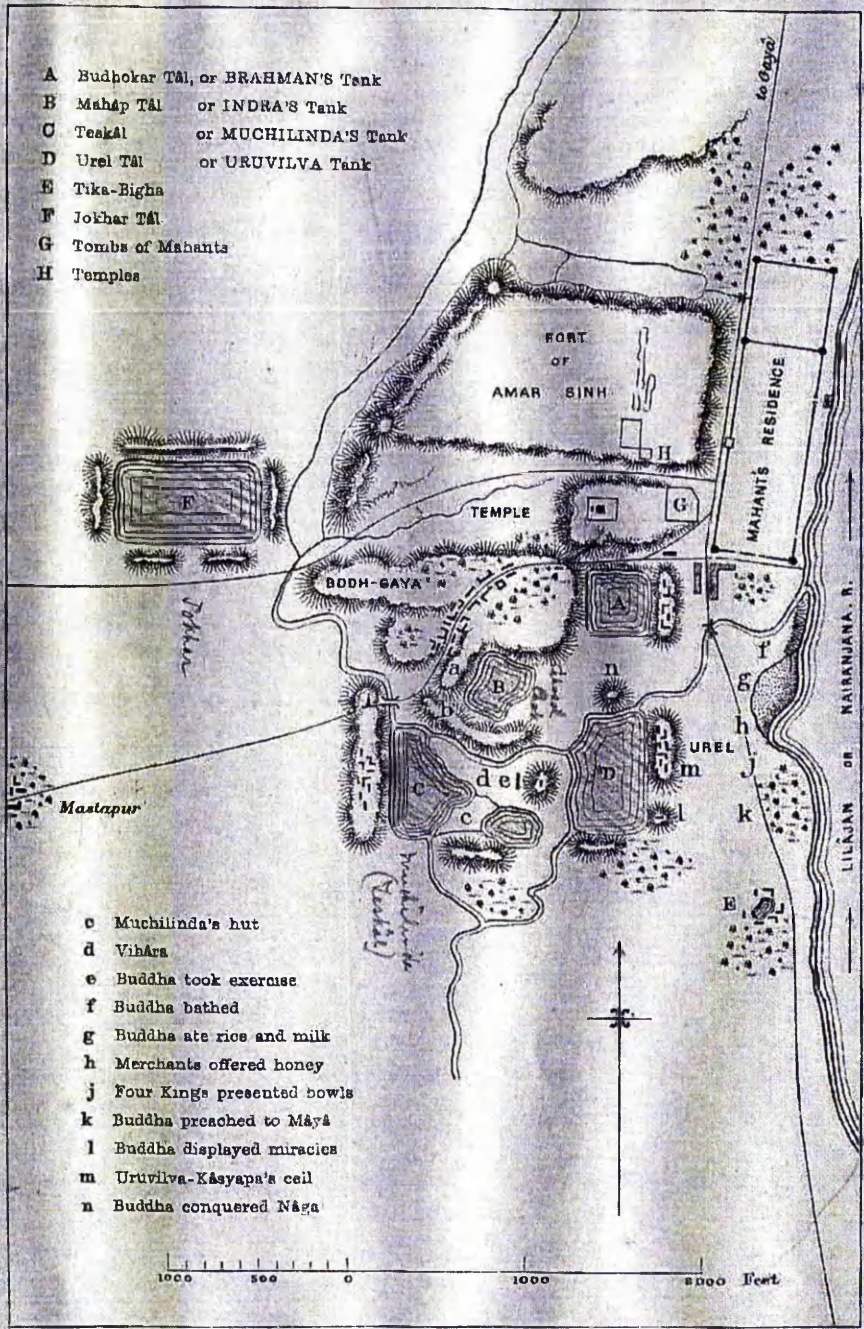
- Veer, Peter Van Der and K.R. van Kooij, eds., *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995.
- Verardi, G. 'Images of Destruction An Enquiry into Hindu Icons in their Relation to Buddhism'. In G. Verardi and Silvio Vita, eds., *Buddhist Asia 1: Papers from the first Conference of Buddhist Studies held in Naples in May 2001*. Kyoto: Italian School of East Asian Studies, 2003.
- Vielle, C. 'From the *Vāyuprokta* to the *Vāyu* and *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas*: Preliminary Remarks towards a Critical Edition of the *Vāyuprokta Brahmāṇḍapurān*'. In P. Koskikallio, ed., *Epics, Khilas, and Purāṇas: Continuities and Ruptures*. Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2005.
- Wagle, N.K. *Society at the time of the Buddha*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1966.
- Walters, J.S. 'Stūpa, Story, and Empire: Constructions of the Buddha Biography in Early Post-Aśokan India'. In J. Schober, ed., *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and South-east Asia* Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.
- 'Buddhist History: The Sri Lankan Pala Vaṃśas and Their Community'. In R. Inden, J.S. Walters and Daud Ali, eds., *Querying the Medieval: Texts and the History of Practices in South Asia*. New York: OUP, 2000.
- Waters, Thomas, trs. *On Yuan Chwang's travels in India A.D. 629-645*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1973.
- Willis, Michael, J. Cribb and J Shaw, eds. *Buddhist Reliquaries from Ancient India*. London: British Museum Press, 2000.
- Willis, Michael. 'The Sanchi Bodhisattva dated Kuṣāṇa year 28'. In *Journal of the Institute of Silk Road Studies* 6 (1999-2000): 269-273.
- 'Relics and Rice' Paper presented at the Royal Asiatic Society, London, October, 2004.
- The Archaeology of Early Hindu Ritual: Temples and the establishment of Gods*. Cambridge: CUP, 2008, forthcoming.

Wynne, Alexander. 'The Oral Transmission of Early Buddhist Literature'. *JLABS* 27.1 (2004): 97-127.

Xing, Guang. *The Concept of the Buddha: It's Evolution from Early Buddhism to the Trikaya theory*. London: Routledge, 2005.

Zysk, K. G. *Asceticism and Healing in Ancient India*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1991.

PART II
ILLUSTRATIONS



A. Cunningham, del.

Lithographed at the Surveyor General's Office, Calcutta, April 1880.

Fig. 1.1 Cunningham's Plan of Bodhgayā, (BM, Asia, Cunningham Bodhgayā Archive)

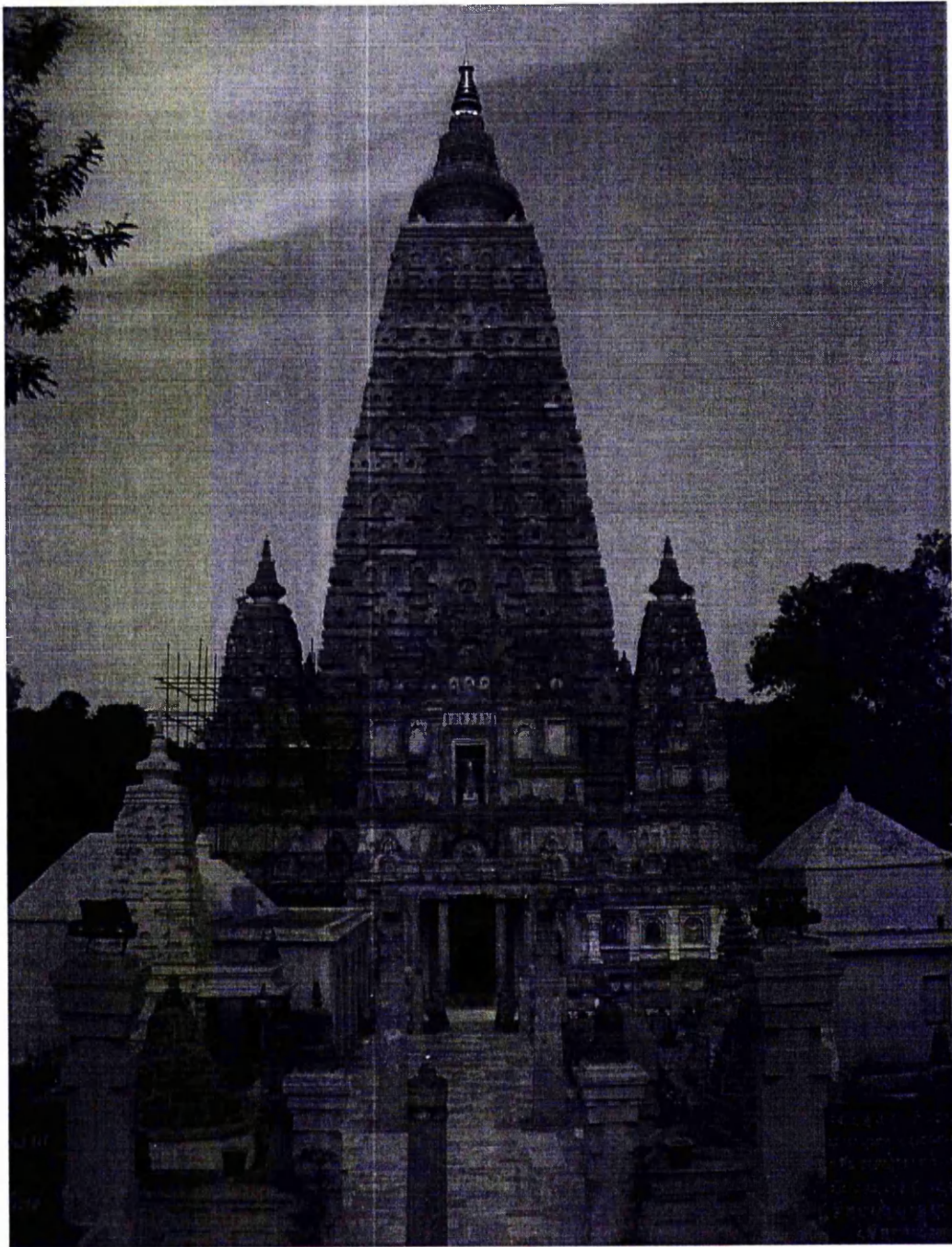


Fig. 1.2 The Mahābodhi *Mahāvihāra*

Study Area Introduction Bodhgaya

Gaya district

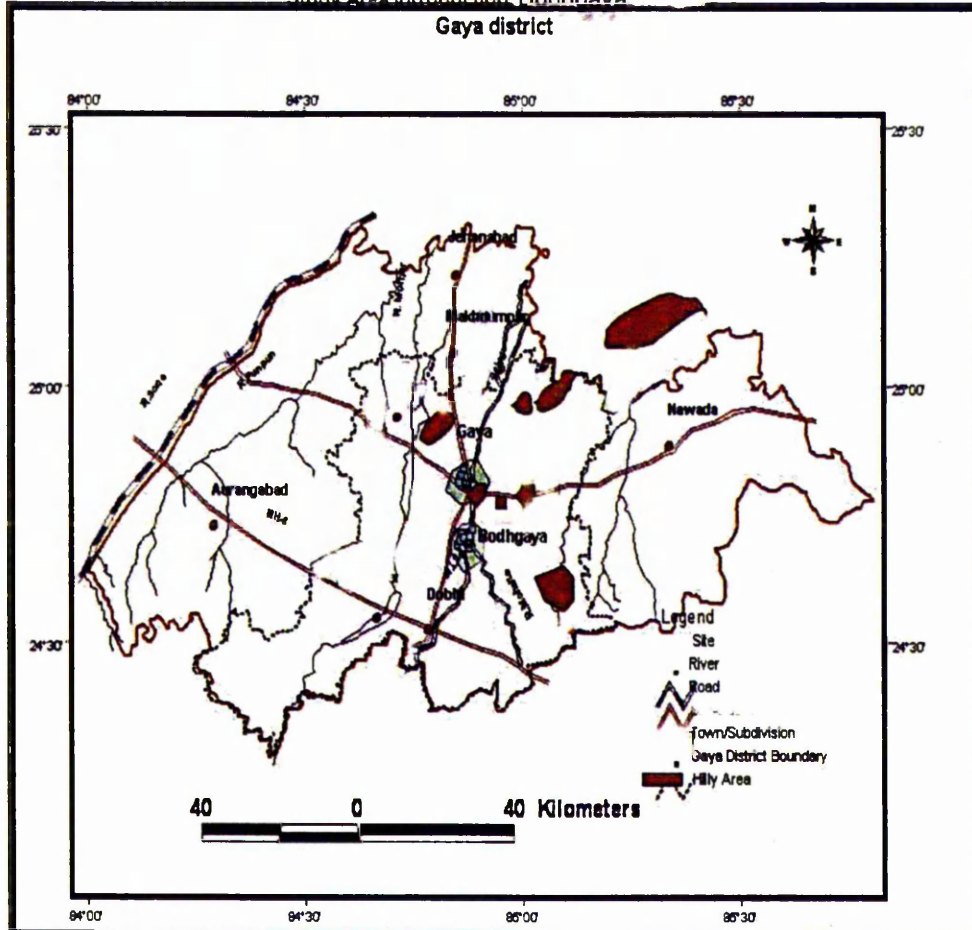


Fig 1.3 The Bodhgayā Region (The area within black dots currently fall within the Gayā district. The area north of NH2, within black dots, is part of the Bodhgayā region for this study.)

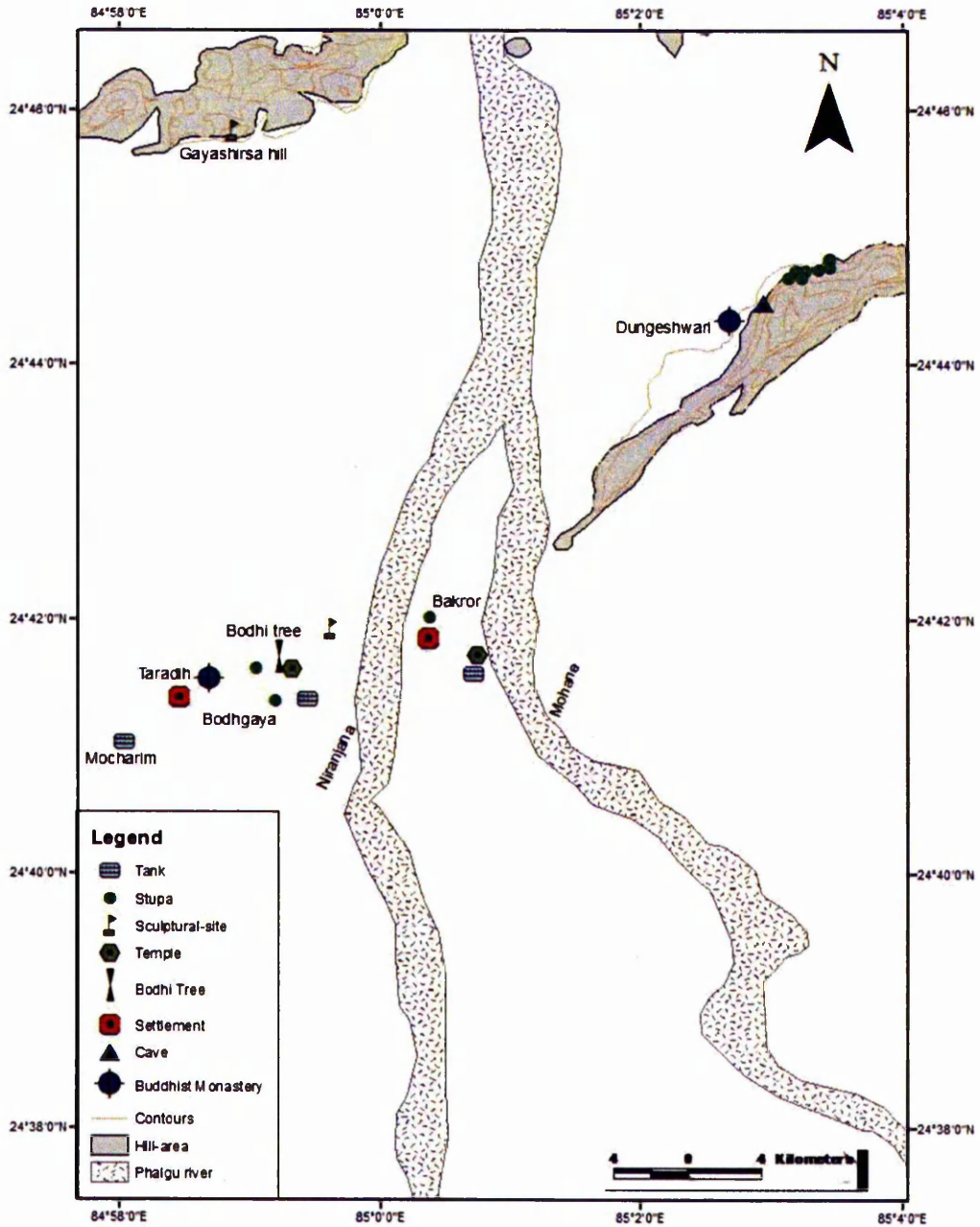


Fig. 2.1 Sacred Sites in and around Bodhgaya



Fig. 2.2 The Bakror Stūpa

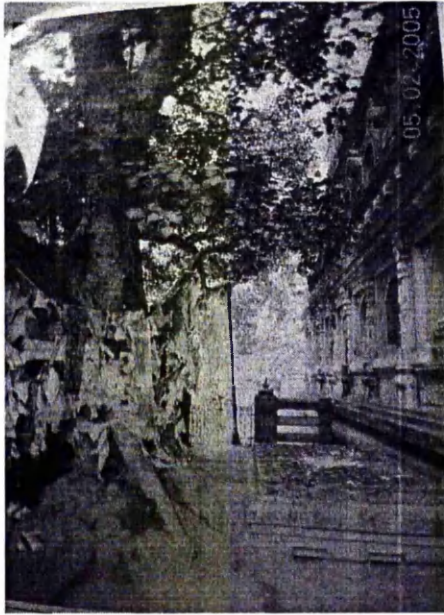


Fig. 2.3 The Bodhi Tree



Fig. 2.4 The Bodhi Seat (BM, Asia, Cunningham- Bodhgayā Archive)

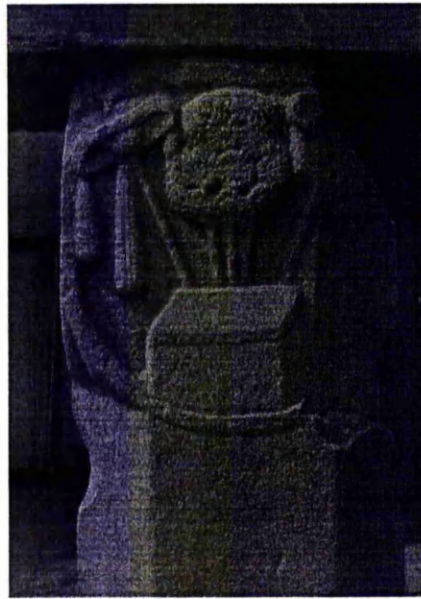


Fig. 2.5 Bharhut Pillar Railing (IM, Kolkatta) Fig. 2.6 Bodhgayā Pillar Railing (BG Museum)



Fig. 2.7 Bodhi Tree, being worshipped by Nāga and other mythical Creatures (BG Museum)

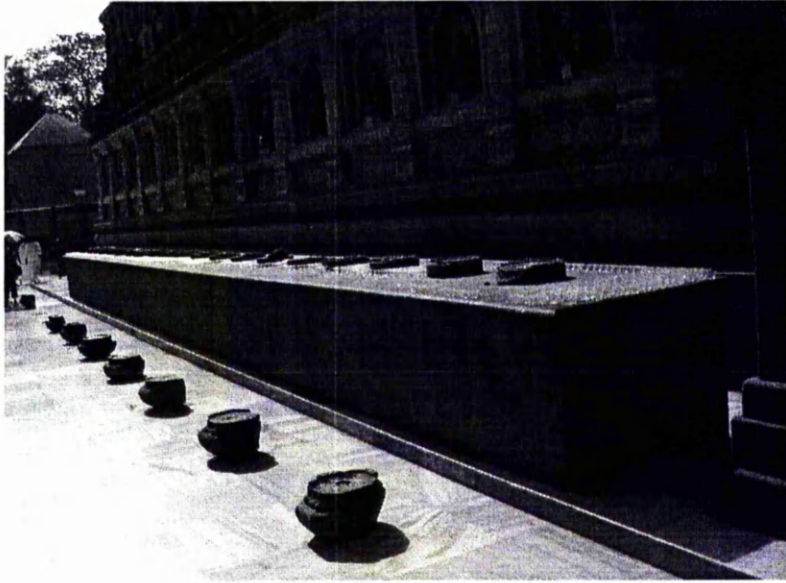


Fig.2.8 Jewelled-walk, Bodhgayā

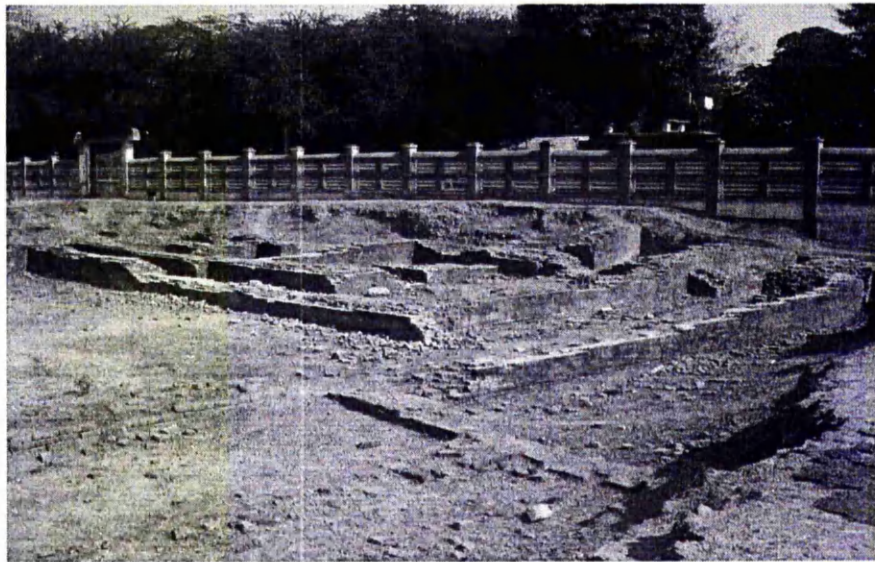


Fig. 2.9 Excavated Ruins of Taradih Monastery, Bodhgayā

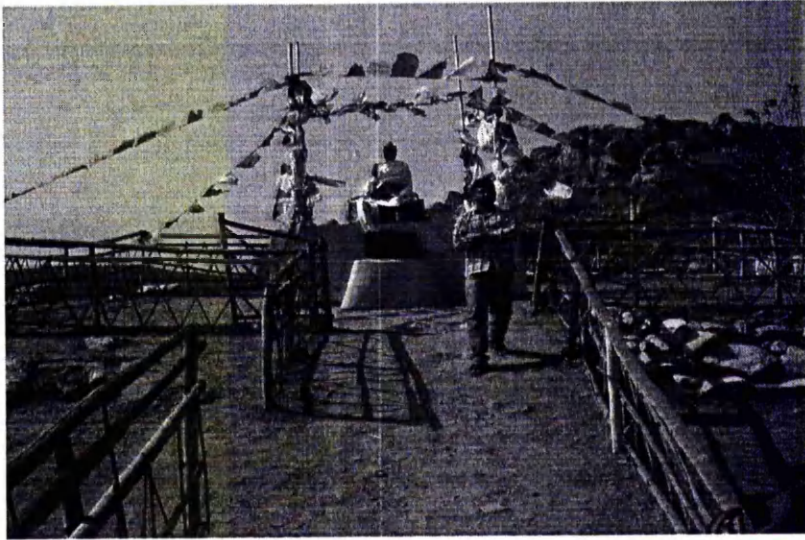


Fig. 2.10 Gayāśīrṣa Hill, Gayā



Fig. 2.11 Dungeshwari Cave, Mora Hill, Bodhgayā

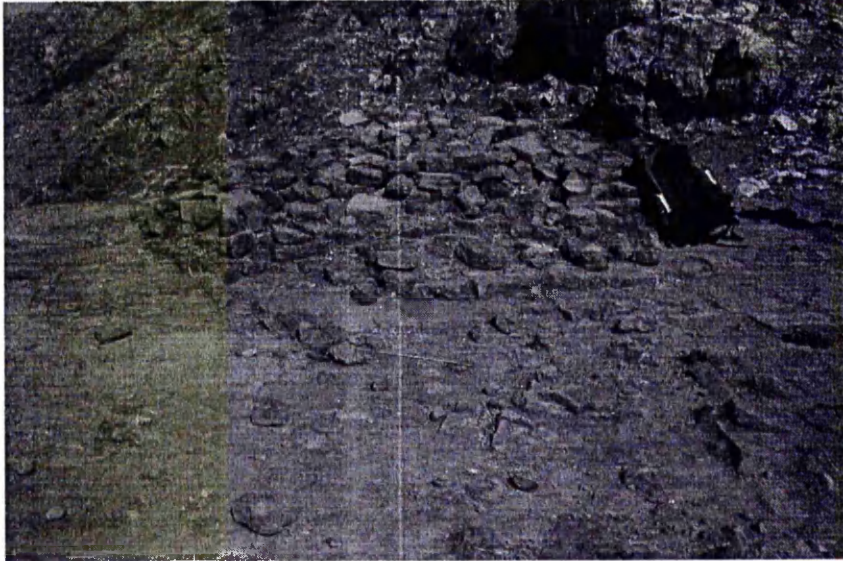


Fig. 2.12 *Stūpa*, Mora Hill Bodhgayā



Fig. 2.13 Remains of a Monastery, Mora Hill, Bodhgayā

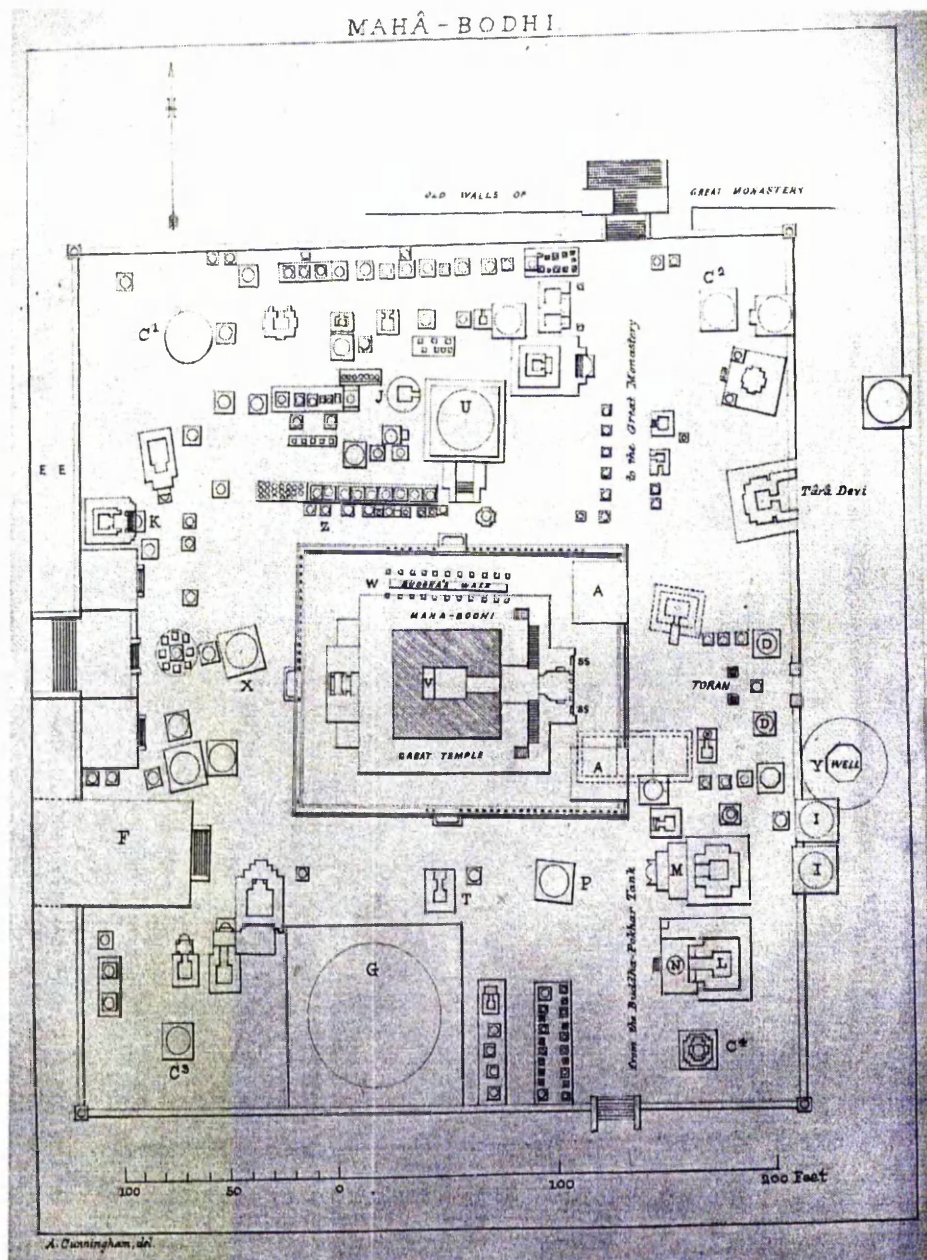


Fig. 2.14 Cunningham's drawing of Bodhgayā based on Xuanzang (BM, Asia, Cunningham-Bodhgayā Archive)

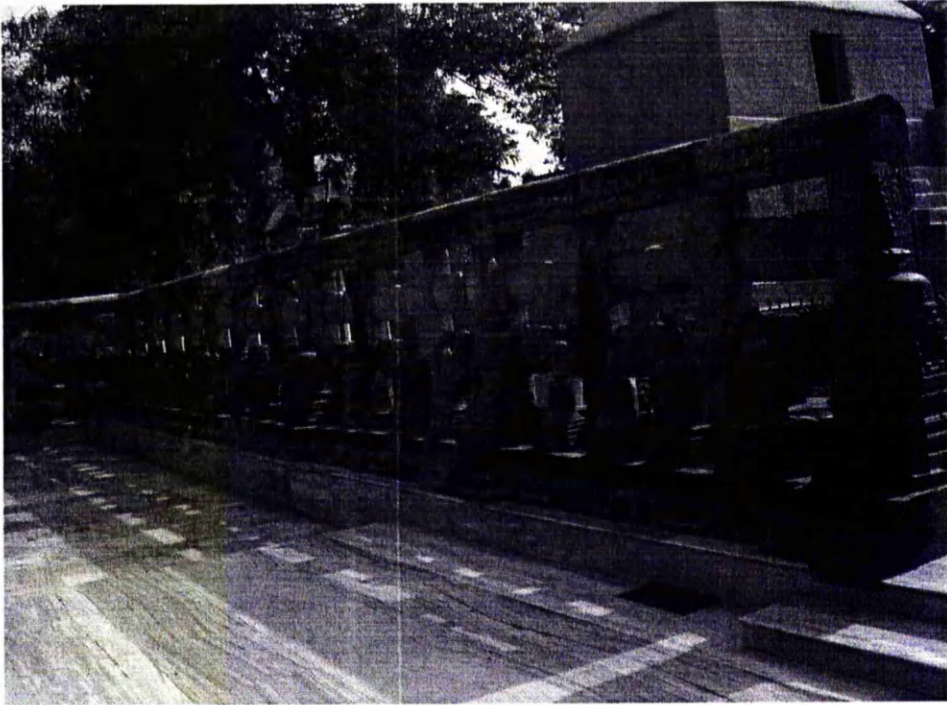


Fig. 2.15 Miniature Stone *Stūpa*, Bodhgayā

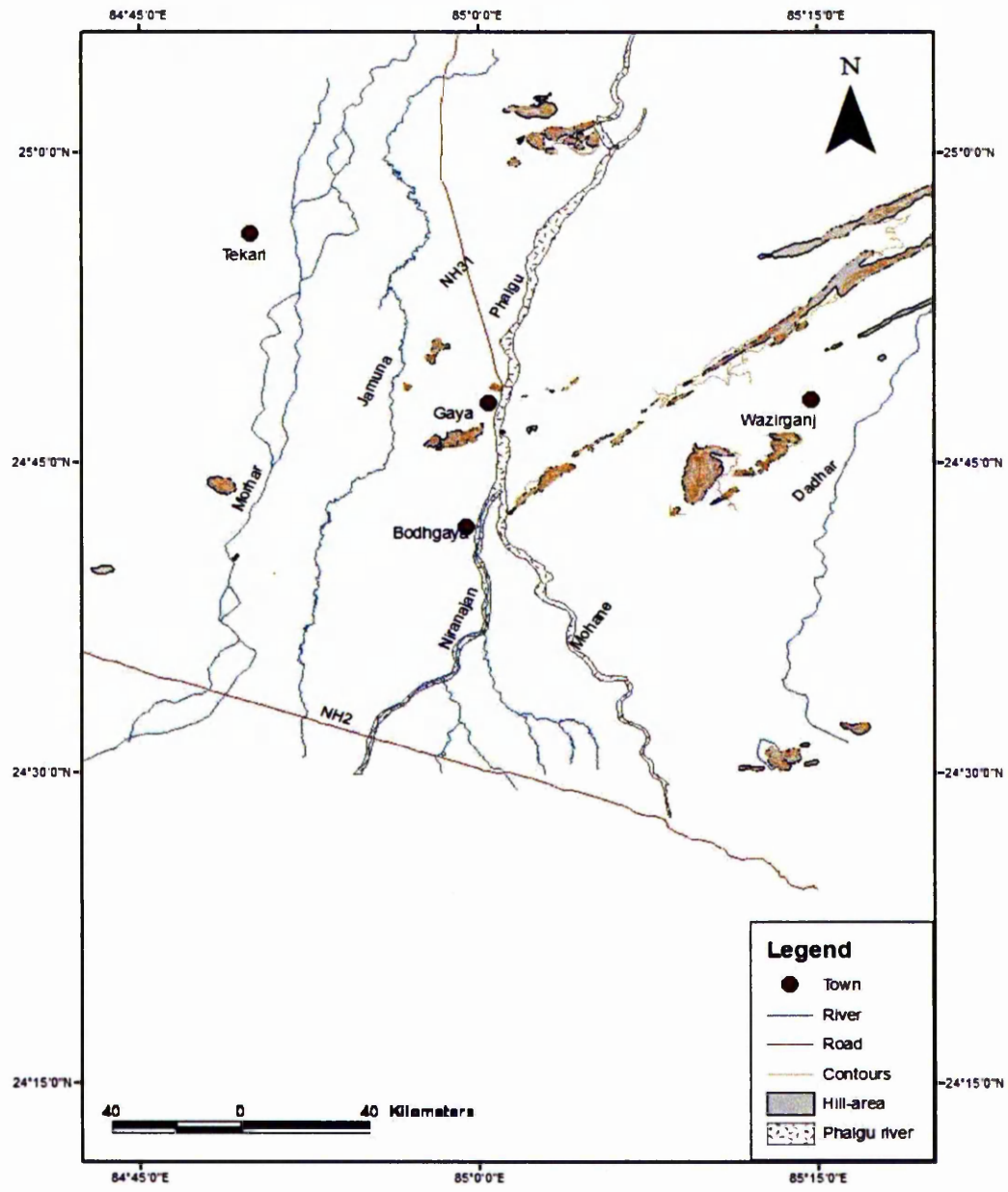


Fig. 3.1 The Bodhgayā Region



Fig. 3.2 Miniature Stone *Stūpas*

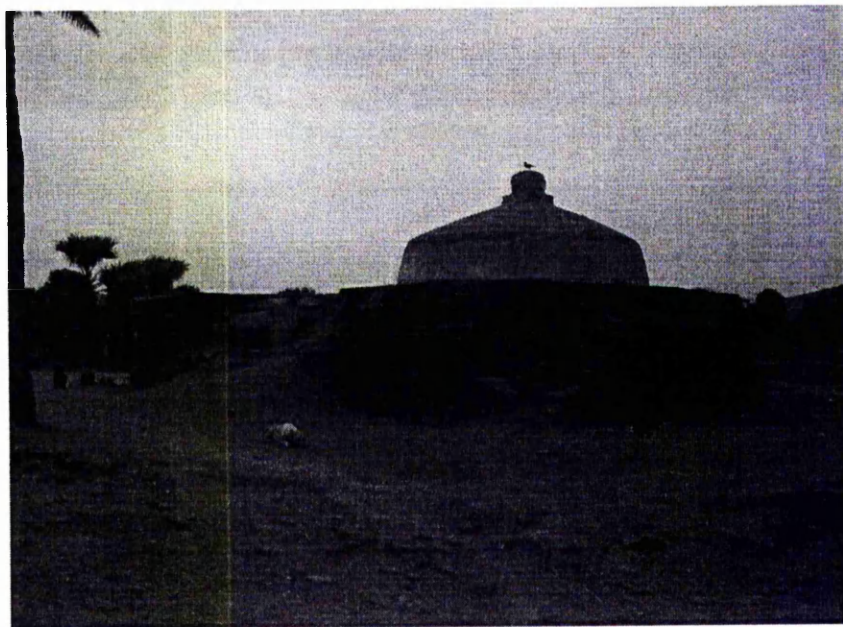


Fig. 3.3 Temples



Fig. 3.4 Neolithic Pottery (Red ware and diagnostic sherds) (1. Jhikatiya, 2. Suppi, 3. Dharawat, 4.Koshila, 5 & 6. Gothu, 7. Maher)



Fig. 3.5 Chalcolithic Pottery (Black and red Ware) (1. Koshila, 2. Taradih, 3. Sumera, 4. Dema, 5 & 6. Jhikatiya, 7. Suppi, 8. Maher, 9. Pirasin, 10. Nasher)



Fig. 3.6 Early Historic –I Pottery (NBP ware) (1. Sonpur, 2. Rajgir, 3. Jhikatiya, 4. Chillor, 5. Gothu, 6. Mangrawa, 7. Sumera).



Fig. 3.7 Early Historic-I Pottery (NBP associated Red ware- pots) (1 & 2. Baiju-Bigha, 3. Lakhaipur, 4. Rajgir, 5 & 6. Suppi, 7. Dema).



Fig. 3.8 Early Historic-II Pottery (NBP associated Red ware) (1. Dharawat, 2. Nasher 3. Kabar, 4. Malikpur, 5. Gothu, 6. Sumera, 7. Bhuthra).



Fig. 3.9 Early Historic-II Pottery (NBP associated Red ware) (1. Dema, 2. Koshila, 3. Koch, 4. Kabar, 5 & 6. Kurkihar, 7. Lakhaipur, 8. Sumera, 9. Chillor, 10. Wari, 11. Pirasin)



Fig. 3.10 Gupta Period (Red ware) (1. Lakhaipur, 2. Koshila, 3. Khikatiya, 4. Malikpur, 5. Gothu)



Fig. 3.11 Early Medieval Period (Slipped red ware) (1. Sumera, 2. Koshila, 3 & 6. Suppi, 4 & 5. Chillor, 7. Bakror, 8 & 9. Jhikatiya, 10. Baiju-bigha, 11. Bhuthra)

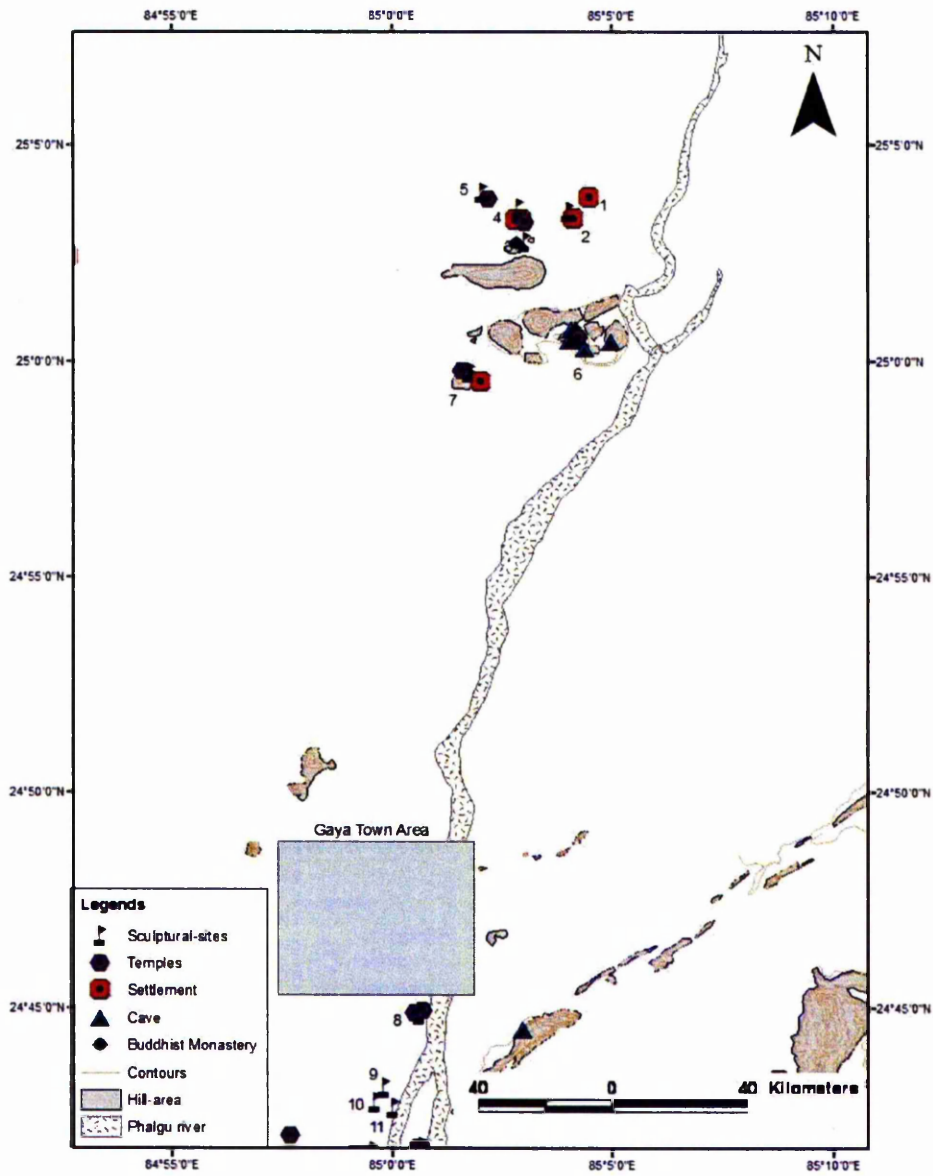


Fig. 3.12 Site-distribution in the Northern Quadrant

1. Suppi-gadh 2. Sumera 3. Kunwa hill, Dharawat 4. Dharawat village settlement 5. Mira-bigha 6. Bararbar caves and Siddheshwar-sthan temple 7. Kauwa-dol 8. Ghugritand 9. Kendua 10. Amwan 11. Ghamandi-sthan.



Fig.3.13 Suppi-gadh Settlement Mound



Fig. 3.14 Sumera Settlement Mound



Fig. 3.15 Avalokiteśvara, Sumera.

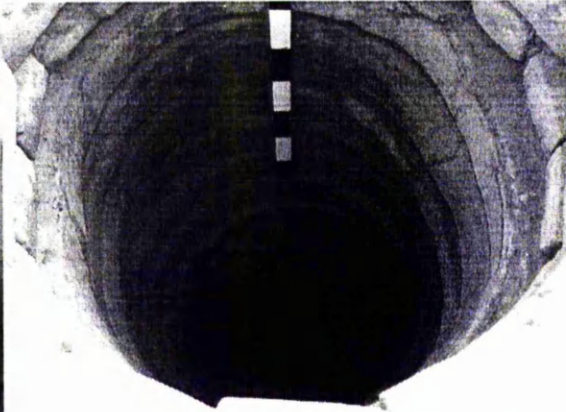


Fig.3.16 Ring-well, Dharawat, EH-I



Fig. 3.17 Terracotta figurines, Dharawat, EH-I



Fig. 3.18 Monastic-wall, Kunwa hill Slope, Dharawat



Fig. 3.19 Monastic wall, Kunwa hill-top, Dharawat



Fig. 3.20 Remains of the Temple-wall, Kunwa-hill, Dharawat



Fig. 3.21 Remains of a Masonary wall, Kunwa-hill, Dharawat



Fig. 3.22 *Stūpa* at Kunwa hill, Dharawat



Fig. 3.23 Terracotta Buddha, Dharawat



Fig. 3.24 Terracotta Sealings, Dharawat



Fig. 3.25 Buddha, Kauwa-dol



Fig.3.26 Rock-carvings of Buddhist and Brāhmanical Gods, Kauwa-dol



Fig. 3.26 Pārvatī, Siddheśvar-sthan



Fig. 3.27 Yakṣi, Mira-bigha



Fig. 3.28 Chāmuṇḍā, Mira-bigha



Fig. 3.29 Viṣṇu, Kendua

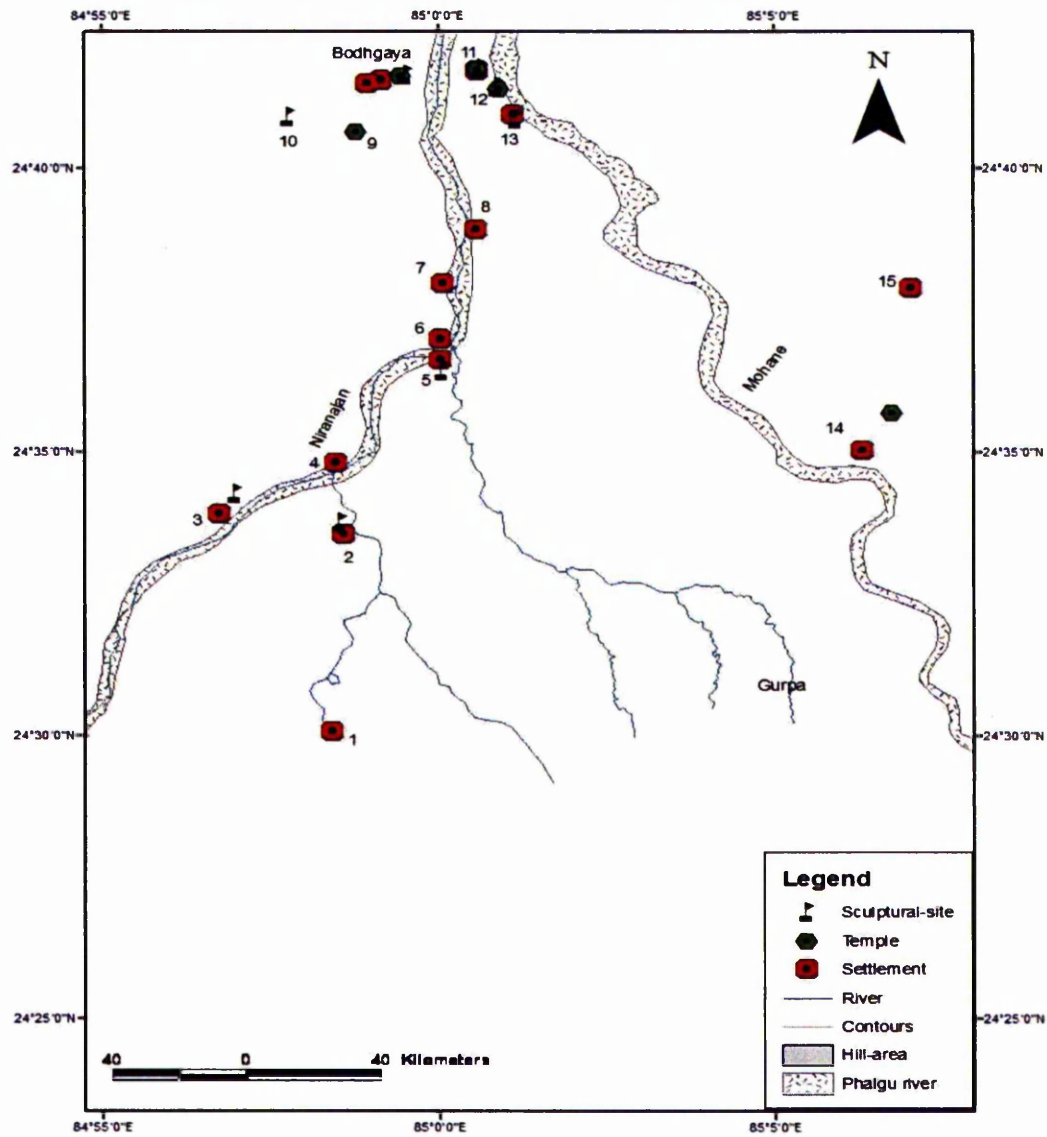


Fig.3.30 Site-distribution in the Southern Quadrant

1. Bank
2. Binda
3. Wari
4. Pirasin
5. Dema
6. Koshila
7. Atiya
8. Gothu
9. Khojwatti
10. Badki-Bhabhni
11. Bakror
12. Dharmaranya
13. Silonja
14. Lakhaipur
15. Jagannathpur



Fig. 3.31 Sūrya, Binda



Fig. 3.32 Avalokiteśvara, Dema



Fig. 3.33 Viṣṇu, Wari



Fig. 3.34 Inscribed Foot-print, Gurpa



Fig. 3.35 Buddha, Badki-Babhni

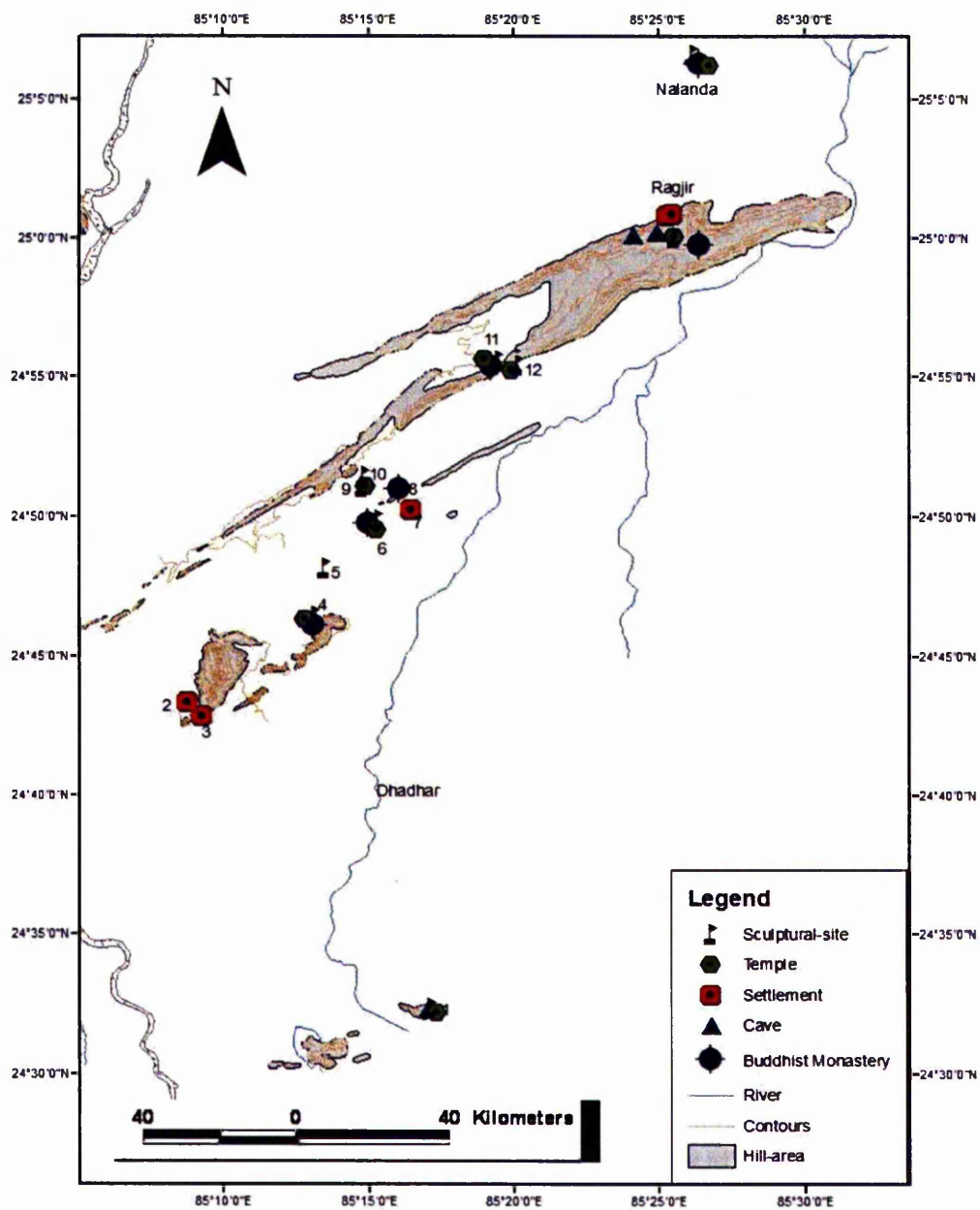


Fig. 3.36 Site-distribution in the Eastern Quadrant

1. Gurpa, 2. Bhuthra, 3. Maher, 4. Hasra-kol, 5. Punawan, 6. Kurkihar, 7. Mailkpur, 8. Mrali hill at Kurkihar, 9. Harahi-sthan (Orel), 10. Amethi, 11. Jethian, and 12. Tapoban.



Fig. 3.37 Exposed wall of a Monastery, Kurkihar



Fig.3.38 Standing Buddha, Kurkihar

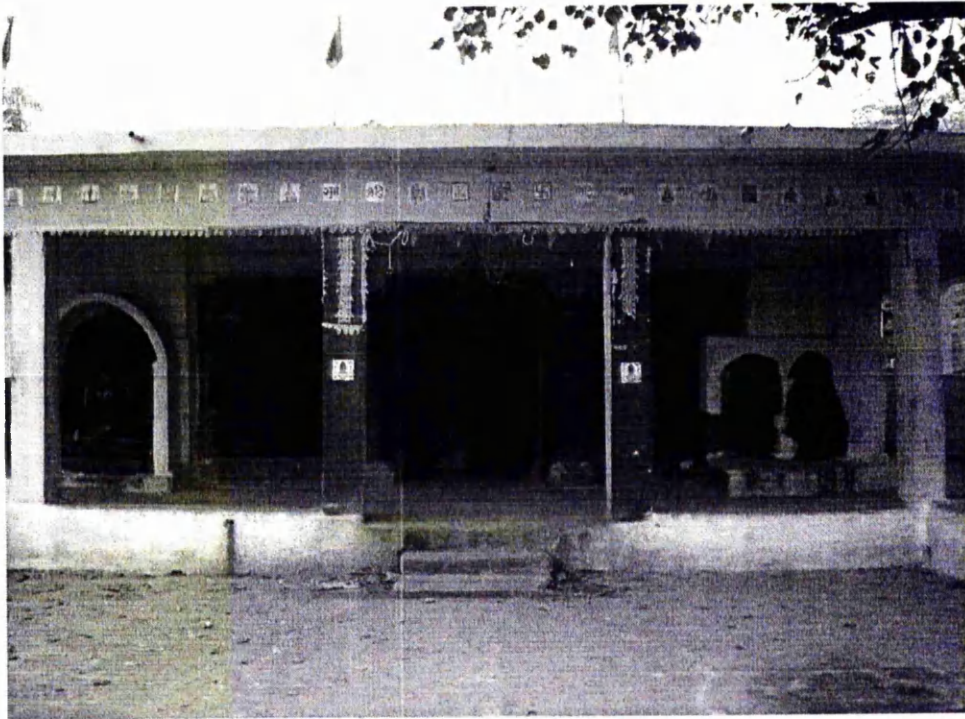


Fig. 3.39 Buddhist Images, Kurkihar temple



Fig.3.40 Remains of miniature stone *stūpas*, Kurkihar

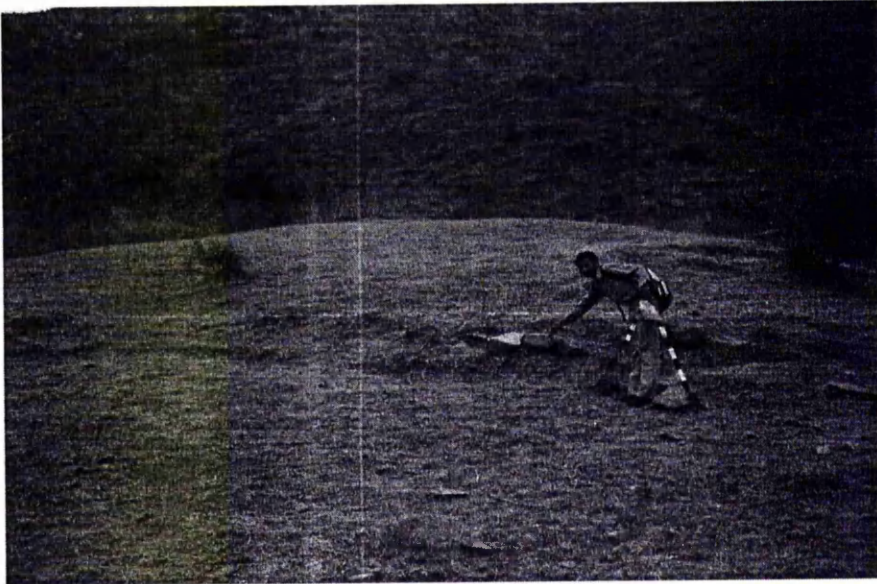


Fig. 3.41 Remains of a *stūpa*, Hasra-kol



Fig. 3.42 Sculptural Remains, Hasra-kol



Fig. 3.43 Durga, Harahi-sthan



Fig. 3.44 Sūrya, Harahi-sthan



Fig. 3.45 Inscribed Fragment, Harahi--sthan



Fig. 3.46 Remains of a temple at hill-site, Jethian



Fig. 3.47 Buddha, Jethian



Fig. 3.48 Amoghapāśa, Amethi



Fig. 3.49 Tara, Amethi



Fig. 3.50 Manjuśrī, Amethi

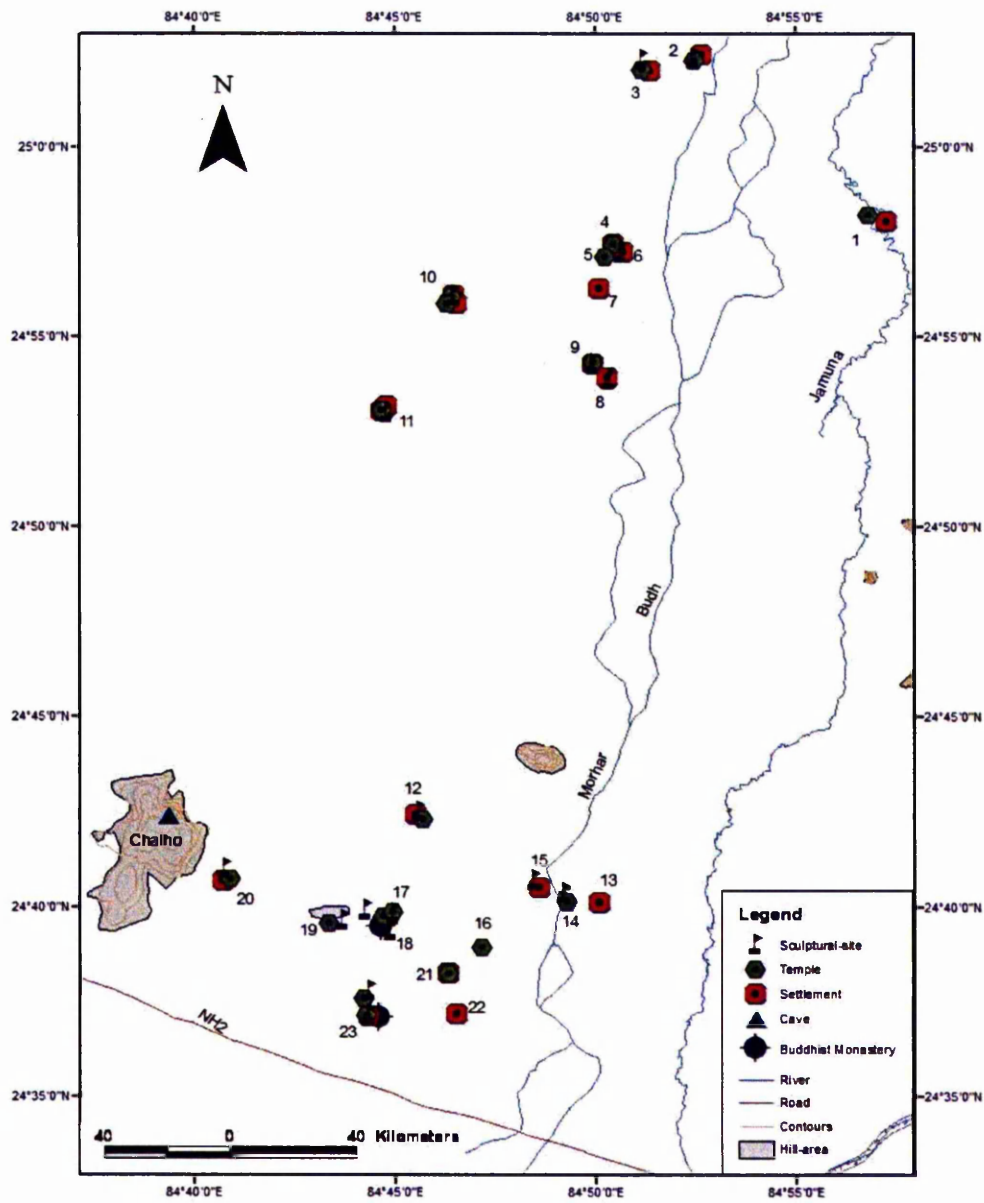


Fig. 3.51 Site-distribution in the Western Quadrant

1. Sonpur, 2. Ghenjan, 3. Kespa, 4. Makhpa, 5. Misr-bigha, 6. Bahelia-bigha, 7. Tekari, 8. Utren, 9. Pali, 10. Koch, 11. Kabar, 12. Mangrawan-gadh, 13. Baiji-bigha, 14. Baiji-bigha hillock temples, 15. Chillaur, 16. Chansi, 17. Burha, 18. Dubba, 19. Manda-hill, 20. Nagwa-gadh, 21. Nasher, and 22. Jhikatiya.



Fig. 3.52 Viṣṇu, Mangrawan



Fig. 3.53 Bhairav, Mangrawan



Fig. 3.54 Buddha, Liṅga and Navagraha-panel, Nasher



Fig. 3.55 Avalokiteśvara,
Nagwa-gadh



Fig. 3.56 Remains of a temple, Kabar



Fig. 3.57 Śiva-liṅga, Kabar



Fig. 3.58 Viṣṇu, Kespa



Fig. 3.59 Viṣṇu, Kespa



Fig. 3.60 Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, Kespa



Fig. 3.61 Lakṣmī (?), Kespa



Fig. 3.62 Cuṇḍa, Kespa



Fig. 3.63 Buddha, Kespa



Fig. 3.64 Viṣṇu-Varāha, Makhpa



Fig. 3.65 Gaṇeśa, Utren



Fig. 3.66 Sculpted-pillar, Pali



Fig. 3.67 Viṣṇu-daśāvatāra, Konch



Fig. 3.68 Ekamukhi linga, Konch



Fig. 3.69 Lakuliśa, Konch temple

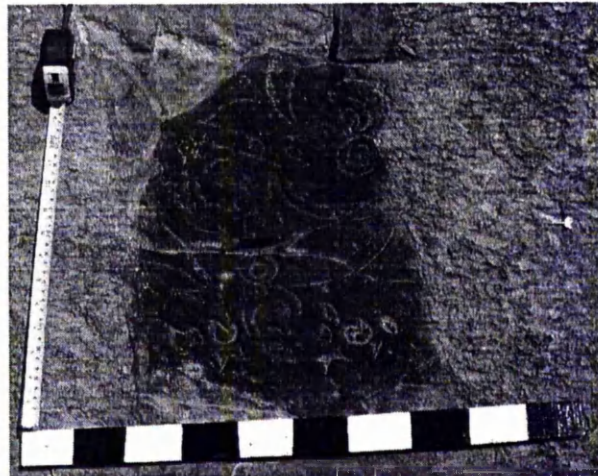


Fig. 3.70 Shell-inscription, Baiju-bigha hillock



Fig. 3.71 Inscribed hillock temple, Baiju-bigha



Fig. 3.72 *Stūpa* Remains, Dubba



Fig. 3.73 Buddha, Dubba



Fig. 3.74 Inscribed Pillar, Dubba



Fig. 3.75 Remains of Miniature stone *stūpas*, Dubba

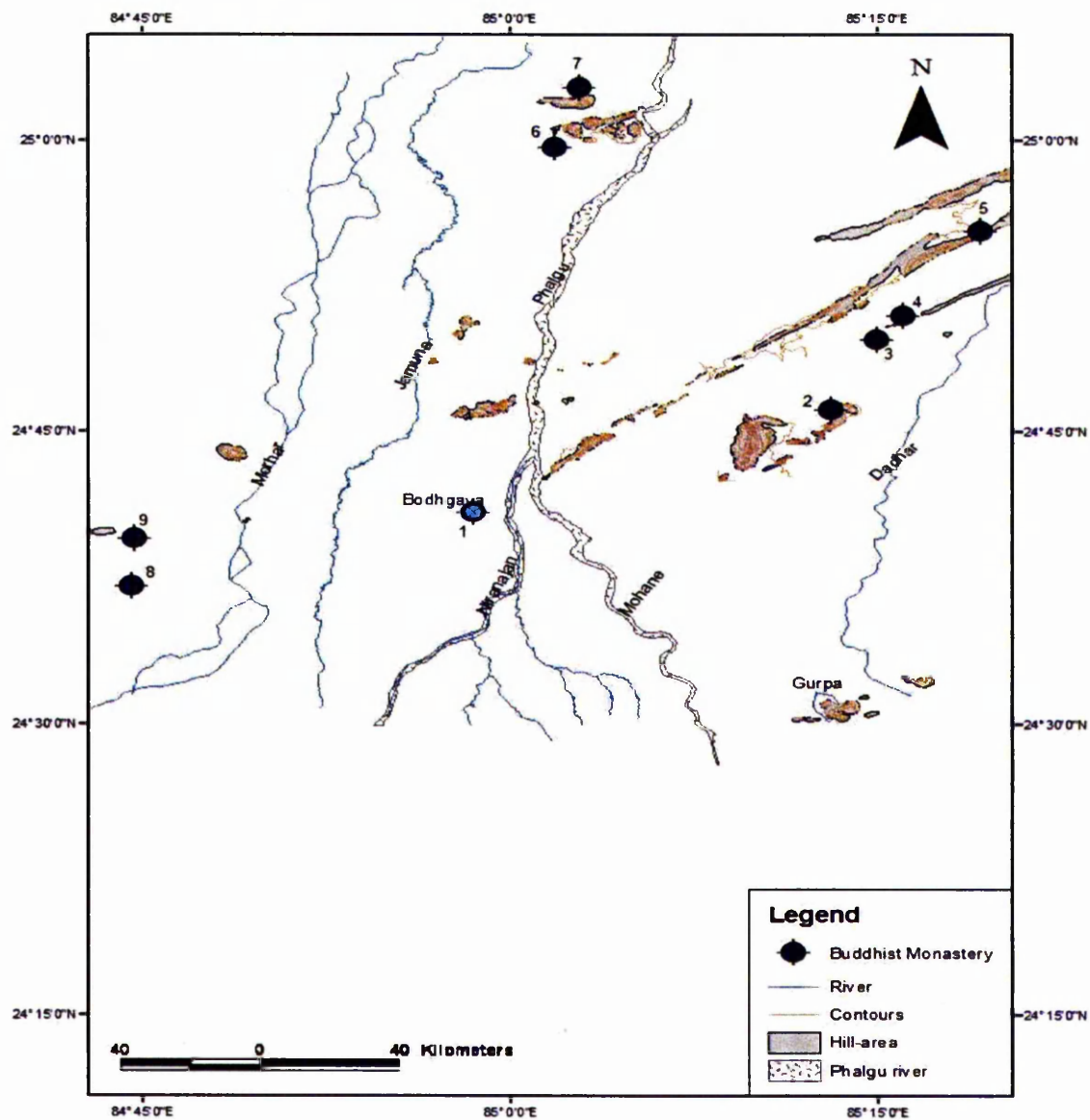


Fig. 3.76 Monastic sites of the Bodhgayā Region

1. Bodhgayā, 2. Hasra-kol, 3. Kurkihar, 4. Murali Hill, Kurkihar
5. Jethian, 6. Kauwa-dol, 7. Dharawat, 8. Guneri, 9. Dubba.



Fig. 4.1 *Āhar*, northeastern embankment, Gothu



Fig. 4.2 Google-earth image of *āhar*, Gothu

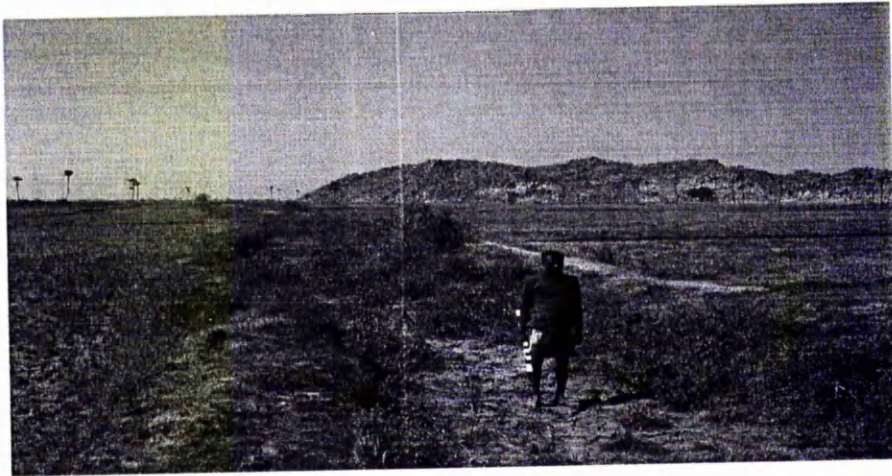


Fig. 4.3 Pyne, Dharawat



Fig. 4.4 BuddhokarTank (*tāl*), Dharawat

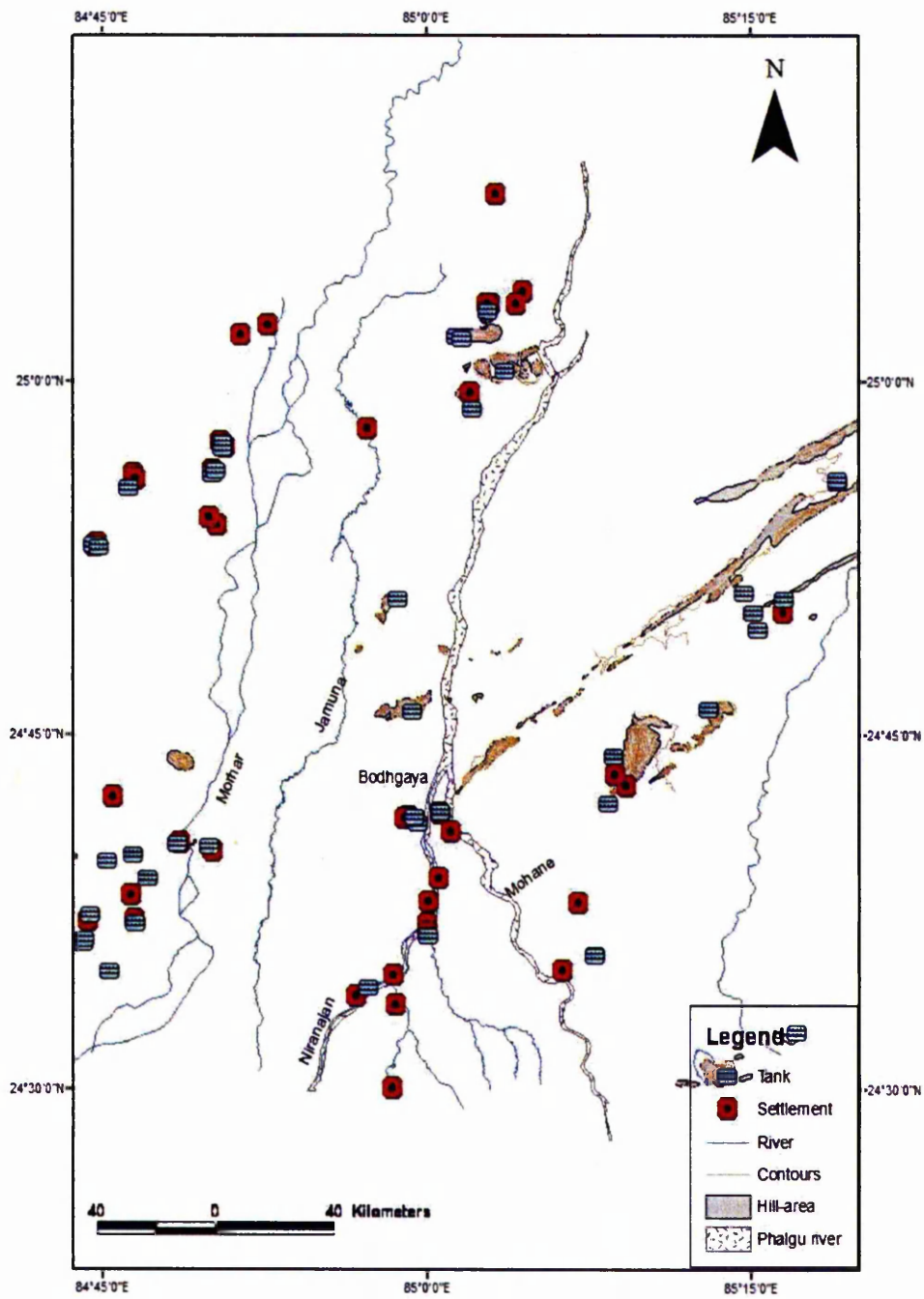


Fig. 4.5 Tank Distribution in the Bodhgayā Region (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

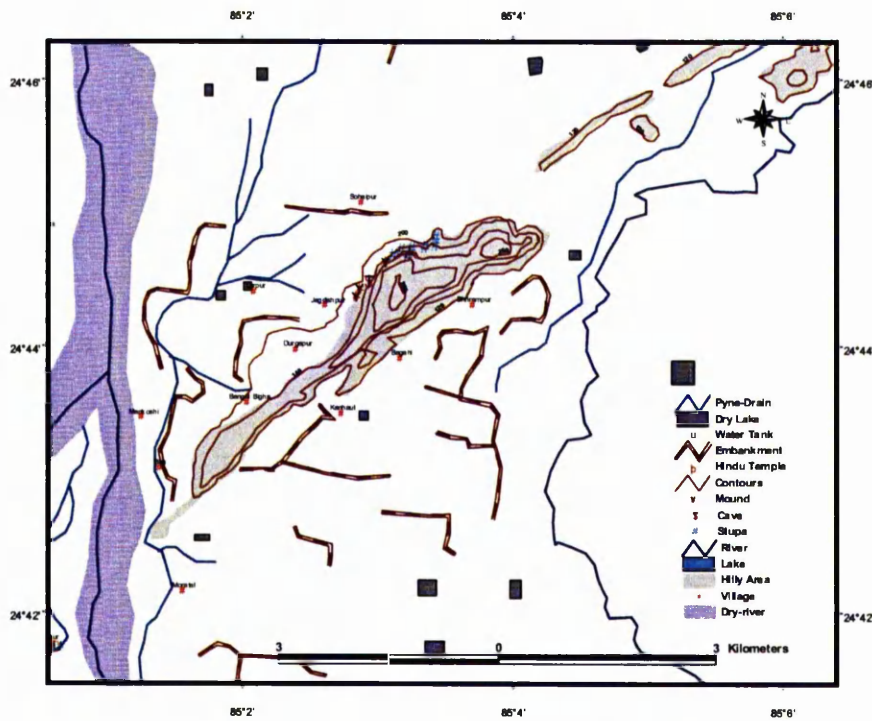


Fig. 4.6 Embankments along the Mora hill, Dungeshwari (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

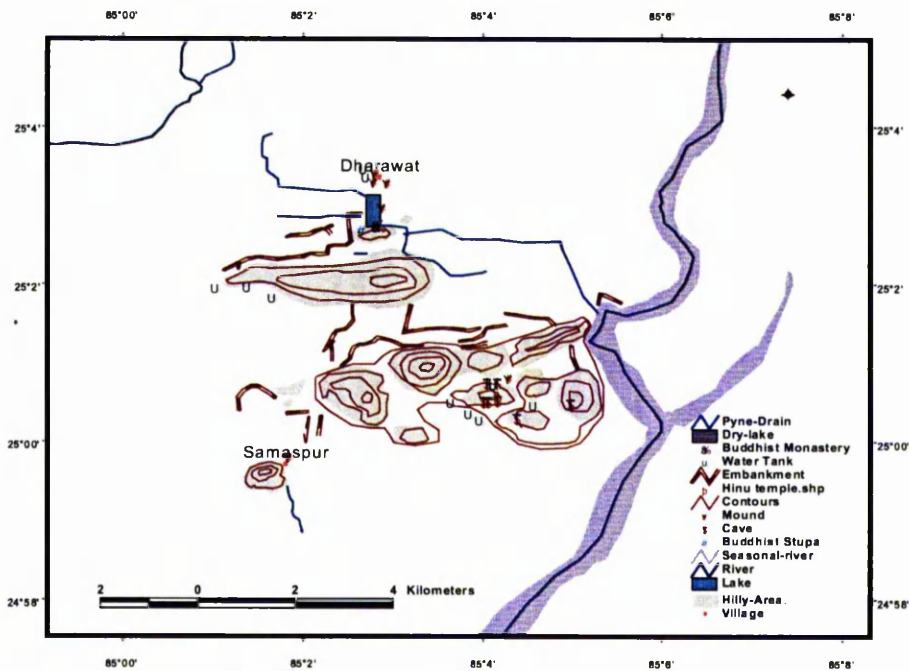


Fig. 4.7 Tank and Āhar - Pyne at Dharawat, Kauwa-dol and Barabar Hills (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

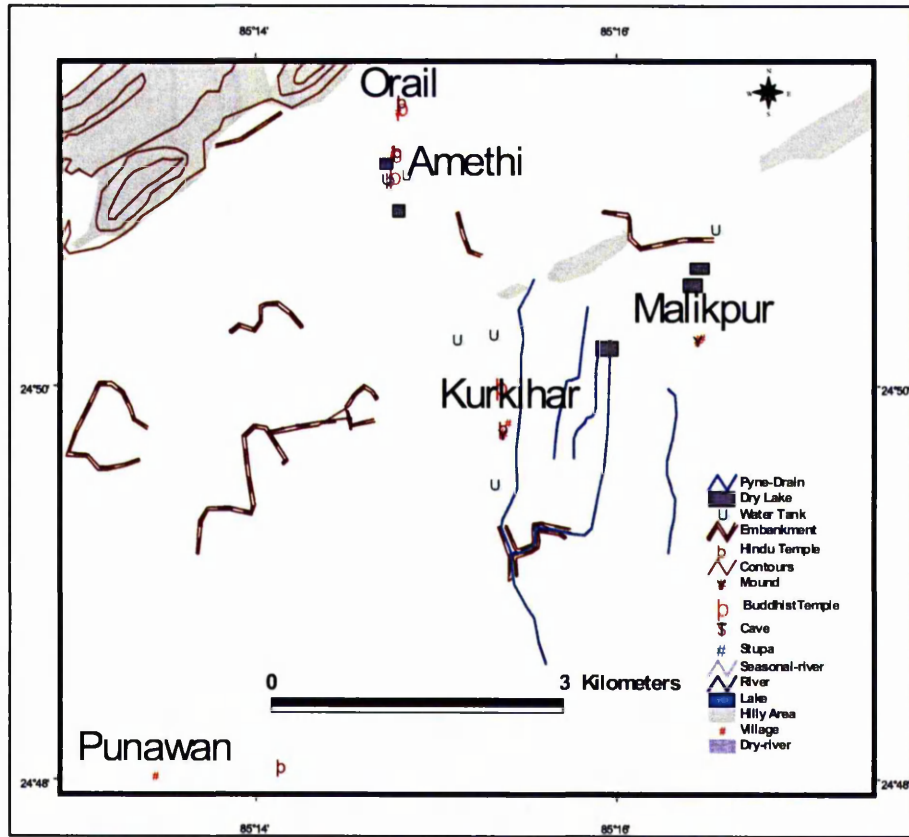


Fig. 4.8 Irrigation system at Kurkihar (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)



Fig. 4.9 Pyne near Murali Hill, Kurkihar

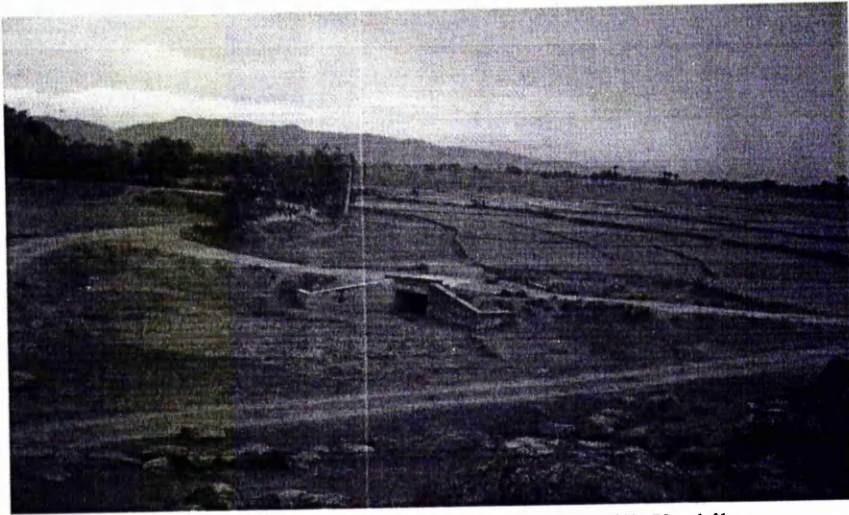


Fig. 4.10 Embankment at the base of Murali Hill, Kurkihar

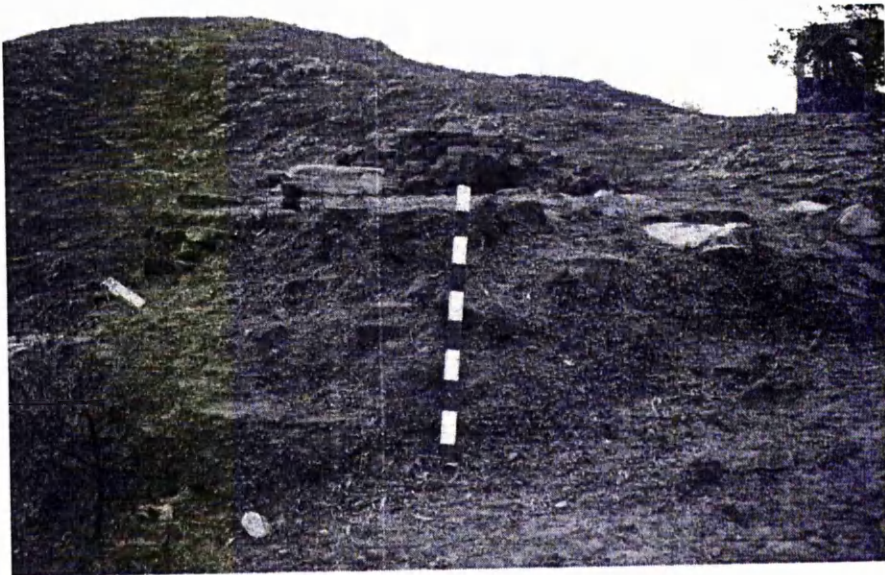


Fig. 4. 11 *Stūpa* Remains, Jethain-hill



Fig. 4.12 Dam at the base of Stūpa-hill, Jethian



Fig. 4.13 Tank, Nasher

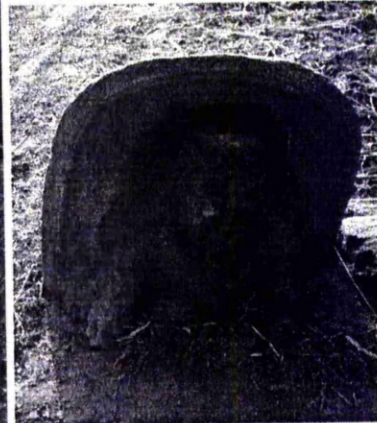


Fig. 4.14 Sculpture along Tank, Nasher



Fig. 4.15 Twin tanks, Jethian



Fig. 4.16 Buddha statue at tank shrine, Jethain

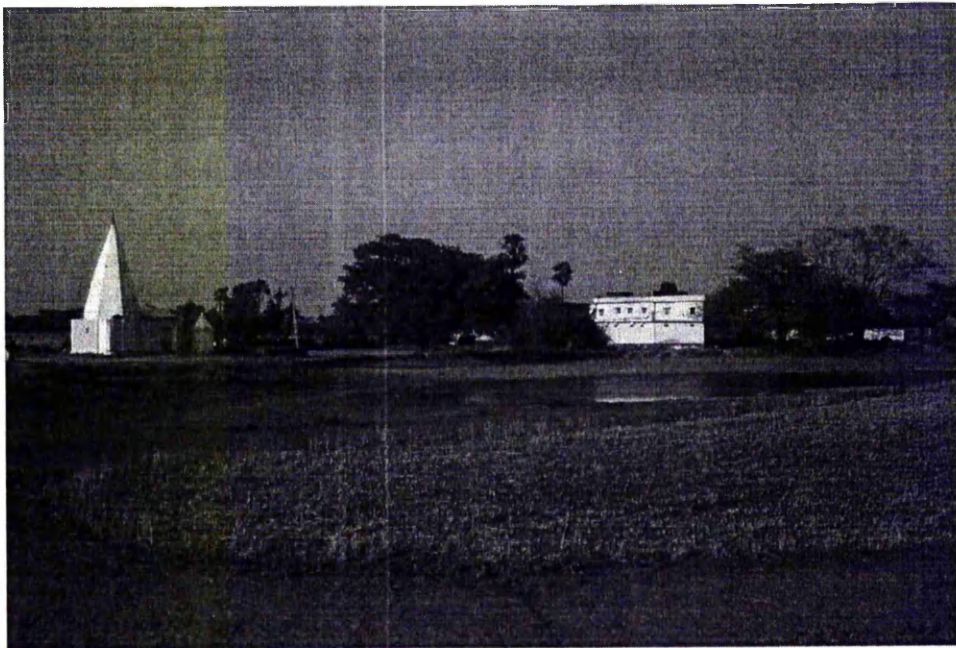


Fig. 4.17 Tank-shrine, Sumera

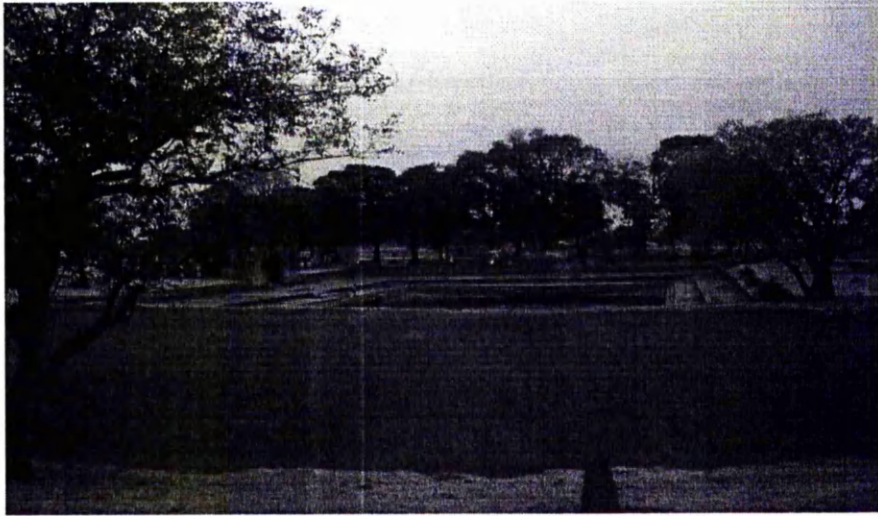


Fig. 4.18 Temple-tank, Amethi



Fig. 4.19 Tank northeast of Temple, Amethi

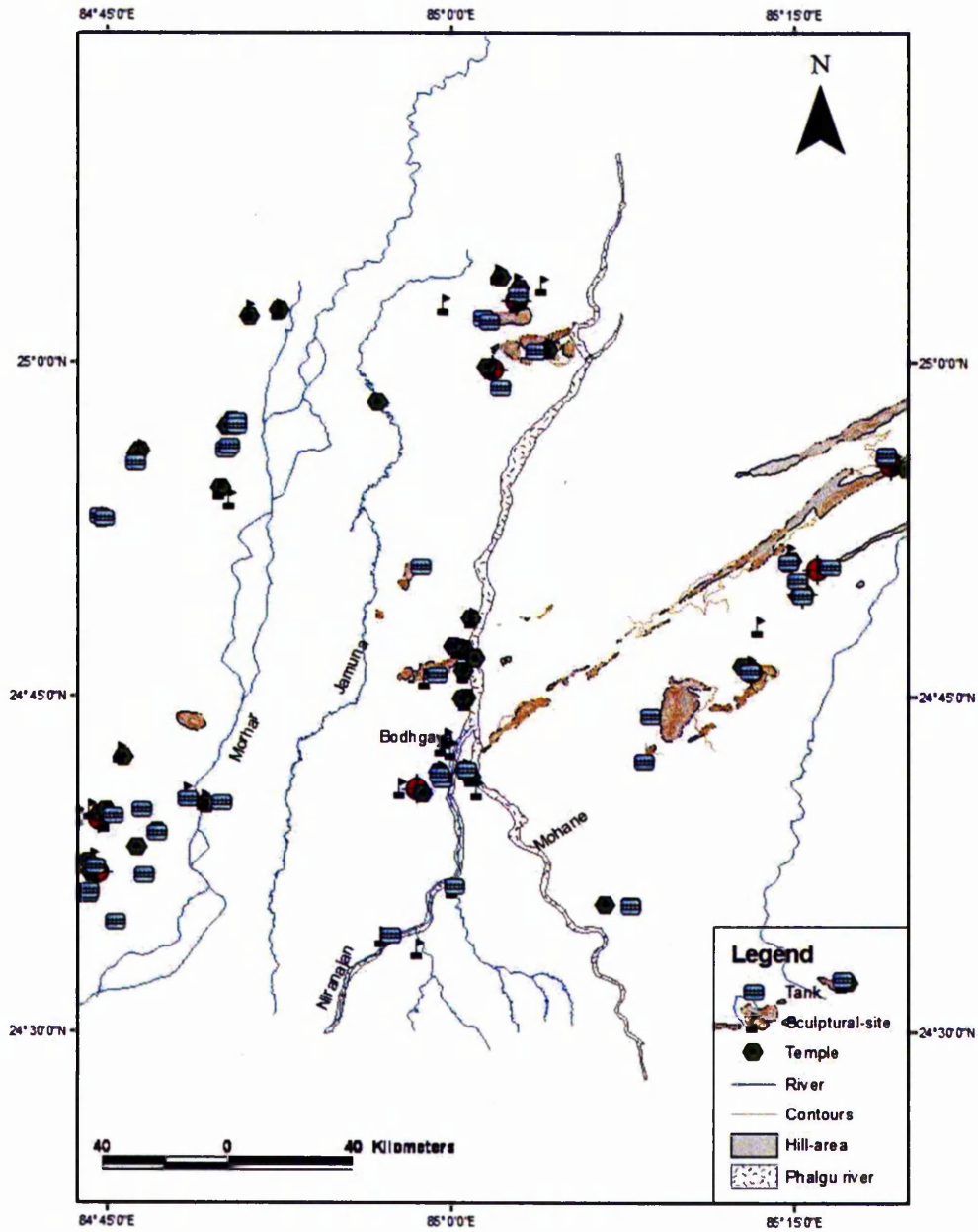


Fig. 4.20 Tanks along Monastic, and Sculptural Sites (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

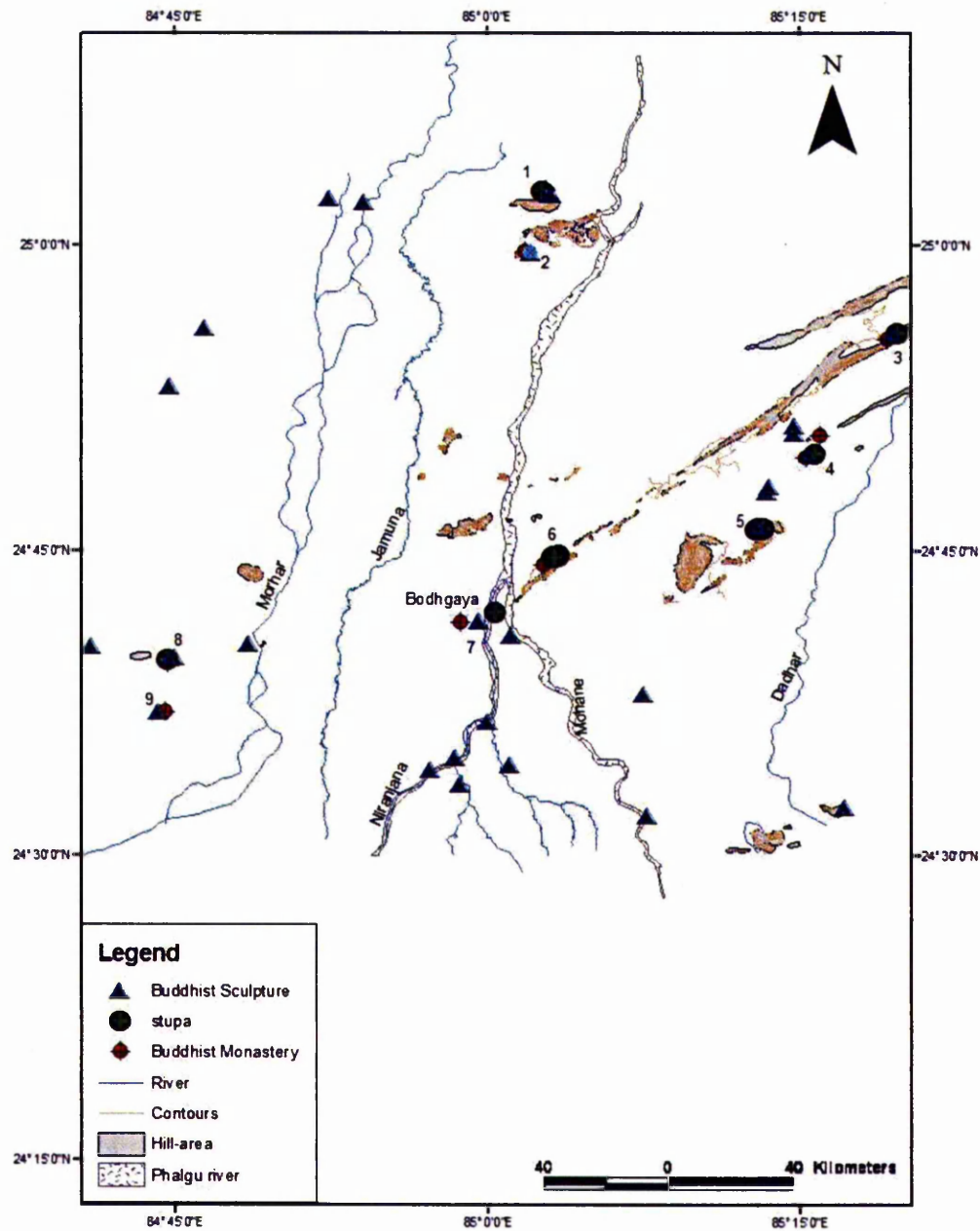


Fig. 5.1 Distribution of Buddhist Monastic and Sculptural Sites (Based on the Survey of India Topographical Maps)

1. Dharawat, 2. Kauwa-dol, 3. Jethian, 4. Kurkihar, 5. Hasra-kol, 6. Dungeshwari, 7. Bodhgaya, 8. Dubba, and 9. Guneri.

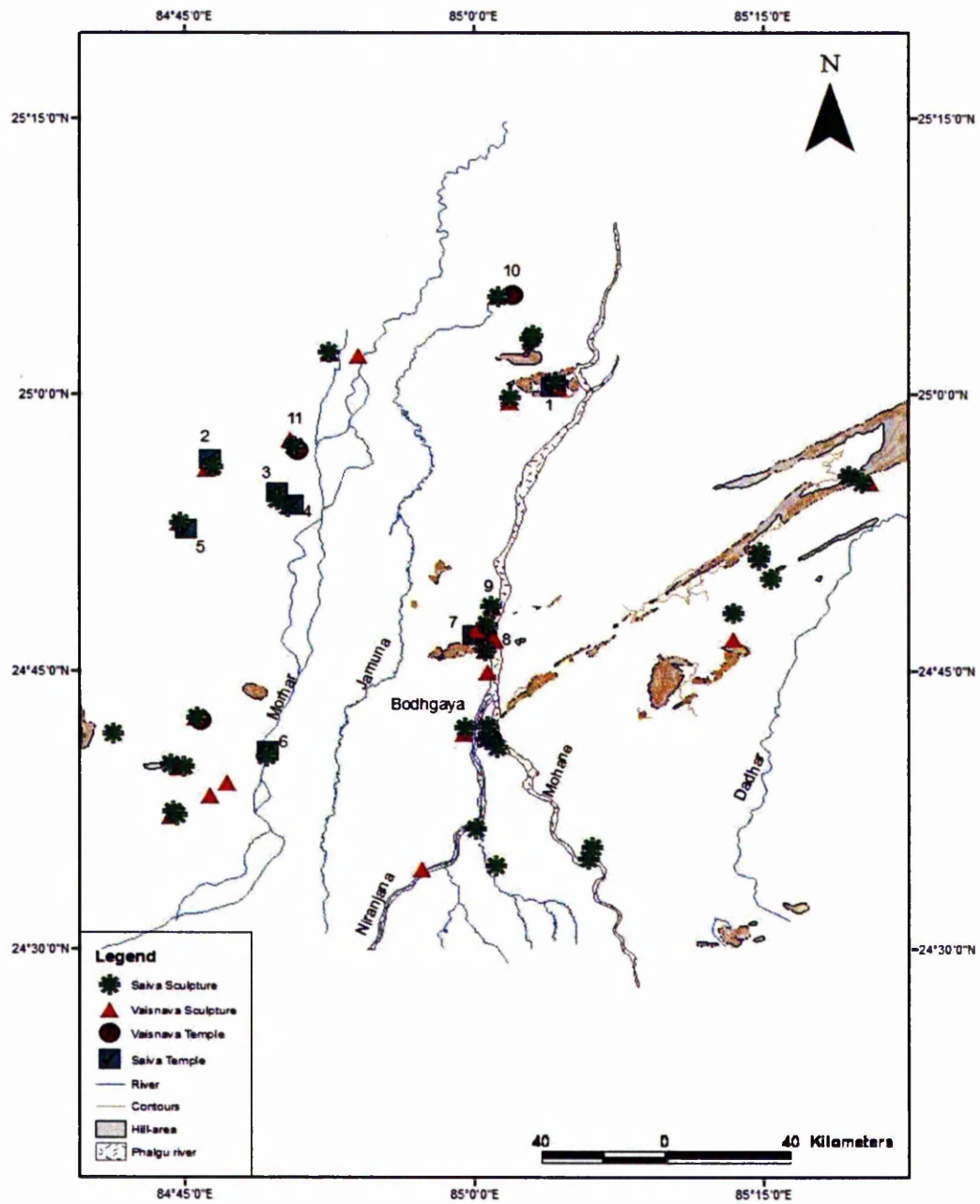


Fig. 5.2 Distribution of Vaiṣṇava-Śaiva Sculpture in the Bodhgayā Region

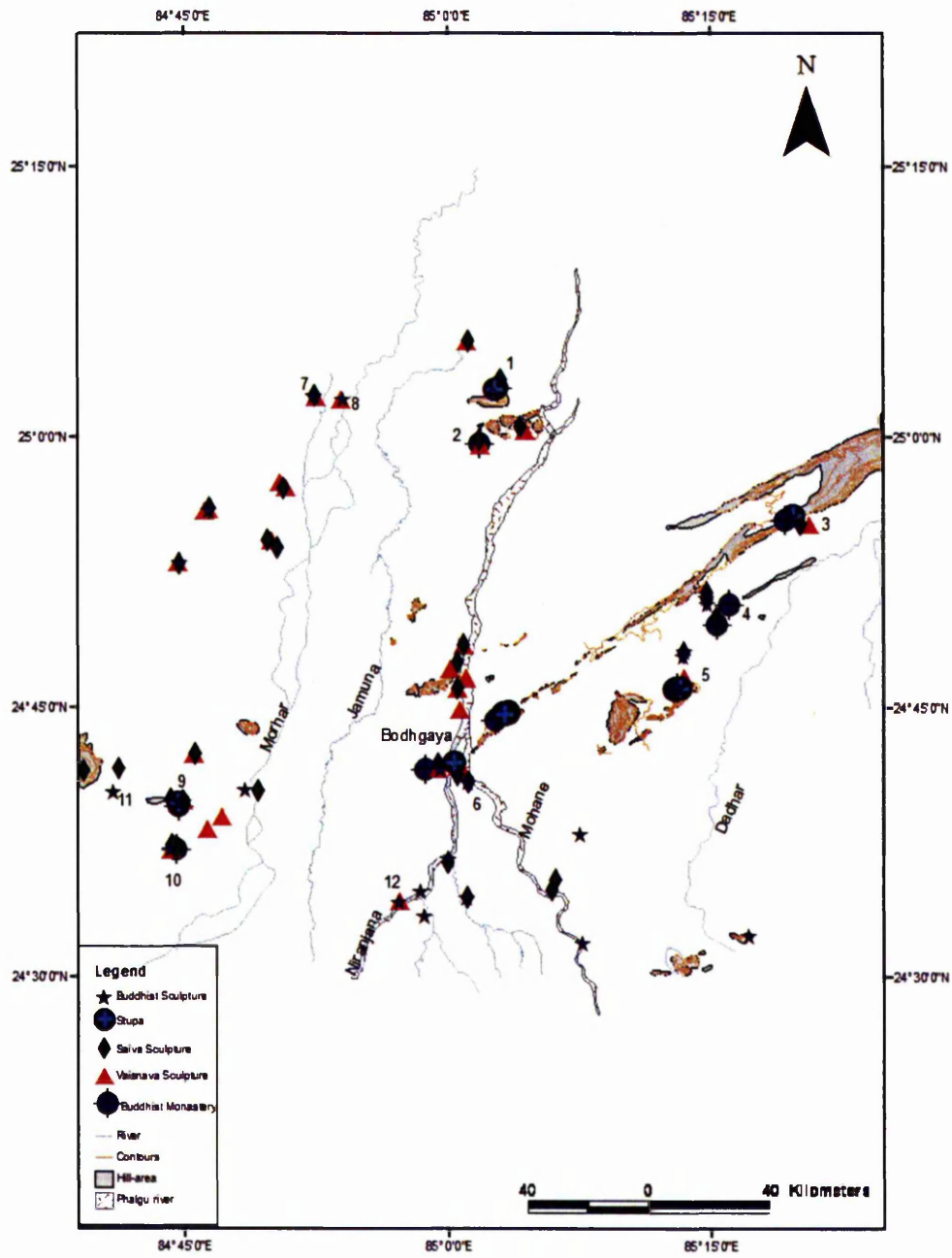


Fig. 5.3 Distribution of Buddhist Sites with Śaiva and Viṣṇava Sculptures in the Bodhgayā Region