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The Buddha

A Storied Life

Edited by

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Todd Lewis is Distinguished Professor of Arts and Humanities and Professor of Religion at the College of the Holy Cross. His primary research since 1979 has been on Newar Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley and the social history of Buddhism. Since completing his PhD (Columbia University 1984), Lewis has authored many articles on the Buddhist traditions of Nepal and a number of books. His translation, *Sugata Saurabha: A Poem on the Life of the Buddha by Chittadhar Hridaya of Nepal* (Oxford University Press 2010), received awards from the Khyentse Foundation and the Numata Foundation. His most recent publication with Jinah Kim, is *Dharma and Punya: Buddhist Ritual Art of Nepal* (Brill 2019). Throughout his career, Professor Lewis found the originality and interdisciplinarity of John Strong's work an inspiration to his own approach to Buddhist studies.

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Around the Tree of Awakening

Todd Lewis and Jinah Kim

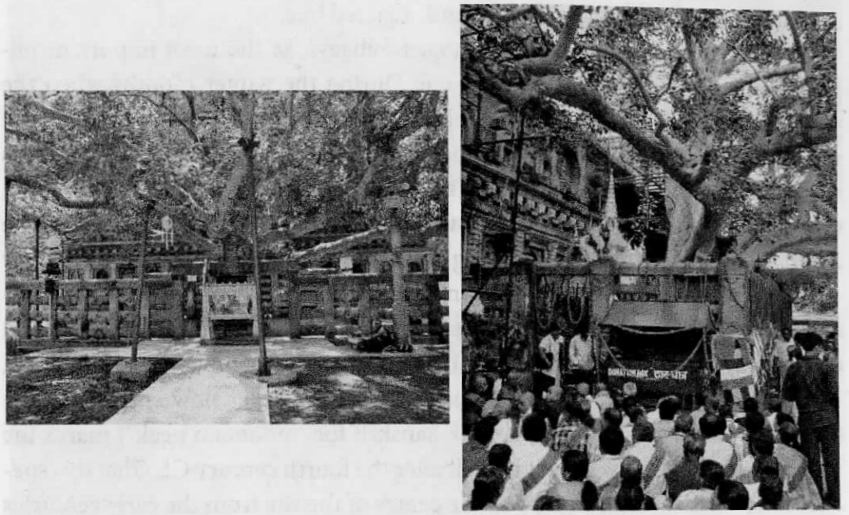

Figure 6.1 View of the Bodhi tree during summer (left) Lay and monastic pilgrims paying homage to the bodhi tree (right), Mahabodhi temple complex, Bodhgaya. Photo by Jinah Kim (left) and Todd Lewis (right)

The great challenge for anyone (ancient or modern) wanting to convey what is meant by the awakening of the Buddha is that its ultimate meaning is beyond words, and well beyond the grasp of the unawakened audience. This moment nonetheless has had to be conveyed in words in the form of oral then written texts. Ancient (and modern) painters and sculptors tasked with representing this moment have faced the same problem. Textual narrative and symbolic art traditions were devised by Buddhist devotees to convey this greatest of human spiritual accomplishments. Artists (*citrakāra/raṅgakāraka*) and Buddhist preachers (*bhāṇaka*) rendered the Śākya-sage's awakening in visual/spoken narratives centered around the fig tree (*ficus religiosa*) where this momentous and cosmos-altering event occurred. In a world largely unable to read, preaching/lecturing

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along with the arts arrayed in monasteries and homes were the primary means of enculturating the beliefs and practices of the Buddhist tradition.

Our analysis of texts and imagery focuses on the event of the awakening and the first seven weeks in the life of the realized Siddhārtha, now a Buddha; it looks closely at the variety of illustrious beings (divine, demonic, human) and their paradigmatic, historically significant actions related to the newly realized sage, called "Sugata," "Tathāgata," or Śākyamuni. It is a remarkable story that begins with an extraordinary account of a man's complete spiritual awakening, in which we encounter gods, demons, serpent deities, dancing women, and devout men. And it all takes place under, and around, a sacred tree.

The site of the Buddha's awakening, Bodhgaya, is the most important pilgrimage site for Buddhists everywhere. During the winter months when the weather in north India is cool, throngs of Buddhists from all parts of the world visit the town now crowded with monasteries built by Buddhists from across the world. At the center of activity is a pipal tree (*Ficus religiosa*) or the Bodhi tree, pictured in Figure 6.1, the place where Siddhārtha reached awakening some 2,500 years ago. In the early morning and at sundown, pilgrims stream together doing continuous circumambulations, most chanting, some prostrating periodically, as they circle in a clockwise direction, the Indic (and Buddhist) ritual of *pradakṣiṇā*. Another focal point is the Mahābodhi temple next to the tree, in which a twelfth-century stone image of the Buddha is now enshrined. The temple with a soaring tower (*śikhara*, Sanskrit for "mountain peak") marks the main sanctum that was probably built after the fourth century CE. That this special tree (and not the temple) was the center of the site from the early centuries of Buddhist history is well attested in the depiction of King Aśoka; he visited the Bodhi tree, as seen in a sculpted scene that appears in one of the architraves of the eastern gateway to the Great Stūpa at Sanchi, a key monument datable to 50 BCE (Figure 6.2). In fact, the tree is not just the main object of pilgrimage but also the focal point in the Buddha's awakening experience and the center where other extraordinary events transpire over the next seven weeks.

Another Great Stūpa architrave on the western gateway reveals the main event of this chapter: the Buddha's defeat of Māra, the demon who is the quintessential incarnation of death and the poisonous *kleśas* (defilements): greed-lust-delusion. This moment is called *Māravijāya*, "Victory over Māra." It is depicted with a tree in the very center of the composition as we see in Figure 6.3.[1] Māra's attacking army, replete with hideous dwarfs, elephants, and horse riders and chariots, fails to elicit any fear in Siddhārtha and turns away in retreat. From the left side of the panel, a retinue of devotees, including adorants, musicians, and bearers of banner and pole standards (with symbols of the *triratna*, the three jewels of Buddhism), approaches the tree. The Bodhi tree at the center of the scene is marked by an umbrella and enshrined within what is probably a multistory temple building; inside, an empty seat marks the spot where the Buddha once sat to achieve awakening.

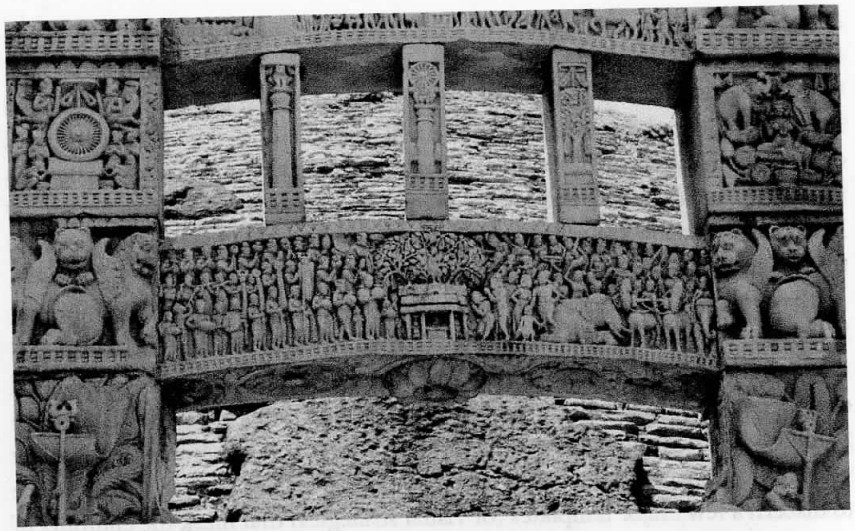

Figure 6.2 King Aśoka visits the Bodhi tree, architrave of the gateway, Great Stūpa at Sanchi, c. 50 BCE. Photo by Jinah Kim.

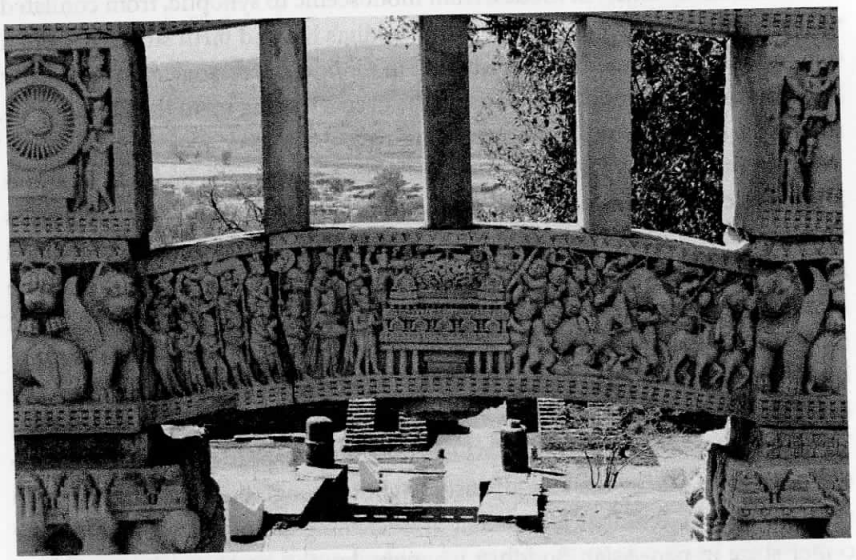

Figure 6.3 Aniconic representation of the Buddha's victory over Māra with a Bodhi Tree shrine, which has an empty throne (standing in for the Buddha) in the middle, architrave of the gateway, Great Stūpa at Sanchi, c. 50 BCE. Photo by Jinah Kim.

In what follows, as a method to explore the events around the Bodhi tree, we model an alternative way of narrative communication, one that is centered on the visual records in association with what we have now as written texts. We do so in part to express our appreciation to John Strong, whose scholarship creatively

connected disciplinary boundaries, leading to many original insights about the Buddhist tradition and the faith's sociocultural history. As Strong points out, certain moments from the Buddha's life, which are later codified and remembered as the major events of the Buddha's life, are attested in the visual narratives of the Sanchi gateway (50 BCE) when no known text from such an early date records the incident. Just as there are many textual variations in the details of the Buddha's biography, as we have seen in previous chapters, there are many variations in the visual records, where the narrative diversity is even greater.[2]

The context of the production of stone and metal Buddhist sculpture must not be forgotten, when considering how narratives were passed down to artists and the nonliterate householders by word of mouth; as Joanna Williams has pointed out, there is a "likelihood that the Sarnath sculptors did not read at all and were familiar with such literary sources in oral form which can never be precisely reconstructed."[3] While there is no official canon of visual narratives, it is possible to discern a few major templates (or visual strategies) that mark the contours of ways in which people imagined and saw the Buddha's life stories.[4]

In early Buddhist art found at stūpa sites across South Asia, visual narratives are told in many different modes, from monoscenic to synoptic, from conflated to diachronic narrative networks.[5] The Buddha's life and birth stories are often told in a series of framed images whether in roundel or rectangle.[6] Overall, early Buddhist art shows much emphasis on the events leading up to the Buddha's arrival at the tree, and stories of his previous lives.

By the fifth century CE, we begin to see more images of the Buddha's long and illustrious career as a miracle-performing teacher in a few, common key episodes with similar iconographic features.[7] The Buddha's life stories usually get codified into eight great events; these are mapped onto the eight pilgrimage sites in the Buddhist heartland (mainly in today's Bihar, parts of Uttar Pradesh in India, and Lumbini in Nepal).[8] One of the earliest attempts to present the eight scenes of the Buddha's life as a set may be seen in a rectangular stele divided into eight equal compartments found at Sarnath, which may date to the sixth century or later.[9]
The most long-lasting, impactful visual strategy for capturing the Buddha's life story occurred during the Pāla-dynasty (eighth through the twelfth century) in north India. The Buddha's attainment of awakening at Bodhgaya began to take center stage in pan-Asian Buddhist iconography: the event is epitomized by a central, enlarged image of the Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree in meditation with his outstretched right hand touching the ground, often with the earth goddess (*bhū devī*) holding up a water jar appearing under his seat. Just as the social and religious orders of this era took on more of a mandala organization with clear center-periphery relations, the key devotional images of Buddhism also use the template of a mandala, with the largest figure, an earth-touching Buddha under the Bodhi tree, as the central focus of the visual field.[10] In it, seven other scenes in miniaturized scale surround the central Buddha like satellites orbiting the earth: Birth, First Sermon, Śrāvastī Miracle, Descent from the Trāyastriṃśa ("The Thirty-three [gods]-) heaven, Taming of the mad elephant, Monkey's offering of honey, with the Parinirvāṇa in the apex.[11] All episodes are represented through cursory visual shorthand, the artist exercising extreme economy of detail with clear hierarchy, highlighting the awakening experience—in what we may call "the Māravijāya template" (Figure 6.4).

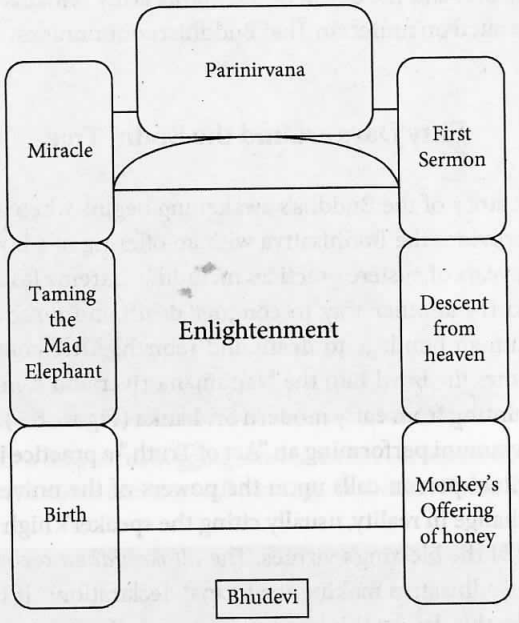

Figure 6.4 Māravijaya template. Diagram by Jinah Kim.

The Māravijāya template (or visual strategy) proved to be the most effective and popular, spreading as far as China (exemplified especially in the later Dunhuang caves) and also to Myanmar and across the Himalayan region until as late as the thirteenth or even fourteenth century.[12] As Janice Leoshko demonstrates, these images with the earth-touching Buddha in the center not only represent the crucial moment in the Buddha biography: they also stand for the spiritual and protective power found in Bodhgaya, the center of the faith.[13] Just as stories in textual sources may have more than one variation, innovations in the paintings and sculptures made using the Māravijāya template appeared occasionally, but none overturned the popularity and effectiveness of the Pāla original until today.

One effective variation may have been the addition of references to the seven weeks after the awakening by surrounding the Buddha with a double row

of cursory events, many of which are seen in what is sometimes referred to as "*Andagu* plaques," like the example we see in Figure 6.17.[14] Here and elsewhere, the Buddha's defeat of Māra at Bodhgaya remained the quintessential moment of the life story in visual records throughout the long history of Buddhism, at times expressing cosmic meanings and at other times evoking very immediate, emotional responses. The events around the Bodhi tree have remained popular for illustration in temple murals in the regions of Pali Buddhism such as today's Sri Lanka and Thailand, and the defeat of the Māra's army remains one of the popular topics illustrated on murals in Thai Buddhist communities.

Fifty Days around the Bodhi Tree

This part of the story of the Buddha's awakening begins when a young woman named Sujātā provides the Bodhisattva with an offering of a bowl of rice-milk, breaking off six years of austere practices including extreme fasting. Siddhārtha then resolves to try another way to conquer death and discover the realities that underlie human bondage to death and rebirth. After consuming Sujātā's offering, he throws the bowl into the Nairañjanā river and it moves upstream, depicted in a painting from early modern Sri Lanka (Figure 6.5). This miracle is the result of Śākyamuni performing an "Act of Truth," a practice in ancient India in which a spiritual person calls upon the powers of the universe to effect an extraordinary change in reality, usually citing the speaker's high spiritual status or the recipient of the blessing's virtues. The *Jātakanidāna* recounts this Act of Truth, with the Bodhisattva making the formal declaration: "If I succeed in becoming a Buddha this day, let this bowl go upstream; if not, let it go downstream with the current."[15] It does move upstream, then sinks to the bottom where it lands on bowls of three previous Buddhas (who did the same, in the same place); this alerts a serpent deity named Kāla who had been there since first of three Buddhas.

Here is the first of a series of events when normal material causality gives way to supernatural occurrences, or "miracles" performed by the Buddha. To those who come to understand the full import and impact of a Buddha's appearance in the world, however, these miraculous displays in the Buddha biography will continue until his death, and then be manifested through his relics. Buddhas, in other words, by their appearance, alter the causal universe humans inhabit:

> Reality is always responsive to consciousness, but only a Buddha can exercise utter control over it. . . . As reality is linked to Buddhahood. The Buddha displays this truth through his command of the physical elements. . . . He offers a dramatic demonstration of matter being utterly malleable in the hands of a realized being.[16]

Figure 6.5 Buddha throws his begging bowl into the Nairañjanā river and it travels upward, c. early twentieth century, wall painting, Sri Lanka. Photo by Todd Lewis.

Figure 6.6 Buddha receives a bundle of *kuśa* grass from a grasscutter, c. early twentieth century, wall painting, Kelaniya Temple, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Photo by Todd Lewis.

Soon after this scene with Sujātā's bowl, the Bodhisattva walks toward his destined seat under the tree, meets a grasscutter and asks him to give a bundle of *kuśa* grass to sit on. *Kuśa* is a tall, tufted, leafy, perennial grass used in Vedic ritual and recommended as auspicious in later Hindu texts; Siddhārtha now intends to use it for a meditation seat. As in other details of the biography (e.g., *kṣatriya* education and training; wedding ceremony), the Bodhisattva follows preexisting Indic traditions. In the modern Newar epic of the Buddha's life, *Sugata Saurabha*, Kathmandu Valley poet Chittadhar Hridaya uses this request to introduce a moment of levity to move away from the ordeals of extreme asceticism and the Bodhisattva's swooning from the near-death experience of radical fasting. After seeing the brahmin grasscutter, he requests, "Give me a handful of straw." So the Brahmin lays his bundle to one side and asks, "Of what use is this straw to you?" Replies the Bodhisattva, "I will attain enlightenment sitting on it!" The brahmin laughs and replies, "How? Such knowledge has not come to us even though we sit on it every day!"[17] This same humorous sentiment is also reflected in the expression of the grass cutter's wife in a modern painting from Sri Lanka (Figure 6.6).[18]

Many traditions next show the Bodhisattva approaching the Bodhi tree.[19] He considers exactly where under its branches to take a seat with his back to the trunk. He considers all sides, following the norm of Indic clockwise circumambulatory worship called *pradakṣīṇā*. When he selects the south side, the earth quakes in protest; the same happens when he tries the west and north sides. But after he sits on the side that faces east, there is great peace and quiet, and there he places the *kuśa* grass. After sitting, he repeats the vow,

> Here on this seat my body may shrivel up,
> My skin, my bones, my flesh may dissolve,
> But my body will not move from this very seat
> Until I have obtained Awakening
> So difficult to obtain in the course of many kalpas.[20]

Entrance of Māra

The main antagonist of the Buddha stories appears prominently after the Bodhisattva first sits under the Bodhi tree: an evil, supernatural being named Māra. The earliest artistic representations of Māra show him as a regally adorned male figure carrying a weapon (spear or sword). He challenges the Buddha who sits cross-legged, peaceful, and resolute under the tree.[21] Māra's regal appearance is fitting for his stature as "a high-ranking god, one of the chief divinities of the realm of desire."[22]

This original confrontation of Māra's army and his defeat is seen in Cave 26 at the fifth century Buddhist cave temple site Ajanta (Figures 6.9 and 6.10), and is also found in the late eighth century relief sculpture at Borobudur (in Java, Indonesia) (Figures 6.7 and 6.8).

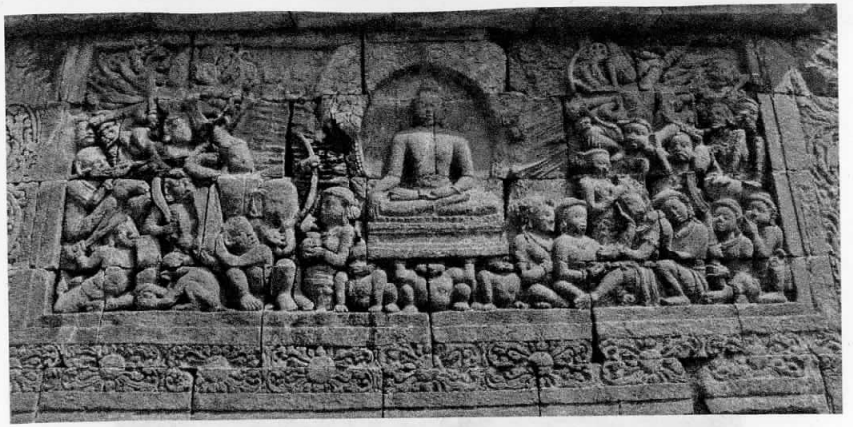

Figure 6.7 Scene of Māravijāya, first floor gallery, Candi Borobudur, Java, Indonesia, c. 780–850 CE, volcanic stone. Photo by Jinah Kim.

Figure 6.8 Detail of Figure 6.7 showing dejected Māra with his right hand on his chin being consoled by his retinue. Photo by Jinah Kim.

Close inspection of Figures 6.9 and 6.10 reveals a slender and regally adorned male figure seated looking dejected with his right hand propping up his face and with his sword on his lap on the bottom right side. Māra here is being consoled by his retinue.

Figure 6.9 Māra seated with his right hand on his chin being consoled by his daughters, detail of the Māravijāya panel, Cave 26, Ajanta, c. fifth century CE. Image courtesy of Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

Māra is called both a *deva* ("divinity") and a *yakṣa* ("demon"). His name translates as "death" or "maker of death." Buddhist teaching regards him as a very powerful being who rules the world of mortals. Since all must die who at death have karma that leads to rebirth, Māra promotes the pursuit of *tṛṣṇa* ("thirst" or "desire") and blinds all in his realm from seeing that desire is the cause of suffering (as proclaimed in the Four Noble Truths). Māra foments false views, illusion, and distraction to confuse beings. In another doctrinal formulation, if individuals have been "poisoned" by the three *kleśas*[23]—as depicted in the very center of the

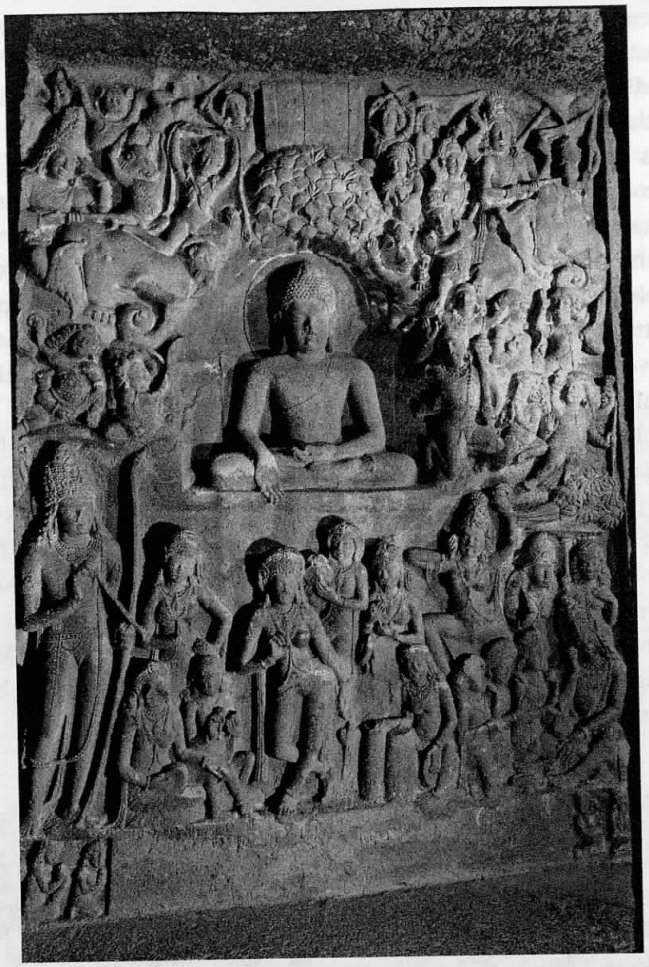

Figure 6.10 Māra's daughters dancing to seduce the Buddha while musicians play music, bottom half of the Māravijāya panel, Cave 26, Ajanta, c. fifth century CE. Image courtesy of Regents of the University of Michigan, Department of the History of Art, Visual Resources Collections.

wheel of life—they will continue to wander in Māra's domain, the six realms of rebirth. In other words, it is Māra who rules our mortal world.

But his unfettered dominion is threatened by the appearance of a bodhisattva who is about to become a Buddha. And Māra is a determined figure who wants to keep ruling unimpeded over mortals, most of whom have no clue about how to conquer their bondage to suffering and mortality. So he aggressively stalks, taunts, and interferes with the Bodhisattva in every way he can imagine.[24]

Predictably, his many attempts fail, and Māra soon feels there is no alternative but to attack the Bodhisattva directly. So Māra calls up his "Eightfold Army." Māra attacks and all the gods, including Indra and Brahma, flee in fear. Siddhārtha faces Māra's army alone.[25]

Māra's minions begin by sending swirling, destructive winds from the high Himalayas, but the gales never reach the Bodhi tree. Māra's armies then gather many hundreds of thousands of massed clouds that rain down torrents, so that the earth becomes soaked. But even as the mass of clouds rain destructively over the nearby forest groves and trees, not a single drop wets the Bodhisattva. Then, Māra sends a rain of stones, like those from a massive exploding volcano; these merely fall as bunches of divine flowers at the feet of the Bodhisattva.

After that, Māra sends a rain of all weapons—single edged, double edged swords, javelins, knives, and various others—that fall smoking and burning from the sky, but these turn into divine flowers and fall harmlessly before the Bodhisattva. Māra persists. He sends a rain of red-hot charcoal that falls from the sky, but these turn to divine flowers as they fall gently at his feet. White-hot ash likewise falls as fragrant pollen; fine smoking and flaming sand turns to divine aromatic powder. And smoking mud falls as a divine ointment. Māra next tries to frighten Siddhārtha by engulfing him in utter darkness. But the blackness transforms immediately into soothing sunlight.

Figure 6.11 Stone relief panel of Māravijāya showing the Buddha seated under the Bodhi tree with his right hand extended to touch earth while Māra challenges the Buddha with accompanying troop ready to attack, Gandhāra, c. second to third century CE. Photo by Jinah Kim.

Māra's mobilization of his troops to attack the Buddha is one of the most dynamic, action-packed moments in the Buddha's biography. In most textual records, Māra's army is rather graphically described as a vast assembly of monstrous creatures with animal faces and bizarre combinations of body parts. This moment lends itself to the fancies of the artists serving Buddhist communities, whether two thousand years ago or today, and countless examples survive in both painting and sculpture. In the *Mahāvastu*, for instance, the demon army includes beasts with faces of various animals, horses, buffalos, rams, tigers, and vultures; such animal-headed beasts frequent the scene in early Buddhist sculptures of the Gandhāra region (Figure 6.11).[26]

Figure 6.12 Hideous demons of Māra's army lunging with full force (to the Buddha who would have been in the central panel of the folio), a painted panel fragment of a palm-leaf manuscript folio, most likely of the Prajñāpāramitā, Nepal, c. 1100 CE. Image courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The fantastic minions of Māra painted in brilliant hues on a twelfth-century Nepalese palm-leaf manuscript (Figure 6.12) include snake-tongued demons hurling a skeleton and a mountain peak at the Bodhisattva, alongside a monster with snarling fire as his tongue, and a colorful four-armed demon with boar heads jutting out as his arms. This painting resembles a description in the *Mahāvastu*, where some in Māra's horde breathe "fire from their mouths, others snakes."[27] The army disturbs the serenity of the meditating Buddha not only with their demonic forms, but they are depicted as extremely loud, with blowing horns, screaming, and yelling.

Figure 6.13 Painted image of Māravijaya depicting the Buddha seated under the tree with his right hand extended downwards calling the earth while Māra's minions run a havoc around him, painted folio of a black paper manuscript of the Prajñāpāramitā, Nepal, c. mid to late twelfth century. Photo © The Trustees of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin.

Māra's attempt to challenge the Buddha's right to be seated in that very spot under the tree is also conveyed through demons trying to lift and shake his seat. This can be seen in the delightful detail of frustrated demons in another late twelfth

century Nepalese black paper manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Figure 6.13). One of the two demons trying to lift the Buddha's seat looks up to the Buddha with an incredulous expression as if to say, "How is he making no single movement despite all my extreme physical exertions?" Against the frustrated and angry expressions of the demons, the Buddha sits with a serene smile and with his right hand stretched downward, signaling his call to the earth to witness his awakening. Such artistic representations of victory over Māra epitomize in one image the whole victorious experience of the Buddha that unfolds during the night of his awakening. Snake and fire-tongued demons visually capture the *āśravas* or "evil inclinations" that the Buddha destroys during the third watch of the night.

A common explanation for the Bodhisattva's ability to repulse these assaults has to do with the Bodhisattva's supernormal powers (*ṛddhi*). The Mahāyāna tradition also focuses on the natural protection afforded by his having "as a shield" the merit (*puṇya*, good karma) of completing the "Ten *Pāramitās*" that came to define the path to awakening over lifetimes for all bodhisattvas.[28]

The narrative traditions diverge with regards to when Māra's next assault occurs: either just now, or much later when Siddhārtha, now a Buddha, sits under the Bodhi tree. This second attack is by Māra's daughters. The texts imply that Māra is a family man who adores his daughters; the latter feel that their father's desperate request to defeat the Buddha will be useless, but they oblige him. They go scantily clad, then dance and vamp alluringly to try to elicit desire, even a twinge of any attachment to sensual life, in the Bodhisattva. Here, too, artists had a subject that called upon their ability to depict a lively and very human narrative.[29]

In the bottom half of the Māravijāya scene in the *pradakṣiṇā* path of Ajanta Cave 26, voluptuous female figures dance to the rhythms of the musicians around the Buddha's seat (see Figure 6.10). Later narrative traditions even have these daughters each multiply their form a hundred or more times, and specify that these women appear in the five stages of life, from children to elders. A Nepalese manuscript of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (dated 1682 CE) depicts the Buddha's victory over Māra with gusto (Figure 6.14).[30] Under the Buddha's seat, Māra's three daughters are represented twice, once as young ladies dressed in fine jewelry and dynamic dancing postures, and a second time, directly in front of the earth goddess as haggard and naked elderly ladies, paying homage to the Buddha with humility. Here, the unnamed artist likely seized an opportunity to illustrate what the Buddha really saw: beautiful maidens as shriveled hags. The Buddha ignores them, then dismisses them.

The pivotal moment in the Buddha's defeat of Māra is when he calls on the earth to witness his merit and affirm his imminent realization.[31] Māra had asserted that no one could affirm Siddhārtha's claim, but the Bodhisattva in

Figure 6.14 Detail of Māravijāya painting, Māra's daughters represented twice, once as beautiful dancing maiden and another as old haggard women, painted folio of a yellow paper manuscript of the Prajñāpāramitā, Nepal, dated 1682 CE. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Francis H. Burr Memorial Fund, Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1965.553.

response touches the earth itself to be his witness: "the great earth, letting out a roar, with a hundred roars, with a thousand roars, with one hundred thousand great roars, said: 'I was then the witness.'"[32] The significance of the "Great Earth" quaking seven times in six ways,[33] "as far as the ocean, uttering a terrible sound"[34] is another instance of a Buddha's presence altering the entire cosmos that includes the human world. Māra's minions quickly disperse and flee.

In early depictions of the moment as seen in the circa third century Gandhāran relief in Figure 6.11, the earth's roaring and shaking is conveyed through soldiers falling and tumbling under the future Buddha's seat. It is unclear when the Buddhist tradition began to personify the earth as a goddess, but by the time the Buddha's biography was carved on volcanic rock at Borobudur (ninth-century Indonesia), the goddess appears with a pot of water (see Figure 6.7). A seventh-century metal image from Gilgit/Kashmir shows a kneeling female figure with a pot right under the Buddha's stretched right hand. A pot likely signals the role of water in this story of awakening; water became a crucial element in later

Southeast Asian depictions as seen in many murals in Thai and Cambodian Buddhist temples.[35] In these later renderings, the earth goddess wrings the water out of her long hair which creates a torrential deluge sweeping the evil creatures away.

After the defeat and retreat of Māra, all the gods and spirit beings that had fled in fear returned to the Bodhisattva and made vast offerings (*pūjā*).

Night of Achieving Complete Awakening (*Samyak-Sambodhi/Abhisaṃbodhi*)

The Bodhisattva settles under the tree and meditates, making discoveries: how human experience is constituted, why suffering occurs, and the spiritual causality in a twelve-fold sequence of dependent origination. The narrative tradition concludes that the defeat of Māra occurs near sundown so that the great achievement of awakening occurred at sunrise. So the Bodhisattva sits in the lotus position on the *kuśa* grass and begins meditating using a variety of methods, including trance practices he had learned from his teachers in the forest. He is also said to have remembered a natural experience he had as a child: while he watched his father do the year's "first plowing" ceremony, he experienced great bliss and clarity of mind by suspending self-centered thinking.[36]

The tradition divides this night into three watches.[37] During the first, he comes to understand "karmalogical knowledge," that is, how bodily, spoken, and mental human actions lead to specific consequences. During the second watch: he gains "cosmological knowledge," an understanding of the natural and supernatural world that humans inhabit. The third watch has him formulate "dharmalogical knowledge," when he sees the central doctrines that explain the world and the human experience of it.

At the moment the sun rises, with its light illuminating the dark world,[38] Siddhārtha experiences a new exalted mental state, blissful beyond words, with mind clear and serene as never before. Only now, properly speaking, can he be called a "Buddha" due to his experiencing *samyaksambodhi* ("complete, total enlightenment"). The doctrinal tradition will make it clear that it was not trance meditation (*samādhi*) that was essential in Siddhārtha's awakening but a practice utterly distinctive to all Buddhas: *sati* ("mindfulness") that perfects a critical discerning faculty, *prajñā*. He seals his awakening by uttering words for the beings assembled around the Bodhi tree:

> O house builder, you have been seen;
> You shall not build the house again.

Your rafters have been broken up,
Your ridgepole is demolished too.[39]

It is from this moment onward that Siddhārtha is properly called a "Buddha." One epithet that describes his extraordinary status— "neither human nor god"— is *daśabala* (Pali, *dasa bala*, "[One of/with] ten powers") that enables him (and only him, in full) his capacity to know ten facts of reality perfectly.[40] Only by defeating Māra is this possible.

The moment of transformation under the tree of awakening, and its impact in the cosmos, came to be understood, described, and depicted, according to the later schools' norms of doctrine and praxis. A new Buddha sets off vast supernatural eruptions throughout the cosmos, or Buddha-universe. The Pali tradition (*Jātakanidāna*) states that

> The ten thousand world systems revolved and remained like a wreath of garlands tossed about or like a well-arranged spread of flowers. The intervening regions of eight thousand yojanas between the world spheres which had not been lit before even with the radiance of seven suns shining together became one mass of light. The great ocean eighty-four thousand yojanas deep turned into sweet water. Rivers ceased to flow. Those blind from birth were able to see . . . Being thus honored . . . he gained penetrative insight into the knowledge of omniscience and made the ecstatic utterance customary with all Buddhas: . . . The mind that has gone beyond things composite has attained the destruction of cravings.[41]

The *Buddhacarita* has it that after awakening, to allay some of the gods' doubts about the Buddha's achievement, he performed the Twin Miracle. At the end of this first oration as a Buddha (that goes on summarizing the Bodhisattva's career), the text states, "the earth swayed like a woman drunken with wine."[42]

The Bodhi tree also remained as a symbolic center in Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna traditions that evolved in later Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. In painted palm-leaf manuscripts of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* prepared in the Pāla empire's domain (Bihar and West Bengal), the image of the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā, the quintessential epitome of the Mahāyāna doctrinal teaching of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, is most often paired together with the image of the Buddha represented at the moment of his awakening.[43] The directional Buddha adopting the *bhūmisparśa* mudra becomes Akṣobhya, who symbolizes the embodiment of awakening facing east in the artwork associated with the tantric traditions.[44]

Seven Weeks

Figure 6.15 Miniature stele with Buddha's life scenes, with the Māravijaya event in the center (seven major moments with the Parinirvāṇa on top form the outer layer, and the seven stations are lined on either side of the Buddha forming the inner layer, on the bottom is the seven jewels of the cakravartin (*saptaratna*), which are common offerings included in medieval Buddhist images), Bagan, Myanmar, c. early thirteenth century CE. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Louis Sidney Thierry Memorial Fund, Photo© President and Fellows of Harvard College, 1979.328.

The biographies of the Buddha have a wide variety of accounts on what happened after the awakening experience. Dwelling in the proximity of the place of *samyaksambodhi*, Siddhārtha savored the bliss of Buddhahood realized. Such a momentous achievement/transformation naturally made it necessary for the Buddha to put the internal, wordless experience of awakening into words and process the experience.

Most texts agree that the Buddha remained in the vicinity of the Bodhi tree for forty-nine days. This number is an important one in Indic religions and in the later formulation of Buddhist doctrine. Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions hold that the "intermediate state" between death and rebirth is, at most, forty-nine days. As a result, one can interpret this narrative as signifying a liminal period separating the individual who had wandered in *samsāra* for many lifetimes seeking perfection, and the fully enlightened being no longer bound by karma or the *kleṣas*, now possessing a full understanding of reality and possessing extraordinary supernormal powers.[45]

In artistic rendering of the Buddha narrative, the events of the seven weeks were also significant. The Burmese Buddhists of Bagan incorporated them into the Māravijāya template as seen in the so-called Andagu plaque from today's Myanmar (Figure 6.15). It is clear even in miniature that the whole Buddha biography is anchored to the Bodhi tree.

Another Burmese example is a clay votive tablet that demonstrates the iconographic codification of the seven weeks following the Māravijāya template (Figure 6.16). The eight life scenes with the Buddha's awakening under the Bodhi tree in the center (now represented as the Buddha seated inside a towering shrine with a stūpa finial) are arranged in the typical manner of the Māravijāya template in this tablet with some delightful details of the narrative. On the bottom register represented in one row are seven Buddhas, each referencing the event of each of the seven weeks, again with extreme visual economy.[46]

If we look at the awakening narrative one week at a time, we learn that for the entire first week, immediately after awakening, the Buddha with unblinking eyes remained under the tree seated with legs crossed "feeling the bliss of deliverance."[47] The *Lalitavistara* adds[48] that the Buddha was "nurtured by the Joy of contemplation."[49]

During the second week, the Buddha got up and walked a short distance to the east, then turned to gaze joyfully but without blinking at the Bodhi tree in order to honor it. One account adds that he had the recurring thought, "At this place I exhausted the limitless suffering, in order to get rid of the heavy burden."[50] In Sri Lanka, this moment turned into a popular iconography of a standing buddha staring at a tree with his hands crossed in front of the chest.

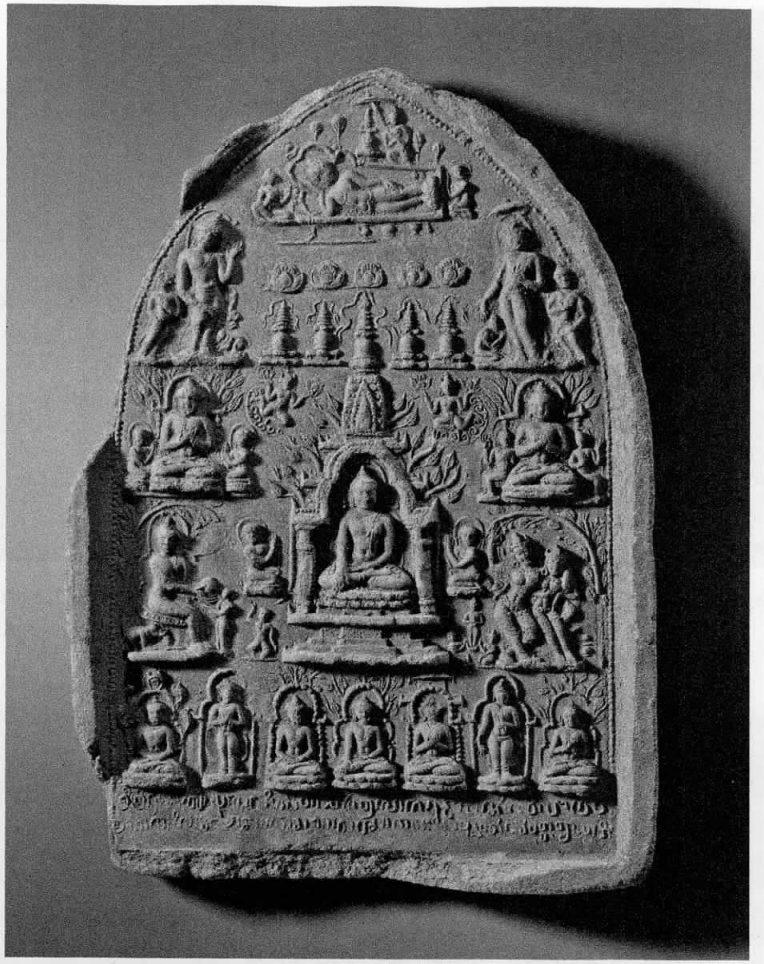

Figure 6.16 Votive plaque with Buddha's life scenes, Bagan, Myanmar, c. early thirteenth century CE. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston Marshall H. Gould Fund 1976.62. Photograph © 2023 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Most texts recount how the Buddha spent the third week walking up and down making a "long promenade" (*caṅkrama*), going from the tree to his standing place. This became renowned as "the cloistered walk" and became an architectural feature found at some Buddhist shrines that feature *stūpa*s and Bodhi trees (Figure 6.18). A *caṅkrama* is shown in two Bharhut scenes.[51]

For the fourth week, the Buddha ventured away from the tree. The *Mahāvastu* has him accepting the invitation of the nāga king Kāla to abide in his domain;[52]

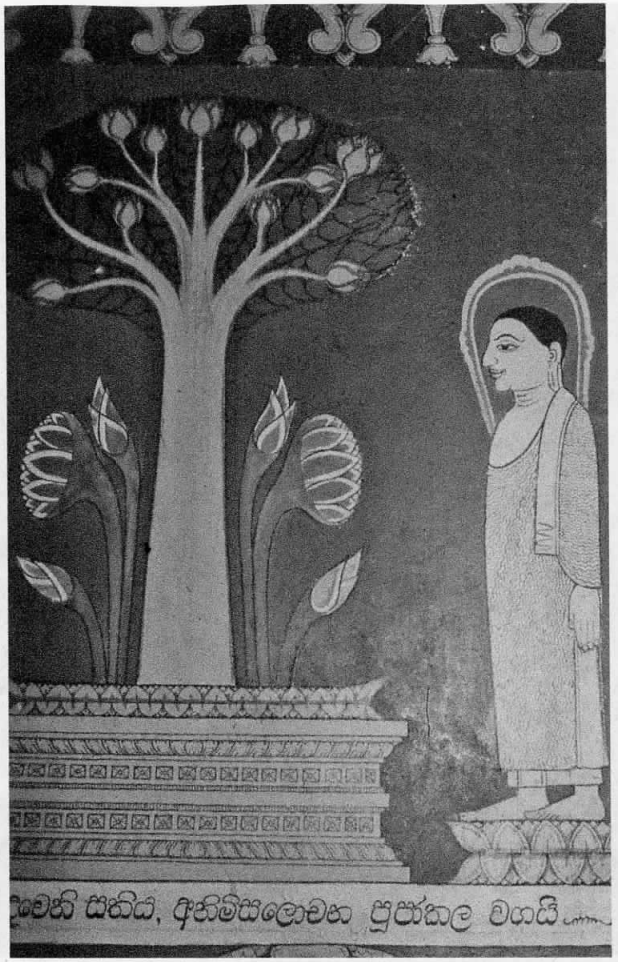

Figure 6.17 Buddha standing and gazing at the Bodhi tree; wall painting in Kandy, Sri Lanka, c. nineteenth century. Photo by Todd Lewis.

by contrast, the Pali account describes the gods creating a "treasure house" where he focused his thought on formulating the advanced teaching, the *Abhidharma*. Yet another alternative is found in the *Lalitavistara*, where he spends a week staring at the awakening seat (*bodhimaṇḍa*) with unblinking eyes.[53] Whether standing or sitting, the textual traditions all have him doing intense meditation during this week.

Figure 6.18 View of the jeweled walkway (*caṅkrama*), Mahabodhi temple complex, Bodhgaya, December 26, 2023. Photo by Jinah Kim.

Figure 6.19 Buddha protected by the nāga Muchalinda when a torrential storm arose during the fifth week after the awakening, detail of painted wooden book cover, Kathmandu, Nepal, c. mid-eleventh century. Image courtesy of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

The connection between the Buddha (and early Buddhists) with the *nāgas* recurs in the fifth week: as torrential rains began falling, the *nāga* Mucalinda extends his coils around his body and his hoods above to provide shelter. The Pali texts assure that the experience of residing with a large serpent wrapped around his body for a week did not detract from being immersed in the bliss of deliverance and that he emerged "unharassed as if having resided in a fragrant chamber."[54] Unnamed Newar artists of the eleventh century depicted this moment as a center of the Buddha biography pictorial program on the wooden book covers (Figure 6.19). An impressively coiled snake with five hoods engulfs the Buddha while two *nāgas* approach him with food offerings, which may be conflating other narrative moments where *nāgas* appear in one scene.

Next the Buddha walks to the goatherd's *nigrodha* tree to spend the sixth week, where he again sat "immersed in the bliss of deliverance." A Pali tradition[55] and the *Lalitavistara* assert that it was during this week when Māra's daughters try to distract and divert the Buddha.[56]

Week seven has the Buddha still fasting, and moving to a grove of *kṣīrika* trees (or sitting under a *rajāyatana* tree) staying in "a shrine of many gods" again immersed in bliss feeding on the joys of deep meditation (*jhāna*) and the bliss of "completing the path and fruition."[57] At the end of this week, the Pali tradition has Indra direct two gods to offer the Buddha a medicinal fruit and betel stem tooth-stick to prepare him to break his seven-week fast.[58]

After the seventh week, the newly enlightened Buddha was still near the Bodhi tree when he was faced with the question of what to do next. Māra urges the Buddha to just enjoy his own bliss, or end his human existence by passing into final nirvāṇa, giving up on any urge to share his spiritual discoveries with other beings. Māra's suggestions have no effect, but the Buddha wrestles with a different concern: would his insight prove too difficult for others to understand? In some accounts, it is Māra pointing out the hopelessness and frustrations of teaching humans.[59]

The gods discern this and feel great dismay. First, the great god Brahma appears before the Buddha, kneels on his right knee, and says, "Venerable sir, let the Blessed One teach the Dhamma. Let the Sublime One teach the Dhamma. There are beings with little dust in their eyes who are wasting through not hearing the Dhamma. There will be those who will understand the Dhamma."[60] The Buddha then gazes about using his *ṛddhi*, superpowers. Once he sees that there are some beings "with little dust in their eyes" who would be capable of understanding his teachings, he announces his decision to share his Dharma with the world. The Buddha points out that Māra was trying to divert him to protect his sovereignty over all mortal beings and keep them circling in *saṃsāra*.

Two Merchants, The First Devotees, and Donors

The decision to teach now firmly rooted, the Buddha begins his engagement with the world. The first two humans who come upon the now fully awakened and resplendent Buddha are merchants, whose caravan passes near the Bodhi tree. (Some accounts add a back story that deceased relatives who are now deities nudged them in this direction, so they could make great merit through making offerings to the Buddha.) They show respect for him by their gestures, and are drawn to be his first disciples, so potent is the charisma of the newly enlightened Siddhārtha. These two merchants, Trapuṣa and Bhallika, are remembered as the first humans who "take refuge" in the Buddha and the Dharma, his teachings.[61]

Then the merchants do what devotees in South Asia have always done to express their reverence: they make offerings, in this case, of food such as honey and curds (some accounts add a "rice cake") to the solitary, seated Buddha. But there is a problem: the Awakened One knows that buddhas in earlier eras could not accept food directly in their hands, but must have a container to accept food offerings. Many accounts report that the onlooking gods had anticipated this issue beforehand, and four of them immediately manifested four bowls each made of a different precious metal, but the Buddha rejected these as unsuitable; then they offered stone bowls, and these too were deemed unsuitable.[62] After he turns all their manifested bowls into one, the Buddha finally accepts the first food that broke his forty-nine day postawakening fast.

Like merchants in later centuries who found the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha a worthy refuge and focus for their patronage, Trapusa and Bhallika left "well-satisfied and filled with the greatest joy."[63] The Buddha intoned a long and effusive[64] series of verses zestfully willing these donors this-worldly success:

> May the blessing of the gods be with you!
> May success follow you always!
> May all your affairs go smoothly
> And according to your desire!
> . . .
> May well-being surround you
> like a garland around your head!
> . . . May the yakṣas, the great divine kings, and the Arhats,
> Together with Indra, be kind to you . . .
> May good fortune follow you everywhere.[65]

Once these merchants head off, the Buddha exits our chapter's frame: as a teacher, heading to the Deer Park at Sarnath, outside Varanasi.

Conclusions

The Buddha's long lingering at this site around the Bodhi tree highlights how, for devotees from the faith's origins, Bodhgaya should be the eternal, sacred center of Buddhism. And so it became for almost 2,500 years. As the scholar Haribhadra (eighth-century CE), in his commentary on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, wrote: "The *bodhimaṇḍa*, the unsurpassed seat is a spot so named because the *maṇḍa*, the quintessence of awakening, is present there."[66] Pilgrims began visiting this place early, drawn by its historical importance and assured of its protective powers. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, for example, declares that beings who go to the seat of awakening (*bodhimaṇḍa*) cannot be harmed there by men or ghosts, except as a result of the fruition of former deeds. The sacredness of the site is due to the power of the signature event of the whole Buddhist tradition, the Buddha's conquest over death through awakening to reality, and his promotion of fearlessness and nonenmity in all beings.[67]

Buddha images, especially those made in later centuries through the Pala era, commonly followed the Māravijāya template. But most depictions in this later period of Indic Buddhism clearly lacked narrative detail and emotional presence. Perhaps they were symbolizing something beyond Māravijāya, not simply the Sugata's last victory before awakening, but, as Janice Leoshko has suggested, an expression of how Buddhists came to regard "the power of enlightenment."[68] Māravijāya in image and narrative in this reading may have become a composite representation of all the Buddha's actions around the tree: an alms bowl moving upstream, the earth that quakes responsive to his actions, the earth goddess who appears as witness and ally, the first performance of the "Double Miracle," *nāga* and deity alliances affirming the supremacy of buddhas in the hierarchy of all divine beings. Here is the beginning of a new buddha's presence in our world. What touching the earth signifies is that through his Dharma, the Buddha reveals both the ultimate truth and the central cosmic power unleashed by a new Buddha's appearance. From these seven weeks onward, the Buddha will share this Dharma to benefit all living beings for matters transcendental and pragmatic. This is what makes Bodhgaya the powerful center of the tradition, the place most worthy of Buddhist pilgrimage.

Through this discussion, we can see less opaquely how the earliest Buddhist communities—led by devout merchants, artisans, and saṃgha reciters and ritualists—built Buddhism through their donations, craftsmanship, ritual praxis, and eventually their literate ability that by 100 BCE was directed to producing written texts. It is the art that reinforces a historical account indicating that rituals and festivals were underway at the beginning, with devotional traditions uniting householders and sangha. Present were sociocultural bonds that would foster the foundations of a great world religion, a tradition that would be adopted

by both nomads and city dwellers, that could coexist with all manner of great gods, local tree spirits, serpent deities, and demons. These patterns, or historical blueprints can lead us to new insights about Buddhism in history. Examining what the tradition remembers occurring around the tree of awakening can open our cultural imagination, so we can view Buddhism more comprehensively, in three dimensions, going where texts alone cannot take us.

Notes

1. This tree as the center of the cosmos is a classic example of the *axis mundi* archetype highlighted by the noted religion scholar Mircea Eliade.
2. The diversity of style and iconography in the images of the Buddha around the globe certainly suggests that how people saw the Buddha varied greatly depending on the time and place.
3. Joanna Williams, "Sārnāth Gupta Steles of the Buddha's Life," *Ars Orientalis* 10 (1975): 186.
4. Simply stated, art is a powerful, distilled expression of religious culture. The more one understands the artistic tradition, the closer one sees faith and devotion through the eyes of a believer. See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).
5. Visual narratives provided flesh and fashion to the skeletal stories so people could see the Buddha's life stories in their own terms; they represent the Buddha in the garb of the lived world of the devotees in each epoch, making the stories more relatable and memorable. The Buddha's life scenes in stone or in painting might have in certain sites served as a basis for rituals, or a "visual liturgy," as is seen today.
6. Vidya Dehejia, *Discourse in early Buddhist art: Visual Narratives of India* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1997).
7. Dehejia calls this phenomenon "narrative recess" or recess of visual narratives.
8. John Huntington, "Pilgrimage as Image: The Cult of the Astamahapratihariya—Part 1" *Orientations* 18, no. 4 (1987): 55–63; "Pilgrimage as Image: The Cult of the Astamahapratihariya—Part 2," *Orientations* 18, no. 8 (1987): 56–68.
9. Joanna Williams, "Sārnāth Gupta Steles of the Buddha's Life," *Ars Orientalis* 10 (1975): 171–192.
10. On the development of a *maṇḍala*-template social order, see Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 131–144.
11. Janice Leoshko, "Scenes of the Buddha's Life in Pala Period Art," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 3 (1993–1994): 28–52.
12. Elena A. Pakhoutova, "Reproducing the Sacred Places: the Eight Great Events of the Buddha's Life and their Commemorative Stūpas in the Medieval Art of Tibet (10th–13th century)" (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009); Ursula Toyka-Fuong, "The Influence of Pāla Art on 11th Century Wall-Paintings of Grotto 76 in Dunhuang," in *The Inner Asian International Style 12th–14th Centuries*, ed. Deborah

E. Klimburg-Salter and Eva Allinger (Wien: Verlag, 1998); Hiram W. Woodward Jr., "The Life of the Buddha in the Pāla Monastic Environment," *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* 48 (1990); Janice Leoshko, "About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India," *Archives of Asian art* 52, no. 1 (2001).

13. Janice Leoshko, "Time and Time Again: Finding Perspective for Bodhgayā Buddha Imagery." *Ars Orientalis* 50 (2021): 6–32.
14. This variation is mostly ascribed to Myanmar. See Hiram W. Woodward Jr., "The Indian Roots of the 'Burmese' Life-of the Buddha Plaques," *Silk Road Art and Archaeology* 5 (1997–1998): 395–407.
15. Gaffney, Sean, *Skyes pa rabs kyi gleṅ gźi (Jātakanidāna): A Critical Edition* (Oxford: Indica et Buddhica, 2018), 164. This is also found in the Pali *Nidāna-kathā*. See N. A. Jayawickrama, trans., *The Story of Gotama Buddha (Jātaka Nidānakathā)* (Oxford: Pali Text Society, 1990), 93.
16. Eviatar Shulman, "Buddha as the Pole of Existence, or the Flower of Cosmos," *History of Religions* 57, no. 2 (2017).
17. Todd Lewis and Subarna Man Tuladhar, trans., *The Epic of the Buddha: His Life and Teachings by Chittadar Hridaya* (Boulder: Shambhala, 2019), 177–178.
18. Although weighed down by the heavy load of grass on her head and under her left arm, the woman deftly carries a grass cutting knife and water pot. She looks at the unfolding exchange between the grass cutter and the Buddha incredulously.
19. In the Hindu tradition, the Bodhi tree is termed "*aśvattha*" in Sanskrit, and is regarded as sacred, linked to an incarnation of Vishnu as Vasudeva. See Eviatar Shulman, "Buddha as the Pole of Existence," 187.
20. Gwendolyn Bays, trans., *The Lalitavistara Sūtra* (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1983), 2:439.
21. On representations of Māra in Buddhist art see Prithivi K. Agrawala, "The Depiction of Māra in early Buddhist Art," in *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art*, ed. K.R. van Kooij & H. van der Veere (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995), 125–134.
22. John S. Strong, *The Buddha: A Short Biography* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001), 70.
23. Symbolized by a pig/rooster/snake found at the center of the "Wheel of Life/Rebirth" (*bhavacakra*): greed/lust/delusion) around which beings move repeatedly in *saṃsāra*. Because humans are poisoned by these *kleśas* they act in foolish ways and are reborn until they realize enlightenment.
24. Māra's interference in the Bodhisattva's life began even before Siddhārtha made his seat under the Bodhi tree. One Pali account has Māra starting his interference when Siddhārtha is about to leave home in the Great Renunciation (Pali Canon, *Paduna Sutta*). Māra tries to prevent the Great Departure by "flying into the air" and going to tell Prince Siddhārtha that if he stayed, in seven days he would become an ultimate king, or *cakravartin*. After the Bodhisattva ignores this, leaves the palace and reaches the forest, the stalking Māra says menacingly, "Wherever you get a thought of lust, malice, cruelty, I'll know it," and then follows him around for the next seven years, step by step. But in the end, Māra must testify, "I have found no entrance of lust, malice, cruelty to the Bodhisattva, a watchful one." Māra, however, persists. Once Siddhārtha gives up his extreme asceticism on the Nairañjanā River and begins to move toward his final efforts under the Bodhi tree, Māra urges

him to give it all up and return to a life of doing good and being a *cakravartin*, back to luxury and religious practice centered on Vedic fire offerings (*homa*). The Bodhisattva rejects this and denounces Māra again. For this story, see E. J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1927), 54–73.

25. The following synthetic account is drawn from texts cited by E. J. Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*.
26. J. J. Jones, trans., *The Mahāvastu: Translated from the Buddhist Sanskrit* (London: The Pali Text Society, 1952), 2, 365–366.
27. J. J. Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 2:366.
28. These are: generosity, morality, forbearance, energy, one-pointed concentration, *prajñā ("insight; wisdom")*, skillful means, determination, strength, and spiritual knowledge.
29. For a discussion of Burmese examples depicting Māra's daughters, see Donald M. Stadner, "The Daughters of Māra in the Art of Burma," *Arts of Asia* 45, no. 2 (2015).
30. This powerful depiction is rendered despite its miniature size, measuring 4″ in height.
31. Less personalized is the account of the earth responding in *Jātakanidāna*: "And, drawing his right hand from beneath his robes, while stretching out his hand towards the great earth, he said: 'Are you, or are you not, witness to the event of my giving seven hundred and seven gifts during my existence as Vessāntara? Speak!'" The reference here is to his last life, when he showed his mastery over attachment by giving away all his wealth, his children, and his wife.
32. Sean Gaffney, *Skyes pa rabs kyi gleṅ gźi, Jātakanidāna*, 173.
33. Later commentators noted that these quakes were not destructive to living beings, though they did terrify and rout Māra's army.
34. Later Buddhist authors, as they did with so many topics, made a numbered list of the causes for the earth to quake in the Buddhist cosmos, including a naturalistic one: (1) natural (earth defined as earth resting on water resting on wind that rests on space; the wind moving upward causes quakes); (2) buddhists using *ṛddhi*; (3) done by the gods; (4) when a future Buddha first raises the conception of enlightenment; (5) future Buddha is born; (6) Buddha's moment of Awakening; (7) Buddha's first turning the wheel of Dharma; (8) Buddha declares the coming end of his life; and (9) *Parinirvāṇa*. E. J. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1927), 147.
35. The hair wringing iconography of the earth goddess grew out of an early auspicious motif of yakṣī or tree spirit figures, but the iconography's development and popularization happened in Southeast Asia rather than in India. For the history and significance of this iconographic development, see Elizabeth Guthrie, "A study of the history and cult of the Buddhist earth deity in mainland Southeast Asia" (Dept. of Philosophy & Religious Studies, University of Canterbury, 2004). This moment is sometimes represented in Gandhāran art.
36. As seen in the bottom left corner of the relief in Figure 6.11, a princely figure pensively sitting under a tree is often understood to be a reference to this moment. Also see Kristin Scheible's chapter.

37. We follow John Strong's useful terms for the insights the Bodhisattva gained; see Strong, *The Buddha*, 74–75.
38. Here there is an Indo-European connection that is relevant to the translation of this experience as "enlightenment:" (light in "enlightenment" resonates with the phrase "seeing the light" ≈ seeing/deep realization of the truth/Dharma. Some scholars prefer "awakening" as a translation of *samyaksambodhi*, with the useful connotation that finally he "woke up" to the clear understanding of reality.
39. From the Pali *Dhammapada*. See for example, Thomas Byron, *The Dhammapada*, Pocket Edition ed. (Boston: Shambhala 1993), 153–154.
40. (1) What is possible and impossible; (2) consequence of actions (*vipāka*); (3) abilities of other beings; (4) the direction of their lives; (5) the constituents of appearances; (6) the paths leading to the different realms of existence; (7) paths leading to purity and impurity; (8) states of meditation (*samādhi*) and absorptions (*dhyāna*); (9) deaths and reappearances; and (10) the eradication of all defilements (Skt. *āśrava;* Pali, *āsava*) due to the desire (kāma) or ignorance (*avidyā/avijja*).
41. Jayawickrama, trans., *The Story of Gotama Buddha (Jātaka Nidānakathā)*, 100–101.
42. XIV, 97 in E. H. Johnson, *The Buddhacarita*, 2nd ed. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, [1936] 1972), 213.
43. For further discussion of the iconographic program of the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscripts, see Jinah Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred: Illustrated Manuscripts and the Buddhist Book-Cult in South Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 73–76. Characterized as "the mother of all Buddhas" in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, this profound philosophical reality is personified as a beautiful regally-bedecked goddess.
44. David L. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors* (New York: Shambhala, 1987), 171.
45. For a detailed account of the seven weeks, see Osmund Bopearachchi, *Seven Weeks after the Buddha's Enlightenment: Contradictions in Text, Confusions in Art* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2016). This section follows the outline of events and utilizes the terms found there.
46. For instance, five snake hoods surrounding the Buddha in the far left corner references the event of the fifth week when the nāga king Mucalinda protected the Buddha from the torrential storm, while two standing Buddhas amongst the seven referenced two weeks during which the Buddha walked and stood in adoration of the tree (second and third weeks). These weeks are discussed in the following pages.
47. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha: According to the Pali Canon* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1992), 30.
48. Bays, *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2: 559.
49. A Pāli narrative has it that the Buddha discerned that the gods were doubtful about his being truly enlightened. To allay their doubt, on the seventh day of this first week, he performed the "Double Miracle" a feat that he will repeat later in his life. (Art historical identifications often call this "the Miracle of Śrāvastī.) The "Double Miracle" consists of his rising up into the air to the height of "six coconut trees," then having flames/water issuing from his upper/lower body, the flames/water being switched, then the display culminating in his multiplying his one body into a thousand bodies with the flames/water displayed. See the chapter by David Fiordalis.
50. This text and the Pali accounts state that a *stūpa* was built to mark this spot and it became known as "the shrine of steadfast gaze."
51. Minku Kim, "Where the Blessed One Paced Mindfully: The Issue of Caṅkrama on Mathurā's Earliest Freestanding Images of the Buddha," *Archives of Asian Art* 69, no. 2 (2019): 186.
52. Jones, *The Mahāvastu*, 2: 250.
53. Bays, *Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2: 570.
54. Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha*, 32.
55. Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha*, 33
56. Bays, *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2: 572.
57. The sole Buddha depicted inside a shrine structure among the seven in the clay tablet (third from the right) may depict this moment.
58. A Burmese narrative tradition has it that King Patanadi of Kośala (Skt. Prasenajit, Pali Pasenadi) later built seven stūpas around the Bodhi tree to mark the key event locations for each of the seven weeks. P. Bigandet, *Vie ou Légende de Gaudama: le Bouddha des Birmans* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1878), 104.
59. Ñāṇamoli, *The Life of the Buddha*, 19.
60. *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta*, MN 26; English translation from Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans., *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya* (Boston: Wisdom, 1995), 57.
61. Later Buddhists will take the "Triple Refuge" once the third "jewel," the sangha (community of monastics), has been established.
62. These four gods are identified as four heavenly kings in later Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna traditions. They were popularly represented in East Asian Buddhist art and architecture as "world protectors" and stationed at the entrance to Buddhist monasteries.
63. Bays, *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 2: 589
64. This takes up four pages in English translation.
65. Bays, *The Lalitavistara Sūtra*, 584–588.
66. Translated in Daniel Boucher, "The *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics," *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1991): 18.
67. Also discussed in Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred*.
68. Leoshko, "Time and Time Again," 22.