

chapter of the *Buddhavaṃsa*, the one about Gotama Buddha, is an abbreviated version of most of the rest of the *Nidānakathā*, adding only a few short bridge passages and a few verses. This section of the commentary (p. 272, line 6—p. 291, line 31) takes the story as far as the first sermon, covering *Nidānakathā*, p. 47 (beginning of the *Avidūre-nidāna*) to p. 82, line 12. The remaining twelve pages of the *Nidānakathā* are not to my knowledge duplicated or closely paralleled in another Pali text, except that parts of it recur in the introductions to individual *Jātaka* stories, which are usually presumed to be by the same hand.

The relevance of this analysis to our subject is that the traditions I encountered do not derive from the *Nidānakathā* alone. For example, the Sunday School primer gives the names of Siddhārtha's three palaces as Ramma, Suramma, and Subha. In the *Nidānakathā* they are not named. But these names occur in the *Buddhavaṃsa* (27, 14)¹⁷ and hence in its commentary (p. 278). The commentary goes on to give the story about the feat of arms, more or less as given in the Sunday School primer. In the *Nidānakathā* this incident is mentioned only briefly, but the author refers one for it to the *Sārabhaṅga Jātaka* (522), in which a similar, but even more elaborate story is told of the Bodhisattva in a former life. The version before us therefore seems to come from the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*.

Sometimes one has to look even further. When a monk was telling me about the birth of the Buddha (see Chapter 7, p. 288) he recited a pair of Pali verses. The first is not in the *Nidānakathā*, but is in the *Buddhavaṃsa* and in its commentary. Its original appearance in the *Buddhavaṃsa* is in a very short reference to the Buddha's birth, but it is quoted again in the commentary in the context of the full story. The second verse, however, is in none of these texts, but in an even shorter version of the whole early biography, perhaps potted from the *Madhuratthavilāsinī*. This very short version is in the commentary to the *Dhammapada* (vol. 1, pp. 83 et seq.). This text, like my informant, closely follows the first verse with another;¹⁸ so this is presumably his source.

¹⁷ Only as quoted in the commentary, p. 293. The P.T.S. edition of the text reports only variant readings, as it does in the next line for the name of Siddhārtha's wife (also not mentioned in the *Nidānakathā*). Miss Horner draws attention to the two names of the wife.

¹⁸ *Dh. A.*, I, 84, note 14. Norman, the editor, seems to consider the verse an interpolation.

Of course the traditions under discussion do not necessarily or even probably derive *directly* from the Pali texts. In most cases the Pali texts have been mediated through the great Sinhalese classics, prose accounts of the Buddha's life such as the *Butsaraṇa*, the *Pūjāvaliya*, the *Saddharmālaṅkāraya* and the *Saddhar-maratnāvaliya*, and through the folk literature deriving from them. But these Sinhalese works closely follow the Pali texts discussed above.

II. THE BUDDHA AS WORSHIPPED: MAN OR GOD?

Now that I have reviewed the Buddha's life and works (*caritaya*), the primary interest of the Buddhists themselves, it is time to return to his ontological status, if I may so call it, which has been the primary interest of academic observers, and to discuss the cult of the Buddha and his image. The bridge to this cult of the Buddha is the relic (*dhātu*, *dahaturvahanse*). We already hear of relics in the Canon. Shortly after the Buddha's last words (quoted on p. 81 of this chapter), in the same text, is recounted how after the Buddha's body had been cremated all the peoples of that area sent asking for his remains. They were divided into eight parts by Doṇa; a tribe who applied late got the embers of the pyre, and Doṇa kept the vessel in which the remains had been collected. The original text ends by telling us that there were then ten portions, and for each a stupa was built and a festival celebrated. To this is appended a verse, which Buddhaghosa says was added in Ceylon, which adds to the earlier eight portions of bodily remains four teeth, one of which was allegedly in heaven, and another in Kalinga in South India. This latter became of great importance to the Sinhalese, for it was brought to Ceylon in the fourth century, and from that time on accompanied the king of Ceylon, and had a temple in its honour in his capital. Its history is chronicled in Pali verse in the *Dāthāvaṃsa*¹⁹ ('The Chronicle of the Tooth'), composed by Dhammakitti in the twelfth century. The Portuguese claimed to have taken it to Goa and destroyed it in the sixteenth century, but the Sinhalese claim that by miraculous intervention they failed to do so. The Sinhalese kings built a temple for it in Kandy which has the title, unique for a religious edifice, of 'palace'—the *Daḷadā Māligāva* (literally 'Palace of the

¹⁹ Ed. R. Morris and T. W. Rhys Davids, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1884, pp. 109-50.

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Tooth Relic'). The temple is controlled by a lay administrator, the Diyavadana Nilamē, and is likewise unique in not belonging to a monastery, though monks of the two great monasteries of Kandy, Malvatta and Asgiriya, alternately officiate there, preaching on *poya* days, etc. It is nowadays—as has perhaps always been the case—exhibited only to people of the greatest importance, such as heads of state and prime ministers. But once a year it is taken in procession (*perahāra*) inside its casket (*karaṇḍuva*) on the back of the largest available elephant; though it is said that these days an empty substitute casket is taken, in case of accidents. This is the Āsaḷa Perahāra, Ceylon's most famous tourist attraction;²⁰ it takes place on the ten nights leading us to the full moon of the Sinhalese month of Āsaḷa (in August) and on the day itself. The tooth is preceded by the *perahāras* of the four gods whose temples are near by; the five processions coalesce into one great spectacle of elephants and men, officials in pompous Kandyan costumes of white, purple and gold, drummers bare-bodied leaping and turning, a din of their drumming and chanting, the whole illuminated by the flames of resin torches. Probably no other occasion attracts so many Sinhalese visitors from all over the island and specially the Kandyan provinces; the procession is certainly a *pinkama* and attendance is meritorious; but the Tooth Temple is not one of the sixteen great places of pilgrimage, because the Buddha never visited Kandy. We shall return to this question.

To trace the progress of other individual relics is beyond the scope of this work. Relics have always followed close upon the spread of the doctrine; the arrival in Ceylon of the Buddha's begging bowl and right collar-bone and a branch of the sacred Bo tree were mentioned in the Introduction. Most recently the Ceylonese Buddhist Mission to England has been supplied with relics from Ceylon; the first relic was judged perhaps too obscure when Mrs. Bandaranaike, then Prime Minister, arrived in London with a second, taken from Mihintalē (the site of Mahinda's arrival and conversion of King Devānaṃpiya Tissa), and astonished the inhabitants of Chiswick with a *perahāra* including an elephant from a circus.²¹

Relics may be of the Buddha or of any *arhat*, male or female.

²⁰ For the tooth relic festival in ancient Ceylon and the impressions of a fifth-century tourist, see Rahula, *History*, pp. 280-1.

²¹ *Times of Ceylon*, 13 October 1964.

By the excavation of a stupa in Kashmir in which was found an inscribed reliquary containing the bones of Majjhantika, striking confirmation was given to the historical accuracy of the *Mahāvamsa*, which records this *arhat*'s mission to Kashmir in chapter XII. However, in practice only relics of the Buddha are important.²² They have been divided by doctrine²³ into three classes: *sāririka* (pieces of the body), *pāribhogika* (things he used) and *uddesika* (reminders, i.e. representations). It is these three classes of relics, or their most typical examples, which are listed in this Pali verse, known by heart by most villagers and recited by the pious laymen who take the Eight Precepts at the temple on *poya* days:

Vandāmi cetiyaṃ sabbam sabbatthānesu paṭiṭṭhitam
Sāririka dhātu mahā bodhiṃ Buddharūpaṃ sakalam sadā.

I worship always every shrine, standing in every place, the bodily relics, the great Bodhi tree, and every image of the Buddha.

The worship of relics, as Obeyesekere put it in his lectures, resolves the clash of the cognitive fact of the Buddha's absence with the psychological (I would say affective) fact of his presence. In a recently published article²⁴ he suggests the linguistic and doctrinal origins of the belief that an enlightened person is immanent in his relics. Linguistically, *dhātu* in Sanskrit and Pali, and hence in learned Sinhalese, means an 'element'; for instance, it can refer to the essences of man and woman embodied respectively in semen and a posited equivalent female fluid. This does not mean (*pace* Yalman)²⁵ that an ordinary Sinhalese villager knows that the word can mean 'semen' and hence that relics have connotations of pollution or sexuality.²⁶ It does, however, mean

²² All relics are included in beliefs about their spectacular disappearance at the end of our *sāsanē*, for which see Chapter 7, section on eschatology.

²³ *J.* IV. 228, where the adjectives are attached to *cetiya*. Cf. *Milindapañho*, 341. For the theory and practice of relic worship in ancient Ceylon see Adikaram, pp. 135-42.

²⁴ G. Obeyesekere, 'The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions', in M. Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism* (Yale University Southeast Asia Series, 1966), pp. 1-26. This argument is on p. 8.

²⁵ Nur Yalman, *Under the Bo Tree* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 137, note 8. Bones are not dirt, nor does *dhātu-garbhaya* mean 'dhatu in the womb'.

²⁶ On p. 9 Obeyesekere refers to the myth that the Buddha will be reassembled from his relics at the end of the *sāsanē*, and says, 'This is strikingly similar to

that unlike the word 'relic', which suggests something merely left behind, the word *dhātu* suggests a basic constituent, perhaps even a sort of essence. This of course applies in the first instance to the ancient Sanskrit and Pali, and is not a Sinhalese innovation. Far more interesting, to my mind, is Obeyesekere's hypothesis that this conception of relics derives from one of the 'undecided questions' mentioned in the Introduction (p. 7). The Buddha would not say, when asked, whether an *arhat* after death exists or does not exist or both or neither. Though that can hardly have been his intention, his silence leaves room to conjecture some sort of after-life for the enlightened. Moreover, the doctrine that Enlightenment, the *summum bonum*, is a 'blowing out' of the personality is counter-intuitive. 'Thus the *dhātu* is the visible representation of the immortal *nirvāna* state.' From the orthodox doctrinal point of view this is a misunderstanding, but it could date from the earliest times. As Obeyesekere shows, it fits in well with the popular ascription to relics of the same abnormal powers of locomotion as *arhats* are supposed to possess, typically the ability to levitate and fly.

Such holy powers should, by the logic of this argument, inhere only in bodily relics. Indeed, certain functions are reserved for the bodily relics. With a few celebrated exceptions, such as the Buddha's begging bowl (*pātra*), they are the only ones to be enshrined. Enshrinement can be in stupas, in relic caskets (which usually have the form of miniature stupas), or in images—which will be explained below. Relics are of course usually to be found in temples, though exceptionally one is owned by a layman. In theory it is not a relic which makes a temple holy—it is monks who sanctify it by their presence—but in my researches I came across only one temple which did not claim to possess a relic. Though they are of course handled with the greatest veneration, in a wider sense these relics are casually dealt with: I invariably asked after the origin of a relic, but never got any reply more interesting than that it was inherited from the monk's teacher (*paramparāvin*). This is not the uncritical attitude of fanatical regard, which would retail some elaborate myth, but an indifference entirely proper to monks. However, I think the indifference is shared by laymen: I

the notion that male *dhātu* and female *dhātu* unite in orgasm to form a new being.' For once I must disagree with him: I do not find the similarity striking or the analogy plausible.

was sometimes told quite casually that some relic had been lost ('*nāti vunā*'). These village relics are indeed not very impressive objects: as a special favour I was shown those in Migala, precious casket removed to reveal precious casket, until the last tiny stupa contained a couple of minute white balls of what I presume was bone.

When monks formally visit a layman's house, typically to receive a meal or to recite *pirit*, they probably take with them the small temple *karaṇḍuva* containing relics, and there is a *perahāra*. (A *perahāra* need not be religious at all, but usually it is. The sort of *perahāra* I am discussing involves monks or relics, probably both. There are also *perahāras* for gods, in which their images are carried.) On the way to or from a *pirit* the sacred books (*pirit pot*), palm-leaf manuscripts, are carried and treated in the same way as the relic. The relic casket, covered with a rich cloth, is carried on a cushion on a man's head, and a canopy is held over it. It is preceded by drumming and, on grander occasions, dancing; small boys run ahead throwing fire crackers, other children carry white pennants tied to sticks, and maybe Buddhist flags, and all the laymen frequently shout 'Sādhu sādhu sā'. The monks walk behind the relics, carrying their umbrellas. When the procession reaches its destination it halts for a final climactic salvo of drumming and then dissolves. Before monks enter the building they take off their sandals, if any, and as they reach the threshold their feet are washed by one layman and dried by another. (The reader who recalls biblical parallels should be reminded that in Ceylon such personal services to monks are always performed by men.) In a well-conducted ceremony the monks from this point walk on white cloths, the provision and spreading of which is a special function of the washer caste. At a really big *perahāra* like the Kandy Āsaḷa Perahāra these cloths are used throughout the procession, but this is too extravagant for villagers. Inside the house the relic casket (with manuscripts, if brought) is put on a table; the essential is that it should be higher than the seats of those present. When monks are fed, a portion may be set aside in front of the relics. I saw this done several times by middle-class people in cities. It is a substitute for the normal *Buddha pūjā* (offering to the Buddha) which is made at every temple before every meal. Such offerings are discussed below. In the village, however, the *Buddha pūjā* is usually sent straight up to the temple to be offered

in the normal way, so no food need be reserved at the scene of the *dānē*. When the monks have been satisfied the remainder of the food is served to the guests, but the *Buddha pūjā* may be given only to animals or beggars; in cities it is often just thrown away. The return procession is similar to the arrival but much less ceremonious.

The commonest *pāribhogika dhātu*, object used by the Buddha, is a Bo tree. Under its shade he attained Enlightenment. There is one in almost every temple, and some grow elsewhere besides. Wherever a Bo tree grows it is sacred: it may not be cut down, and it may receive offerings. The nature and rationale of offerings (*pūjā*) made before relics will be extensively discussed below. Here I shall only remark that one type of offering seems to have entered Buddhism from earlier tree worship via the Bo tree: a piece of cloth, nowadays formalized as a flag (*koḍiya*), may be tied on to a branch.

It is the *pāribhogika dhātu* which provide occasion for pilgrimage. In the canonical text already quoted which describes the Buddha's death is a passage in which the Buddha, on the last day of his life, recommends pilgrimage to four places: where he was born, attained enlightenment, preached the first sermon, and died. These places should be seen and admired, and if anyone dies with a contented mind while on a pilgrimage (*cetiya-cārikā*) they will be reborn in heaven.²⁷ These four points, or the places believed to be them, are the supreme goals of pilgrims; every year tours are arranged from Ceylon, and several of my monastic informants had been on them. However, more places of pilgrimage have been found nearer home, on the above model: anywhere visited by the Buddha provides occasion for religious awe, so he visited Ceylon.

According to the first chapter of the *Mahāvamsa* the Buddha paid three visits to Ceylon, arriving by air. His first visit was to Mahiyangana, at the eastern foot of the central massif; his second to Nāgadīpa (Tamil: Nainativu), an island near Jaffna in the extreme north. On the third visit he went to Kālaniya, on the west coast near Colombo, and on his way back planted his footprint on Siripāda, known in English as Adam's Peak, in the south-west part of the hill country, the second highest mountain in Ceylon and by far the most spectacular; he further tarried and meditated in a cave at the foot of Siripāda, at Dīghavāpī on the east coast, and

²⁷ *D.N.*, II, 140-1 (*Sutta* 16. 5. 8).

four or five spots in Anurādhapura. According to another ancient version (*Samanta-pāsādikā*, I, 89) the third visit included Mutiyangana, in the south-eastern highlands. What these places have in common is that, like the Bo tree, they were used by the Buddha. At Mahiyangana the Buddha also left some hairs of his head and that temple later miraculously acquired a bone of his neck;²⁸ at Nāgadīpa he left the seat from which he had preached and the tree which had served as his parasol, themselves *pāribhogika dhātu*; but at the other places he originally left nothing, and Siripāda, the place of pilgrimage *par excellence*, has nothing material to offer the worshipper except the Buddha's footprint, recently covered in concrete.

There are altogether 'sixteen great places' (*soḷos mahāsthāna*) which are said to have been visited by the Buddha and are therefore sites of pilgrimage. Such a group of sixteen is alluded to in the last chapter of the *Cūlavamsa* (C. 128 and 253) but for reasons given below I suspect that the group is far older. The list is not stable, and I think I have discovered the basic reason for its instability: in the passage in the *Mahāvamsa* describing the Buddha's third visit to Anurādhapura, and in the passage in the *Dīpavamsa* on which it is at least partially based, there is an ambiguity,²⁹ so that they can be interpreted to mean that the Buddha stopped at the future site of the Bo tree *at* the future site of the Mahāvihāra, or to make these into two separate stops. The other points visited in Anurādhapura, as listed in the *Māhāvamsa*, are the Ruvanvāli sāya, the Thūpārāma and the Lankārāma. There are thus eleven³⁰ or twelve³¹ sites which according to fifth-century sources (the *Mahāvamsa* and the *Samanta-pāsādikā*) were visited by the Buddha, and the number sixteen has to be completed by the addition of four or five names. Candidates for the other places are Tissamahārāma near the south-east coast (always included); Kataragama, near Tissa; Mihintalē, very near Anurādhapura; and at Anurādhapura the Mirisavāṭi sāya, Abhayagiri, and

²⁸ Not a collar-bone, which is in the Thūpārāma. See Geiger, *Culture of Ceylon*, p. 213 note.

²⁹ *Mhv.*, I, 80-1, *Dīpavamsa*, II, 61-5.

³⁰ Thus Geiger in his note to his translation of *Mhv.*, C. 109, attributing his list to Wijesinha, a previous editor; and Obeyesekere, 'Buddhist Pantheon', p. 23.

³¹ Thus Professor Jayawickrama, *The Inception of Discipline and the Vinaya Nidāna* (Luzac, London, 1962), p. 116, and depictions in the local temples I visited.

Jetavana. When the Buddha is supposed to have visited these places is obscure to me, but their other sacred associations are all recorded in the first part of the *Mahāvamsa*.

What can we deduce from the size and shape of the list about its history? Though I know of no ancient evidence for a list of sixteen places of pilgrimage, the number sixteen has ancient connections with stupa worship in Ceylon:

'On the lowest terrace of a stupa there were sixteen marks of footsteps known as *pādapīthikā* fixed at regular points round the cetiya. They indicated the places where the pilgrim should stop and kneel down and worship in the course of his circumambulation, after offering flowers at the upper terraces. . . .'³² 'Guruḷugomi . . . (12th c.) says that there were sixteen *pādapīthikās* fixed at the Ruvanvālisāya indicating the points at which sixteen golden Buddha-images were enshrined inside the cetiya. . . .'³³

As for the list's composition, it is notable that none of the superb sites of Poḷonnaruva are included, but that all the places named have sacred associations going back at least to the fifth century A.D. Moreover, it can hardly be a coincidence that half the places listed are so well distributed round the country, while the other half are in the ancient capital. It certainly looks as if the list antedates the Poḷonnaruva period, and symbolically brings the whole of Ceylon under the religious suzerainty of Anurādhapura.

These then are the sixteen places of pilgrimage, fifteen of which the devout Buddhist hopes to visit at least once in a lifetime. (Fifteen, because the site of Divyaguhā ('Divine Cave'), in which the Buddha spent a day at the foot of Siripāda, has not been determined.) A pilgrimage is simply called a *vandanāva* ('worshipping') or a *pin gamana*—a 'merit journey'. It may well be the longest journey in a villager's life. It is normally undertaken in large groups, without differentiation by age or sex. A monk may go too, in which case he is of course provided for by the others, but I do not think monks travel on more pilgrimages than do devout laymen. Pilgrimages may take place at any time, but there are recognized seasons for the most famous spots, and nowadays the Government makes appropriate arrangements. The season starts³⁴

³² Rahula, *History*, pp. 117-18, with references to Buddhaghosa's commentaries.

³³ Rahula, *History*, p. 118, note 1.

³⁴ Kālaṇiya used to hold a *perahāra* in February; this has been suspended during that monastery's difficulties since the then incumbent was jailed for his part in Mr. Bandaranaike's assassination.

with Siripāda, which is usually climbed in the four months ending at Wesak (in May), because that is the part of the year when it is least likely to rain there and the sunrise may be seen in its full glory. Siripāda is the only pilgrimage necessarily to involve physical exertion, but the 3,000-foot climb up steep stone steps, up by night and down in the morning, deters neither the aged nor the pregnant woman with another baby on the hip; I went along with such a cross-section of Mīgala, and all of us made the ascent in three hours and the descent in one and a half. Poson, in June, is the time to visit Anurādhapura, because it is the anniversary of Mahinda's arrival in Ceylon. The fortnight before the full moon in August (Āsaḷa) is the time of Ceylon's two most famous religious festivals, though neither of them is on our list of pilgrimages: the procession for the tooth relic in Kandy and the festival of the god Kataragama at his eponymous centre in the south-eastern jungle. A Buddhist's visit to Kataragama, whether it is considered one of the sixteen places or not, is inevitably combined with a pilgrimage to nearby Tissamāhārāma; witnessing the procession of the Tooth is anyway meritorious. Finally, September is the month of the *perahāra* at Mahiyangana.

In the old days, of course, people walked on most pilgrimages, but nowadays they hire a bus from one of the companies which cater principally for this demand. Some enterprising people decide to organize a trip, calculate that they can fit fifty or sixty bodies into a bus, and divide the cost equally among the lay travellers. Some buses take pilgrims to all the sixteen places, and several besides, in a tour lasting a week or more. These buses have materially altered the character of pilgrimages. The sentimental outsider may deplore the rapid disappearance of the religious picnic party adventuring through the forest towards some scene of ruined grandeur. The safer bus journey to a repaired and whitewashed antiquity, electrically illuminated by night, may seem less romantic, and may exclude the very poor, but few Kandyan villagers in the old days can ever have reached Nāgadīpa, and the wider travel may even have marginal political advantages in increasing national sentiment. The ritual character of the pilgrimage has been equally altered: all improvements in communications work to the detriment of purely local deities. Less mobile villagers used to worship the local god before leaving his territory; then the god's overlord, the bigger god who controlled a wider area; and

so on till at their destination they reached the Buddha, lord of all and god above the gods (*devātideva*). The remains of these customs, if any, are hard to recognize. On leaving Mīgala for Siripāda no one ever dreamt of bothering with our local god, Piṭiya Deyyō; but on our way we stopped in Kandy to pay our respects to the Buddha at the Temple of the Tooth, and as we climbed the mountain we chanted.

*Apē Budun api vaṇḍinna
Saman deyyō piṭiya venṭa.*

We praise our Buddha; god Saman, help us.

That Saman is the god of Siripāda everyone knows, but few know how far his territory extends. Much less obvious is the vestigial nature of our stop in Kandy: to go from the Buddha's tooth to the Buddha's footprint is a geographical, but not a religious ascent; however, we were worshipping the local and familiar relic before venturing into the unknown.

The two classes of relics already discussed have probably been venerated since the Buddha's death, worshipped by pilgrimage and prostration, like an old and respected teacher. The third class, the *uddesika dhātu* which 'indicate' the Buddha to remind one of him, are an innovation, though an ancient one. Though the very shape of a stupa, through its association with physical relics, has itself acquired the status of an *uddesika dhātu*, the most important example is the image of the Buddha, his representation in painting or sculpture. The Sanskrit word for any image, *pratimā*, has become specialized: in Ceylon it and its derivatives, such as Sinhalese *pīlimaya*, refer only to sacred sculpture, for the sculptured image is culturally the important one.³⁵

In the earliest Buddhist art, which is of course Indian, the Buddha was represented only symbolically by an empty seat under a Bo tree, a footprint, an umbrella, or the *dharmacakka*, the wheel of the law which he discovered. Or probably it would be more accurate to say that the Buddha was not shown at all, to symbolize the fact that he was *nibbuta* ('extinguished'), and certain emblems served to indicate the scene portrayed. Where and when

³⁵ The ordinary word for sculpture in Sinhalese is *rūpaya*. Painting is *citrakarmaya* or *pintūraya*; the latter word more naturally applies to a framed picture, so that the wall-paintings typical of temples are generally called *citrakarma*, or *situvam*, the Eḷu form of the same word.

his body was first depicted is still disputed: art historians say that it was either in Gandhāra on India's north-west border, where art was influenced by contact with the Roman Empire, or well within North India in the Mathurā school of art, and that it probably happened some time in the last two centuries before Christ. They thus reject or ignore the evidence of the *Mahāvamsa*, which says³⁶ that a stone image of the Buddha was set up by Devānaṃpiya Tissa, i.e. in the third century B.C. This image was the most famous one in ancient Ceylon; it is frequently referred to in the chronicles, and was probably the one which so impressed the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsien in the early fifth century A.D. (He says the image he saw was made of green jade, but that is most improbable.) It is possible that it is the same as the famous *samādhi pīlimaya* (seated Buddha image) still visible (though disfigured by restoration) on the Outer Ring Road at Anurādhapura; though this statue is far less tall than the two *chang* (about 22 feet) vaguely claimed by Fa Hsien. This *Mahāvamsa* testimony occurs in an account of events in the third century A.D., and was written still later; the author may have been mistaken about the statue's origin.³⁷ Error is, however, even less likely in the long account (chapter XXX) of Duṭṭhāma's decoration of the relic chamber in the early first century B.C.; he had a golden Buddha image made, and many other sculptures and paintings which are enumerated. The similarity of the subjects then chosen to what I saw in the village temples I visited is quite remarkable.

Buddha images are sacred objects. They are made by special people: their manufacture is—or was before the days of mass production—the prerogative of *sittaru* (literally: 'painters'). *Sittaru* do all the art-work, both painting and sculpture, in a temple. They form a sub-caste of the *navandannō*, the caste which includes all types of craftsmen, from carpenters to goldsmiths. Another person, an artist, may in these modern times make a Buddha image, but if he has any trace of traditional sentiment left he will refrain from giving it the finishing touch, which consists in putting in the eyes, and leave this to a *sittarā*, who will perform the appropriate ceremony, a *nētra pinkama* ('eye festival').

³⁶ XXXVI, 128.

³⁷ For more detail on this interesting question of the origin of the Buddha image see Rahula, *History*, pp. 121–5. It is sad that the facts he adduces are still so unfamiliar to art historians. I would also recommend the curious reader to his subsequent investigation of the origins of the image-house in Ceylon.