Reconsidering the Symbolic Meaning of the Stupa

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Reconsidering the Symbolic Meaning of the Stupa

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Abstract

This thesis explores that the symbolic meanings of the *stupas*, as a result of both the transition of pre-Buddhist monuments and the mixture of Vedic, Jaina, and Buddhist tradition, were formed converging with such regional constructions as *smasana*, *aiduka(eduka)*, *Bodhi-ghara*, ritual altars, pillars(*yupa*, *skambha*, and *yasti*), and dome-shaped huts. Also, the paper understand that, during the Buddhist period, the implication and function of the *stupas* were united into a mausoleum, joining hands with the primitive notion of *smasana* and *aiduka(eduka)*, and then were more developed for the Buddha's relics, an honorific hut to memorize the Buddha, a shrine for the Buddha, a sacred place in the Buddha's biography, and a dwelling structure housing the living presence of the Buddha within its relic chamber. The study further shows that the symbolic meaning and functional purposes of the *stupa* was converged depending on the regional preferences of Vedic monuments and the structural vocabularies of Buddhist sacred sites. Hence, this research shows the *stupa* was developed with the selective adoption of the pre-Buddhist building types by local preferences, in the preservation of the varied symbolic meaning according to each locality, and through the employment of universal notions such as a chamber, a mound, an altar, a pillar, a place, and a hut.

1. INTRODUCTION

Early Buddhist literature records such building types as '*stupa*' and '*caitya*' in the Sanskrit, '*thudva*' '*dagoba*,' '*thupa*,' '*mahacetiya*,' and '*cetiya*' in the Pali, Anglo-Indian '*tope*,' and Chinese pagoda (*ta*, *lou*, *ge*, *ci*, *tang*, and *dian*) with different names, shapes, and functions as well. As regional influence has contributed enormously to the variations in the *stupa* architecture, multivalent symbolic meanings regarding the *stupa* structure appears to be flexibly taken depending on prevalent, socio-cultural, and religious practices and tradition of the different times and drawing upon the choice of Buddhist literature and *sutras* by monastic intellectuals and lay people as well. Likewise, the uses of different names related to the *stupa* intentionally occurred in keeping with the preference of the locality and the time. This thesis discusses important historical contexts like '*smasana*' and '*aiduka*' for the dead in the Vedic

era to revisit the symbolic meaning of the *stupas*. Nobody has ever mentioned the association with the primitive constructions. On the *stupas*, most of scholars have just mentioned the rapports between the Vedic and Buddhist objects such as the *svaru* and the *yasti* through the simple comparisons of each notion.[1] Further, the thing in their arguments is that they have ignored the historical context of the regional and ceremonial structures for the *Bodhi-ghara* (*Bodhi* tree), the *svaru* (*yupa*), the *skambha*, and the altars. The study thus proves that the *stupas* have the significant backgrounds[2] founded on vernacular

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1) The criticism of the existing studies of *stupas* is enough dealt in this book. Akira Shimada, and Jason Hawkes. *Buddhist Stupas in South Asia: Recent Archaeological, Art-Historical, and Historical Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, 2009.

2) The term '*stupa*' was used in many places, but not accepted in South India, e.g. Salihundam, Bavikonda, Nagarjunakonda, Amaravati, and Kanganhali or North Indian in Nepal, e.g. Svayambhunath. Svayambhunath, and temple complexes on the top a hill of the Kathmandu Valley). For the one, it was called a "*mahacaitya* or *mahacetiya*," meaning "great *caitya* or great *cetiya*." For the other, only four earthen mounds, along the axes of the street network in Patan from the Kathmandu, are named *thudva*. The '*thu*' is possibly borrowed from the Pali. Nonetheless, the *stupa*, *mahacaitya*, *mahacetiya*, and *thudva* imply the same building types functionally. Each meaning is differently interpreted in multivalent approaches between

and ceremonial constructions originated from the pre-Buddhist period, positively accepting the existing theories of the *stupas* as well.

Hence, this research explores that the symbolic meanings of the *stupas*, as a result of both the transition of pre-Buddhist monuments and the amalgamation of the Vedic, Jaina, and Buddhist tradition, were formed converging with such regional constructions as *smasana*, *aiduka* (*eduka*), *Bodhi-ghara*, ritual altars, pillars (*yupa*, *skambha*, and *yasti*), and dome-shaped huts. Also, this paper understands that, during the Buddhist period, the implication and the function of the *stupa* were united into a mausoleum, joining hands with the primitive notion of *smasana* and *aiduka* (*eduka*), and then were more developed for the Buddha's relics, an honorific hut to memorize the Buddha, a shrine for the Buddha's images, a hallowed place in the Buddha's biography, and a dwelling structure housing the living presence of the Buddha within its relic chamber. The study further shows that the symbolic meaning and functional purposes of the *stupa* were converged depending on the regional preferences of Vedic monuments and the structural vocabularies of Buddhist sacred sites. Therefore, the thesis shows the *stupa* was developed with the selective adoption of the pre-Buddhist building types by local preferences, in the preservation of the varied symbolic meaning according to each locality, and through the employment of universal notions such as a chamber, a mound, an altar, a pillar, a place, and a hut.

2. NOMENCLATURE: *STUPA/MAHACETIYA*

2.1 DESCRIPTIONS IN SANSKRIT SOURCES

Early literature on the *stupa* could be shown in earliest Sanskrit sources. They are divided by two folds: the one is for Jainism, and the other is for Vedic culture, which are gradually merged into the Buddhist tradition. On the one hand, Ajivakas in Jainism did not adopt *stupas* as a tool of worship toward the Buddha, and they did not include the relics of Buddha in their *stupas*. In fact, the *stupa*'s construction was originated from the common habit of religious varied sects to erect funeral monuments for their great teachers with the *stupa* form and to

worship them as the tool of the *samādhis* practice, for which it was built all over India in honor of distinguished ascetics.[3] To Jainas and Ajivakas,[4] the *stupa* was just used as an instrument for the meditation practice held in memorial services in search for their own enlightenment. The only ancient Jaina *stupa*

Figure 1. Jain stupa on Āyāgapaṭa relief, Kaṅkālī-Ṭīlā

unearthed to date which was excavated from Kaṅkālī-Ṭīlā at Mathurā showed an architectural instance. The Jaina *stupa* had "10 pieces of old pottery filled with the ashes of some Jaina monks." [5] (Fig.1) Its structure, although the Jaina's *stupa* structures came to light before the advent of the Buddha and afterward its incarnated gods also emerged in the Jaina *stupa* in the use of convenient means (*upaya*), was a conscious and a concrete expression of human socio-economic and religious norms and beliefs of the pre-Buddhist era.[6] On the other hand, the earliest Buddhist inscription made by King Asoka refers to the enlargement of the *stupa* structure, which characteristic sense was a "relic monument." [7] The *Yajur-veda Samhita* stated concerning the *stupa* is referred to as a 'bunch of wool' or 'knot or tuft of hairs,' or the 'upper part of the head, crest, summit.' [8] The *stupa*

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vernacular tastes and religious purposes. Niels Gutschow, et al. *the Nepalese Caitya*, Edition Axel Menges, 1997, p.7.

3) Führer's excavation of the stūpa in 1889-90 did not reveal any relic chamber or relics, although commemorative stupas at an earlier time and the worship of bone relic was never practiced by Jains. George Bühler, "Further Proofs for the Authenticity of the Jaina Tradition," *Vienna Oriental Journal* 4 (1890): 328.

4) Refer to the following book to see the religious difference of Jains and Ajivakas. Jacob Kinnard, *The Emergence of Buddhism: Classical Traditions in Contemporary Perspective*, Fortress Press, 2010, pp.11-12.

5) The Jaina *stupa*'s information on relic shrines of Jaina monks and nuns occur in the aniconic traditions, although there is no evidence for a widespread cult of the bone relics of the Jaina comparable to the relic *stupas* of the Buddha. The word "aniconic" is often used as a synonym of "anti-iconic" and "iconoclastic" which designate the rejection of the creation or veneration of images and the destruction of images of a sacred being. Burkhart Gladigow, "Anikonische Kulte," *Handbuch religionswissenschaflicher Grundbegriffe* (1988): 472-473.

6) Vincent Arthur Smith, *the Jain Stupa and Other Antiquities of Mathura*. Nabu Press, 2010, pp.13-15.

7) Mirelle Bénisti, "II. Étude sur le stūpa dans l'Inde ancienne". *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 50, 1(1960): 47.

8) Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 1899, p.1260.

then might be a Sanskrit term dating to the Vedic period that originally referred to the top or upper part of a head (topknot hair style), even representing a tree and a pillar,[9] and further might be related to the construction of Vedic altars[10] that the round altar symbolizes the terrestrial world, and the square altar on top of the round body means the celestial.

Also, the *stupa* which is stemmed from the root '*stup*' (to heap) is a funeral mound or a tumulus. The '*stup*' is defined as "heap up or pile up," equivalent to the original meaning of "*caitya* and *cetiya*" because they contain the meaning of "heap up." The tumulus was associated with funerals, being mounds containing the ashes and charred remains of the dead collected from the funeral pyre. By contrast, '*thupa*' means a conical heap, a pile, or a mound or a conical or bell shaped shrine, containing a relic.[11] The practice for erecting *stupas* over corporeal relics had pre-Buddhist origin. Further, in the Buddhism, the events of the *stupa*'s construction as a funeral mound represent a symbol of the last great event of the Buddha's life, i.e. the *Parinirvana*.[12] As well, the verbal form '*thupikata*' means 'heaped up,' and the same as the *stupiktya* in the Sanskrit. It traces the earlier burial practice prevalent in the Indian soil, maintaining that the *stupa* is like an "Aryan royal tomb."[13] Therefore, the *stupa* must be derived from the Brahmanic tumulus[14] as the ancient funeral form.[15]

2.2 STUPA CONSTRUCTION IN BUDDHIST LITERATURE

The earliest Buddhist sources of *stupa* constructions are shown in such several *sutras* as *Ksudrakavastu, Mahasangkika Vinaya* and *Mahavamsa.* In the first place, according to the Dulva, XI, 67, *Ksudrakavastu*, Memo 18 by a Nepalese version, Bhagavat(Adorable One) authorized Anathapindada to make a *stupa* for the relics of Sariputra. Bhagavat said that the *stupa* should be built in this way, letting Anathapindada know the stupa should be made with this shape only for Sariputra or for all Aryas.[16] The *sutra* also introduces each component of the *stupa* with Chinese and Tibetan version. The *stupa* for Sariputra has the equivalent *parisanda* (terraces) while the Chinese term '*ki*' (foundation) is diverged by means of bricks.[17] The '*bre*' is a quadrangular kiosk regarded as the *harmika,*[18] which is named into the Chinese version as '*ping-tou*,' flat head and flat-top, top of one or two feet, two or three feet wide.[19]

Second, the *Mohe sengzhi-lu* as the *Mahasangkika Vinaya* documents the construction method of a votive *stupa* for the monk Kasyapa. Buddha said to have raised a *stupa* for Kasyapa. Its bottom platform was enclosed by railings on the four sides; two tiers were raised upon a cylindrical form, with four square-shaped projections. The top of the dome set the spire with its disks. A notable point through the text is that they are important as a

9) Giuseppe Tucci and Lokesh Chandra. *Stupa: art, architectonics and symbolism.* Aditya Prakashan, 1988, pp.xi-xvii.

10) Vedic rites introduce and accompany the building of the temple. At the beginning of the various phases in the construction and consecration of the temple, the rite of the seeds and their germination (*ankurarpana*) is most important. The ploughing and the sowing of the sacrificial ground with all kinds of grain preceded the piling of the fire altar, the building of the temple (Vaikhanasagama). Stella Kramrisch, *the Hindu Temple*, University of Calcutta, 1946, p.15.

11) B. M. Barua, *Bharhut: Aspects of life and Art*, p.8. In the Pali version, the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta*, the Buddha himself referred to the erection of the *thupa* implying a stupa over the remains of the Mahapurusa or Tathagatha.

12) Ananda Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Kessinger Publishing, 2003, p.30.

13) E. B. Havell, *a Handbook of Indian Art*, J. Murray, 1920, p.4.

14) Foucher, « Etude Sur le Stupa Dans l'Inde Ancienne, » *Bulletin de l'école française de l'Extrême-Orient*, Vol. 50 (1960): 45.

15) Alfred Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique du Gandhâra: étude sur les origines de l'influence classique dans l'art bouddhique de l'Inde et de l'Extrême-Orient.* E. Leroux, 1905; Alfred Foucher, t*he Beginnings of Buddhist Art and Other Essays in Indian and Central-Asian Archaeology*, Nabu Press, 1865 (2010), pp.1-4;

Sukumar Dutt, Buddhist *Monks and Monasteries of India*, G. Allen and Unwin, 1962. pp.190-94; Henry Cousens, *The Architectural Antiquities of Western India*, Cousens Press, 2007, p.8; John, Sir. *Guide to Sanci*, Calcutta, 1918, p.30; Paul Mus, "Le Borodudur," *Bulletin de l'ecole Francaise d'Extreme-Orient* XXXIII, p.37.

16) Après avoir fait successivement quatre ban-rim, on fera ensuite le bum-rten. Puis, après avoir fait le bum-pa, le bre, le srog-sin et 1, 2, 3, 4 gdugs et jusque 13, on placera les char-khab. Bhagavat ayant dit que les stupa doivent être faits de cette façon, Anathapindada ne sachant pas si un stupa de cette forme doit être fait pour le seul Sariputra, ou pour tous les Aryas, alors les bhiksus sollicitèrent l'avis de Bhagavat qui dit. Louis de La Vallée Poussin, "Staupikam," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (July 1937): 276-277.

17) Wogihara believes that it is "doubling" and "increase fourfold." But, there were several opinions or practices these banns-rim or ki is named in Divyavadans medhi, which has a three-storey foundation with four staircases. *Ibid.*

18) *Ibid.*

19) The *bre* is a *drona*, a certain measure of wheat and the receptacle for this measure. Besides, the flat-topped structure, regarding the *sirsaka* as a part of architecture, is recognized as "*dou*" or "*drona*" and "*dou-gong*." *Ibid.*

symbol of reminiscence concerning Buddha's events or Buddha himself whether they held non-relic or relic, as well as the implication of *dharma-dhatu* of relic-contained *stupas*. The record connotes the difference of the monuments with relics called a *stupa* and those without any relics called *cetiyas*,[20] and the same sanctity between the Buddha's images and His relics to early Buddhist devotional worships.

The substitution of the Buddha through objects, images, and relics is enough secure as long as devotees believe firmly that they are the corporeal remains of the Buddha himself. Thus, if the monuments had their authenticity and appropriateness as valid cult objects, early Buddhists never had any concerns whether they contain a relic or not.[21] The *stupas* of Mahasangkika sect were founded at Nagarjunakonda, Jaggayyapeta, Garikapadu, Ghantasala, Peddaganjam, and Amaravati of the Andhra province. The structural characteristics such as *ayaka* platforms and pillars follow the *Mahasangkika Vinaya*.[22] The *ayaka* pillars found at the four cardinal points are not seen in such great *stupas* as Sanci, Bharhut, and Dharmarajika, situated in the northern part of India.(Fig.2,3) The *ayaka*-platforms projecting towards the four cardinal directions round the base, on which worshipers going round gave their offerings, are set around including the tall pillars of sculptured and decorated stone called the '*ayaka-stambhas*.'

Most of *stupas* have relics within them. The relics are never put in the center of the *stupas*, rather in the one of the chambers, usually on the north side.[23] In

particular, the *stupa* at Site 1 follows the citation of the *Mohe sengzhi-lu*. It writes the building shape of the *stupa* for monks. The lower platform of the *stupa* belongs to two podiums in a cylindrical form, which has four square-shaped projections, enclosed by railings. The square-shaped projections are described as "teeth that stick out of its mouth", and they are composed of four square podiums placed in the four cardinal directions. (Fig.2,3) By contrast, the *Mahavamsa*, an ancient historical record of Sri Lanka, says that at the site of the *stupa*, a pillar is to be erected and it is called a *yupa*.[24] Early *stupas* were simple mounds of earth or clay; but, over time, they became progressively larger and more dome-shaped. Other elements were constantly added until the *stupa* attained its classic form; a cubical stone surrounded by a *vedika* (seemingly derived from fences surrounding the *Bodhi* tree during the Vedic era). Also, it records a series of schedules and construction works to build a *stupa* in detail. In accordance with the *Mahavamsa*, the four directions and their center during

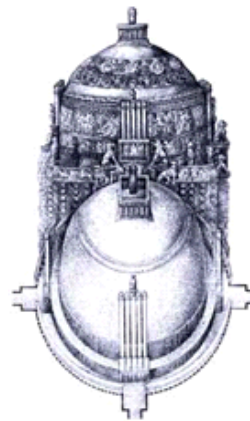Figure 2. Stupas of the Mahasangkika (Site.1) at Nagarjunakonda by Longhurst

Figure 3. The Great Stupa at Amaravati by John Irwin

the construction are very important when builders pick out a site to construct the temple. The pillar of stone was raised upon the place of the (future) *thupa* and remembered the old tradition. The first action is to pick out the center and to erect the pillars, and then to decide the location of the gates and the ambulatory path. According to the *thera* (*bhikkhū*, Pali)'s instruction, a moderate space for the *cetiya* (*stupa*) laid on the foundation stones was allotted. The builders made the great circular and the square-shape platform with clay and bricks, and established the ambulatory path and steps in the four cardinal directions." [25]

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20) *vide*. T53n2122_p0580b16(00)-T53n2122_p0580b17(04)

21) Such view of point is related to the Tathagatha idea. In "Le Culte des Caityas d'après Asanga," Poussin writes "The nature of Tathagatha-caitya is that of all Tathagatha-caityas, and this present Tathagatha in front of me, and as all Tathagatha present in front of me, and as all past, future, present Tathagathas. I worship this present Tathagatha-caitya in front of me, and in ten regions and numberless universes, all other *stupas*, *gahas*, *kutagaras*, *puranacaityas*, *abhinavacaityas*. They combined worship, facing / non-facing, Tathagatha / Tathagatha-caitya." Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *op. cit.* pp.282-283.

22) The feature of *ayaka* was uncommon at such another Buddhist sites in Andhra province as Salihundam (Srikakulam), Ramatirtham (Vizianagaram), and Sankaram (Vishakhapatnam). Also, the Mahisasaka sects of South India do not employ images. V.V. Subba Reddy, *Temples of South India*, Gyan Publishing House, 2009, p.36. Young Jae Kim, *Architectural representation of the Pure Land*, Penn Dissertation, 2011, pp.225-226.

23) The relics consist of a tiny bone relic were placed in a small gold reliquary which was in a second gold reliquary shaped like a

miniature stupa. *Ibid* p.500; Albert Henry Longhurst, *The Buddhist antiquities of Nāgārjunakoṇḍa*, Manager, 1908, p.20.

24) Wilhelm Geiger, *Mahavamsa: Great Chronicle of Ceylon*. Asian Educational Services, 1996, p.225.

25) *Ibid*. Ch. 28-30, pp.187-209.

3. KNOWLEGE ON THE SYMBOLIC MEANING OF *STUPA* AS BURIAL CONSTRUCTIONS

3.1 STUPA AS SMASANA

The hemispherical structure has a close rapport with the Brahmanic *smasana* (funeral mounds) because it emerged out of the earthen funeral mounds under which the ashes of the dead were buried according to the Vedic rituals.[26] The construction does not have any links the origin of the non-relic *stupas* which are equally numerous and similarly revered. The Brahmanic *smasana* was made to avoid the worries about the pollution of the physical surroundings due to the body of the deceased. After the cremation of the dead, people interred the dead bodies in the places out of sight from the village or people piled up the dead bodies in a heap of earth between the village and the cemetery. It shows that the Brahmanic traditions were different from the *stupa* constructions that deposit relics after its cremation. In fact, in case of *stupas* at Nagarjunakonda and Amaravati, the bones and daily necessities of the dead persons and even the bones of animals were inhumed after the cremation within four to eight chambers in the brick-built *stupas*.

Anyhow, the crematorium and the cemetery in the Brahmanic system were surely considered unlucky and polluted. The corresponding ritual behavior was to turn around to the left (*prasavya*) as a result. But, the *stupas* and the *cetiyas* were the opposite. The records are mentioned in several *sutras*. The *Maha parinirvana sutra* states that Kasyapa turned around to the right side for the purification after the cremation cult. The corresponding ritual behavior was to turn round to the right side (*pradaksina*). Also, the *Yourao fota gongde jing* says that they were built in the surroundings nearby villages and people worshipped deities of earth and village established in the vicinity of the villages.[27] It also points out that the devotees get multivalent merits and big benefits accordingly when devotees turn around the *stupa* to the right side.[28] It proves that the *stupas*, in the

assimilation of the other traditional worship, were gradually formed as pure and auspicious symbols.

3.2 STUPA AS AIDUKA (EDUKA)

The '*aiduka*' of Dravidian origin is derived from either '*idu*' meaning "to lay at rest," or "to build or pile up."[29] Its root is similar to that of '*stu*' means "to praise or to worship" stemmed from '*stupa*.'

Philologically, the "*eduka*" was equivalent of "*aiduka* (relic chamber)" and might also be connected with the Vedic root '*ida*,' meaning "to praise or worship." There could be some purposeful similarity between '*ida*' derived from the '*eduka*' or '*aiduka*' and the root '*stu*' of the *stupa*. Because the Vedic Sanskrit literature did not mention the word '*aiduka*,' likewise, the Sanskrit derivation could not be easily suggested. Nonetheless, the resemblance of etymological root offered some clues that they referred to a '*heap*.' They then were commonly associated with a structure erected over the remains of the dead at a place of importance, and for the sake of the commemoration although the attempts to trace the derivation from the Sanskrit word were not clearly taken so far.[30] By contrast, the followers of Brahmanism, due to the popularity of *stupas*, contemptuously called them '*eduka*' structures of rubbish.[31]

The '*Kali-yuga*' chapter in the *Mahabharata* mentions that the degeneracy of society is one of the reasons for the construction. The *Mahabharata* writes that the earth shall be disfigured with tombs and pillars containing bony relics and not graced with temples dedicated to the gods.[32] The notion is associated with the social degeneracy while Buddhism reflects a sign of resurgence or purity, not of degeneracy. It hardly bears any similarities with the Buddhist *stupas* which represent socio-religious renaissance. Then, there are the reciprocal significance between the *aiduka* and the *smasana*. There further are intimate bonds, whether conceptual or structural, between the *stupa* and the *aiduka*. But, the *aiduka* is for the

26) Sarawati, "the age of imperial unity Vol II," *the History and Culture of the Indian People*, Bharatiya Vidya, 1951, p.488.

27) Kosambi, D.D. *Myth and Reality*, Popular Prakashan, 1962, pp.82-109; Zhan Ru. *Jing fa yu fo ta: Yindu zao qi fo jiao shi yan jiu*, Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006, pp.172-173.

28) *vide*. T16n0700_p0802b25(00)-T16n0700_p0802b26(00)

29) Pariyabala Shah, "Aiduka," *Journal of the Oriental Institute, Vol. II* (1951-52): 278.

30) Agrawala, "Terracotta Figurines of Ahichchhatra, Dist. Bareilly, UP," *Ancient India*, No.IV,1947-48, p.278; Pariyabala Shah, op. cit.

31) Sushila Pant, *The origin and development of stupa architecture in India*. Bharata Manisha, 1976. pp.18-22.

32) *Ibid.*

Brahmanic and Vedic, while the *stupa* is 'sramanic' (to perform austerity) for Buddhist and Jains.[33]

3.3 MERGING AIDUKA AND SMASANA INTO STUPAS

The reciprocal rapports between the *aiduka* and *smasana* exist, and even between the *aiduka* and the *stupa*.[34] The original Siva *aidukas* might follow a development parallel to those of the *caityas* and even *stupas*. First of all, the *caityas* and the *stupas* lost their funerary connections, and they were built in the surroundings of towns or cities as the sacred objects of worship. The Siva *aidukas* then might move from the *smasana* to towns or cities, and become hallowed objects of worship. The earlier practice for installing bone relics that caused pollution in the Brahmanic tradition might be later abandoned. Afterward, the *aiduka* became purified as the holy objects of worship like *stupas* and *caityas*. Also, though the *aiduka* originally had a relic chamber, when it was erected for the Siva worship, the *aiduka* did not contain any relics. The concept explains the close bond between the *aiduka* and the *paribhogika stupa* (shrines of things that the Buddha used, bowls, robes, and copies) afterward. The *paribhogika stupa* then has a similar purpose to the *aiduka* whether the *aiduka* construction refers to the pre-Buddhist or Vedic structures with completely different origin from the Buddhist *stupa*. Further, in that the *aiduka* had relic chambers to deposit bones, and suggested ritual structures for commemoration, praise, and worship, to be sure, the Buddhist *stupa* was coined from the *aiduka* mound and its transformation for good merits and respect. The *stupa* was more developed with the mixture of the *smasana* mound considered unlucky and polluted in the Vedic era.

The *smasana* method was contrived for the Buddhist system, not Brahmanic. Its purpose was built to stay away from the concerns about the pollution of the physical surroundings caused by the deceased. So, the *smasana* construction preferred the cremation to inter the ashes of
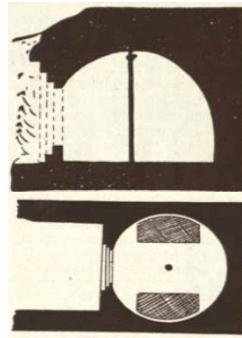

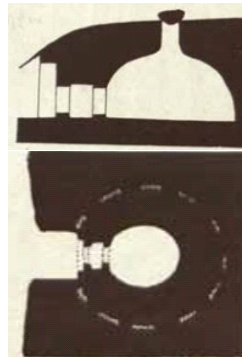Figure 4. Tekkalkota

Figure 5. Manapuram

Figure 6. Cannanora, Malabar

the dead for the purification of earth, and then it acquired the same symbol of good luck and purity as the *stupa*, while the *aiduka* method does not take any measures relevant to the cremation. When bones were interred in the ground, the earth was polluted due to the bones, and abandoned as a result.

So, the *aiduka* tradition was not public in Brahmanic society any more until Buddhists changed the *aiduka* into shrines (*paribhogika stupa* or *caitya*) to deposit bowls, robes, and copies that Buddha used. As a result, when bony relics were removed from the *aiduka*, the *aiduka* looked like the *stupa* constructions in a characteristic sense.

The symbolic meaning of the *aiduka* and the *smasana* thus were amalgamated into the *stupa* monument as an universal context.

4. DOMICAL HUTS WITH A STUPA FORM

The hemispherical solid body of brick or stone might be originated from the domical hut or tent built of bamboos or wooden ribs that had central poles.(Fig.4,5,6) In earlier Vedic and Buddhist literature, building materials for a hut were just mentioned. The use of bamboo was described in the *Cullavagga* and the *Jataka*. In the *Cullavagga* (6.3.11) 'kudda' (Pali) had a wall of wattle daubed with mud and whitewash, and the *Jataka* (4:318)[35] says a 'panna-sala' with walls of reed with sills. The *Rig Veda* (4.30,XX) says a house made of a hundred stones although wood was the commonest of all materials for architecture in earlier period of Indian territories.

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33) The Sanskrit word *śramaṇa* is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root *śram* "to exert effort, labor or to perform austerity." The *Śramaṇa* means "one who strives" in Sanskrit. *Moksha* (*mokṣa*) or *mukti*, literally "release" (both from a root *muc* "to let loose, let go"), is the liberation from *samsara* and the concomitant suffering involved in being subject to the cycle of repeated death and reincarnation or rebirth.
34) Priyabala Shah, *op. cit.*

35) E.B. Cowell, ed. *the Jataka, or Stories of Buddha's Former Births*, Cambridge, 1895-1907.
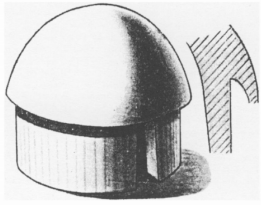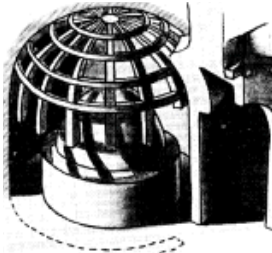
Figure 7. Sudama, Bihar, 3rd c. BCE

Figure 8. Guntpalle, AP, 1st c. BCE

Figure 9. *kuti*, Kanganhali, AP, 1st c. CE (Meister)

By contrast, the earlier tombs built by the Aryan chieftains were borrowed from a temporary abode for the spirit of the deceased for the Vedic funeral rites.[36] The Buddhist *stupas* might be coined from rock-cut tombs with a hemispherical shape like archeological findings at Manappuram in Kerala.[37]

One of them has an unusual meager column in stone at the middle of the hall. The pillar is not a structural function, but obviously a translation in stone of earlier wooden structures for which the pillar at the center employs a significant structural necessity.(Fig.5)

Perhaps, this cave is a borrowing in stone of a very early form of hemispherical huts, which existed in the pre-Buddhist period. Another cave with a hemispherical domed roof was discovered at Cannanore in Malabar, which section was comparable to that of Sudama cave, Barabar hills, Bihar (the third century BCE.), and Guntpalle (the first century BCE).(Fig.6,7,8) The cave shows the survival of a Vedic fire-altar-a veritable shrine of the sacred fire(*agnidriya*, the *stupa* of the Vedic period is the forerunner of the *harmika* of Buddhist *stupa*). The chimney of the Vedic fire-place was exactly replaced by the place of the *harmika* of the *stupas*; the form of the latter might be a descendant of this primitive cave shrine. The Sudama cave for the Ajivaka ascetics follows domical forms with the left end of a vaulted rectangular hall, excavated
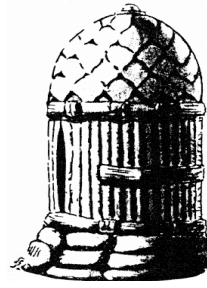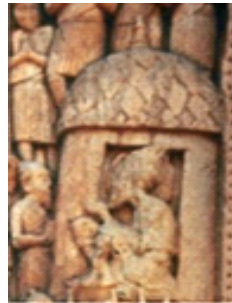

Figure 10. Mathura, UP
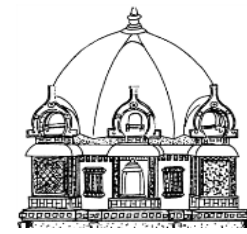

Figure 11. Sanci, UP

Figure 12. Ghantasala, AP

parallel to the rock-face.(Fig.7)

Likewise, the *stupa* originally meant simply "top or summit," which has a dome-shaped roof. The form was strongly linked to domical huts or cottages with circular or rectangular single rooms, called as the '*kuti*.' The root '*kut*' implies a curvature. (Fig.9) The *kuti* in the sense of the hut was an arbor and simple shelter with entwined branches or creepers.[38]

Peasants, Brahmanic recluses, and Buddhist friars used the *kuti* in the old days.(Fig.11) As a village (*grama*) consisted of the *kuti* dwellings, so a monastery (*arama*) was composed of one or more *kuti* cells.

The *kuti* types also constituted the '*panna-sala*.' which referred to the leaf thatch, and the *sala* implied a tree or a home.[39] In the early literature, a monastery was named as the *panna-sala*, equivalent to the *vihara* meaning a single cell although currently used as a Buddhist temple.

The *kuti* and *panna-sala* then corresponded to the *vihara*. In other words, the *kuti* was a cell, while the *panna-sala* was a monastery.(Fig.9,10,11) The shape of the *kuti* in the sense of a hut represents a circular dome surmounted by a pinnacle or a finial,[40] while the *panna-sala* signifies a hut covered with leaves or reeds. The *kuti* emphasizes a shape of the roof, while the *panna-sala* indicates material faces. Further, the *kuti* constructions meaning 'curvature,' were developed as a Buddhist building type such as an octagonal pagoda or

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36) E. B. Havell, *op. cit.* p.18. Barua is of the opinion that the stupa primarily denotes a funeral monument in the shape of a mound of Brahmanic period. Pande also maintains that it seems likely that the hemispherical shape of the stupa is the refined form of the burial mound. D.C. Pande, *Buddha Dharm Ke Vikas Ka Itihasa*, p.206.

37) Dubreuil believes it is the survival of a Vedic fire-altar in a cave.

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38) The root '*kuti*' was used as a nest, which means '*kudu*' in Tamil, equivalent to *siha-panjara*. Sanskrit "*Kutanka*," Prakrit "*Kudanga*," made of the root '*kuti*,' "thatch" and "wattle and daub," respectively. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, "Early Indian Architecture," *Res 15* (1988): 7-8.

39) Fergusson believes that the structure might have started with the thatched hut of the primitive settlers and tribes of Bihar and the Southern India. James Fergusson, *Indian and Eastern Architecture Vol.1*, John Murray, 1874, p.65.

40) *Ibid.* p.18.

circular with two or three storeys.(Fig.12) Therefore, it could be said that the *stupa* begun from the *kuti* type.(Fig.9) The wooden constructions with a domed roof in earlier buildings were continuously preserved in the later stone constructions of Buddhist *stupas*.

5. CONVERGENCE OF VEDIC ALTAR AND *BODHI-GHARA* INTO THE *STUPA*

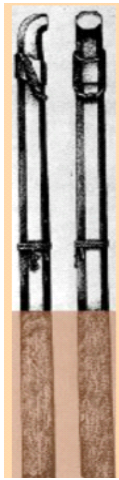Figure 13. Asoka Pillar, 3rd c BCE

Figure 14. Brahmanic post (yupa), 2nd c CE

The *stupa* was obviously associated with Vedic altars in that it referred to a tree or a sacrificial pole, '*svaru (yupa).*' the Vedic texts says that the *svaru* was used for a sacrificial post, sometimes as the *yupa*, which is shown only in four passages in the Vedic texts.[41]

The *Mahavamsa* records that a stone pillar was erected at the site of the *stupa*. The *yupa* then might be referred to as a prototype of the Buddhist stone pillar.(Fig.13,14) By contrast, the *skambha* from another Vedic text is comparable to the *yupa*. The *Atharva Veda* (hereafter abbreviated as *AV*) says people know the golden-embryo [as] highest···; *skambha* (column) in the beginning poured forth that gold within the world. (X.7.28) The column that supports the whole world, indicating that the *skambha* sustains heaven and earth here; the *skambha* supports the wide atmosphere.(X.7.35) It even was functionalized as a tool for consecration to heaven, saying "unto which with the two hands, with the two feet, with speech, with hearing, with sight; unto which the gods continually render tribute." [42] The *skambha,* in contrast with the *yupa* as a sacrificial manifestation, was employed for obeisance, recitation, seeing, and offerings to practice ceremonies, in the presence of instrumental music in festivals. The Buddhist monuments were originated from the local *skhambha* for sacrificial performances, and later

on, they were merged with the '*yupa*' for the sacrificial pole in the association with the *skambha*. As well, the *skambha* was directly alternated as the term '*yasti*' of the *stupa* to support a parasol (*cattravali*) because the *skambha* had been long used in major Buddhist and Hindu sites.(Fig.13,14,17) Though many matters regarding the development of the meaning of *skambha* were uncertain, the key thing is that early Buddhists embraced the conception of the central pillar as an 'insignia' that rendered tribute to the Buddha to combine with a complex cultural system through social interactions.
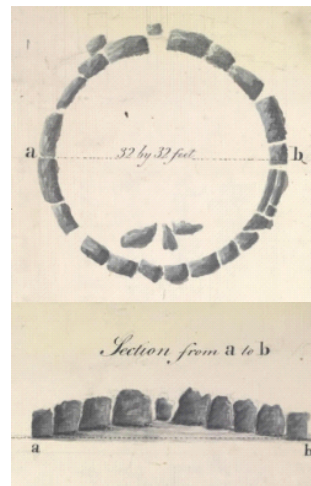

Figure 15. Amaravati, 1st c BCE (Mackenzie)

Undoubtedly, the use of the *skambha* reflects the close link with the *stupa* in terms of the sacred ceremonies.

The *skambha* was also connected to the sacrificial performance corresponding to the *svaru (yupa)* in the pre-Buddhist era. The *stupa* united the *skambha* for ceremonial practices and the *svaru* for sacrificial practices when Buddhism flourished.

The *stupa* then was transfigured into a commemorative monument[43] and the result of conflation with a Vedic altar and a cairn construction for the deceased in the end of the pre-Buddhist period. The dolmen (stone circles) was associated with the initiation of Hindu temples as altars and huts during the Vedic times. Such information was preserved in the manuals of astrology and architecture.[44] (Fig.15) The original meaning was conserved, and at the same time reinforced its context when the Buddhist or Jaina *stupas* as a funeral altar and a cairn were equivalent with the Vedic altar. The altar had the socle, usually circular, within its perimeter that the cairn rose like a

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41) John Irwin, "The Axial Symbolism of the Early Stupa: an Exegesis," *The Stupa: its religious, historical and architectural significance,* Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1980, pp.12-58.

42) William Dwight trans. *Atharva Veda Samhita*, Whitney, Harvard Oriental Series 7-8, 1905.

43) The sacrifice's notion for slaughtering animal to propitiate the God is in opposition to Ahimsa's Buddhist philosophy, non-violence and compassion. Sushila Pant, *op. cit.* p.17.

44) The early stone caves in North and South India were constructed as a house for their gods, beginning in the south India (Udaigiri, Madhya Pradesh, ca. 400 CE). Even earlier, temples built in materials other than stone apparently used forms from urban and domestic architecture to shape a towering structure. Michael W. Meister, "Prâsâda as Palace: Kûtina Origins of the Nâgara Temple," *Artibus Asiae* 49 (1989.2): 254-280.

gigantic bubble for a world-egg(*anda*). The *stupa* then was a funeral mound fused with the Brahmanic traditions.

Also, the raised platform from practices for erecting a cairn over the ashes of the dead was for ritual and reminiscence. As time went on, the cairn started to be called a *harmika* when it was surmounted on the dome. It reflected the assimilation of the Brahmanic traditions with the primitive practices by Jains and Buddhists. The axis of the universe for the metaphorical expression of the *stupa* brings about the prolongations of the axis above the roof and below the ground in actual construction.[45] Its finial extends upwards in the form of a veritably sky-scraping mast '*yasti*' or sacrificial post '*yupa*' far beyond the dome or the Vedic '*skambha.*' Furthermore, the *stupa* in the mixture of the Vedic altar was combined with the *Bodhi* trees (*Bodhi-gharas*).

The *Bodhi* tree with equipments like the *vajrasana* was represented as surrounded by a two- or three-storeyed hypaethral temple. Through the archeological findings of Harappa, the Jaina-Ayagapata from Kankalitila, Mathura, and some of the reliefs of Bharhut and Sanci, the tree-worship was shown as the one of the oldest traditions in India. The excavations of ruined shrines prove that the tree-shrine's traces by the *Bodhi-ghara* or by the *Bodhi* tree existed long for the deceased, although its forms were subsequently renovated according to circumstances.[46] The *Bodhi* tree, with or without a temple structure, was likewise called as a *rukkha-cetiya* or *caitya-vrksa*, or a tree-shrine according to the *Artharva Veda*, the *Ramayana*, the *Sthananga sutra*, and the *Mahaparinibbana sutta*.[47] The temples for the *Bodhi* tree are referred to as *Bodhi-gharas* in the *Mahavamsa*.[48] But, the terms were already used mainly for the tree shrines in the pre-Buddhist period, not specifically Buddhist. The *Bodhi* tree at Sanci is surrounded by railings, capped with limestone-like copings and cross bars.[49](Fig.16) The free-standing parasols at Amaravati

were worshipped as the *Bodhi* tree symbols. The *Bodhi* tree was occasionally established on the altar. The

Figure 16. Sanci, 1st c. CE

parasols (*cattravali*) occasionally subsume smaller parasol-shaped leaves hanging from them, combining with an emblem of sovereignty.(Fig.17) The *yasti* and the parasols represent a *Bodhi* tree, while the *vedika* surrounds a cubical altar on the *stupa* at Amaravati and Sanci. (Fig.17,18)
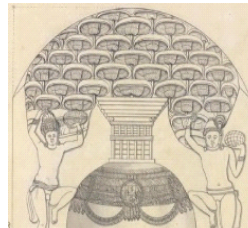

Figure 17. Amaravati, 1st c. CE

The combination resembles those at early *Bodhi* tree shrines which had an altar-seat at their base and a railing to surround their sacred enclosure.[50](Fig.16) The tree then became the eminent sanctioned hut in the Buddhist monastic literature, and later stimulated association as a holy venue or a hallowed dwelling by means of representation, explanation, and elaboration. The tree was advanced as the site of the Buddha's enlightenment for

Figure 18. Sanci, 2nd c. CE

worship, and at the same time an emblem of his ascetic practices.[51] A notable point is that the *stupa* was developed into more complex forms, subsuming shrines. The *stupa* at Sanci is its undoubted evidence that the *stupa* came to be emblematically identified with a *Bodhi* tree and its shrine. (Fig.18) It shows that this concept was combined with a Buddhist shrine at Bodh-Gaya as a model of ascetic practice. The *stupa* with the *Bodhi* tree shrine as a result became an important spot and a structure associated both in actuality and symbolically with the

45) Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, "Symbolism of the Dome," *Coomaraswamy*, Princeton Univ. Press, 1987, p.427.
46) Janice Leoshko, *Bodhgaya, the Site of Enlightenment*. Marg Publications, 1988, p.94.
47) Ananda Guruge, *The Society of the Ramayana, by Ananda Guruge*. Maharagama, Ceylon, Saman Press, 1960, p.265.
48) The *Mahavamsa* repeatedly emphasizes the fact that Asoka and Devanampiya Tissa worshipped the sapling of the *Bodhi* Tree.
49) The later material for the railings of *stupas* was a limestone around the first century, while the earlier was for the granite

railing as early as the third or second century BCE.
50) Robert Knox, *Amaravati: Buddhist sculpture from the Great Stūpa*. British Museum Press, 1992, p.14; James Burgess, *Notes on the Amarāvati stūpas*. the Government press, 1882, p.34.
51) Susan Huntington points out "while a representation of lay worshipers performing devotions at the site of the Buddha's first sermon is undoubtedly a reminder of the first sermon itself and a reference to it, the actual subject of the scene is still the worship at the site. "Aniconism and the Multivalence of Emblems: Another Look," *Ars Orientalis* 22(1992): 111-156.

climactic moment of *nirvana* or awakening.

6. CONCLUSION

Referring to the Vedic and the Sanskrit sources in this paper, as it is quite clear, the *stupa* started from burial edifices stemmed from two roots such as tumuli for the dead, merging the *smasana* and the *aiduka* (*eduka*) into the memorial mausoleum, for they were primarily tombs like cairns during the Iron Age. Their spirit and body were also overlapped from their mounds of the *smasana* and the *aiduka* (*eduka*) notion. As the constructions were combined with primitive burial ceremonies, the *stupas* were more developed through the convergence with symbolic meanings in association with the religious objects like the *Bodhi-ghara* (*Bodhi* tree), the *svaru* (*yupa*) for sacrificial rituals, the *skambha* for heaven-and-earth, the Vedic altars, caves, ascetic huts, and *caitya* (*cetiya*). The large hemispherical dome (*anda*) is the most critical part of the *stupa* because the *stupa* functions to house the precious relics within it. It supports a square railed platform or altar (*harmika*) which, reminiscent of a chamber on the roof of a building, is a symbolic *Bodhi* tree shrine at the same time, constructing the *vedika* on its top. It then becomes a memorial superstructure and a referent of Buddha's house to memorialize the Buddha's enlightenment for worship, and to symbolize an emblem of His ascetic practices, conjoining His nirvana, as well. Consequently, the *stupa* represents precious lessons and honorific venues in his living years for devotees.

In the due course of time, the disparities in their senses were united into the *stupas* by combining indigenous ceremonial performances and local building types in the pre-Buddhist period. Even according to Buddhist schools, the dissimilar types of the *stupas* were produced in the early Buddhist period though there were various debates. Although most of *stupas* had access by way of four gates in each of the cardinal directions, the *stupas* at Nagarjunakonda, Jaggayyapeta, Garikapadu, Ghantasala, Peddaganjam, and Amaravati in Andhra province had a structural peculiarity absent from the *stupas* of northern India. In the course of time, they then became progressively larger and more dome-shaped. Other elements were constantly added until the *stupa* attained its 'classic' form. A cubical stone surrounded by

a *vedika* (a fence, seemingly derived from fences surrounding the *Bodhi* tree during the Vedic era). The *stupas* were transfigured into funeral mounds raised over the relics of the Buddha. Later on, as independent images appeared on most of *stupas* at least from the third century onward, the majority of *stupas* were incorporated into the functions of worship halls inside temples. They then implied varied symbolic meanings and functions for ritual performances and ascetic practices, as well as for a shrine, a tumulus, a *Bodhi* tree, and a *caitya* (*cetiya*).

Hence, the *stupas* were an object of the cult-worship and an instrument to enshrine holy relics in addition to the belongings of the Buddha himself or even to mark special sacred spots. In addition, not much later, the mere dedication of the *stupa*, with or without relics, came to be regarded as an act of merit. They were equated with the manifestation (*nirmana-kaya*) of the Buddha's perfect virtuosity as the factitious body of the living Buddha.

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* Regarding other sources not mentioned in the REFERENCES, please refer to the fifty-one footnotes of this thesis.