

Let's Meet at the *akṣayavāṭa*:  
Conjunction of Hindu and Buddhist Traditions at Bodhgayā

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Today I bring the history of the Hindu traditions of *śrāddha* to bear on the history of Gayā in order to expand the historical context within which we study Bodhgayā. I am interested in the development of Gayā as a pilgrimage site, a site specifically associated with *śrāddha*. I hope to correct some misconceptions about the development of *śrāddha* in ancient India and indicate how a more nuanced view is instrumental in understanding the significance of Gayā from the time of the Buddha to the beginning of the Common Era. First I address the history of *śrāddha* as relevant to the cultural background for this time frame and discuss the earliest references to Gayā in both Brahmanical and Buddhist sources. Then I will synthesize this evidence and attempt to answer a deceptively simple question: Why did the Buddha choose to go to Bodhgayā to strive for enlightenment?

While the practice of ancestor worship dates back to at least the *R̥g Veda*, *śrāddha* is not described in the ritual texts until the *Gṛhyasūtras*, which were composed sometime in the middle of the first millennium BCE. The older rituals, the *piṇḍapitṛyajña* and the *pitṛyajña*, belong to the corpus of large-scale, public Vedic ritual that dates to the second millennium BCE, but the *śrāddha* is a product of the formative stages of classical Hinduism, a transition characterized by a waning in the popularity of Vedic ritual and a rise in private domestic ritual. The *śrāddha* owes a debt to Vedic ancestral ritual, but also evidences several innovations. There is not time enough to address these changes in detail, but the most significant changes merit discussion.

There are two primary differences. First, while the Vedic ritual requires the full complement of Vedic priests, and considerable money, the *śrāddha* is a private ritual, performed

by a householder. This made the ritual accessible to a broader spectrum of people. Second, whereas in the *piṇḍapitryajña* offerings are made into the ritual fire, in the *śrāddha*, the householder makes the offerings to Brahmins who stand in for and represent the Pitr̥s, the ancestors. The Brahmin takes on the role of mediator, enacting the exchange between householder and ancestor, supplanting Agni, the divine mediator of the Vedic ritual. This transition—evident in both Brahmanical and Buddhist reflections on the householder and his ritual obligations—is very significant for the changing role of the religious expert in ancient India

Domestic ritual certainly predates the composition of the Gṛhyasūtras, but it is clear from the evidence in those texts that the *śrāddha* was a relatively new phenomenon, at least in the form that survives. My argument rests on a comparison of the rituals in the different Gṛhyasūtras, which suggests that the conception of the *śrāddha* was still contested—or perhaps better: under construction. Several aspects of the descriptions of the *śrāddha* found in the Gṛhyasūtras support this hypothesis. They are schematicized in Table 1.

	ŚGS	ĀśGS	GGS	PGS	ĀpGS	HGS
<i>śrāddha</i>	○	●	●	○	●	●
<i>parvana</i>	○	●	○	○	○	○
<i>ekoddiṣṭa</i>	●	●		○		
<i>sapīṇḍīkaraṇa</i>	●	? <sup>1</sup>		○		
<i>ābhyudayika</i>	●	●				
<i>śrāddha</i> first					●	●

Table 1: Reference to different types of *śrāddha* in the Gṛhyasūtras.

Filled dots indicate the text describes that ritual with that term.

Empty dots indicate that the text describes that ritual without that term.

Most significant in this respect is the fact that the authors do not all describe the same types of *śrāddha*. In classical Hinduism the four types of *śrāddha* are: the *parvana*, the monthly offerings

<sup>1</sup> At least one commentary suggests that 4.7.5 refers to the *sapīṇḍīkaraṇa*, but I see no strong evidence for this interpretation.

to one's ancestors; the *ekoddiṣṭa*, the ritual that sustains the *preta* for the first year after death; the *sapiṇḍīkarāṇa*, the ritual that transforms a *preta* into a *pitṛ*; and the *ābhyudayika*, a *śrāddha* that celebrates an auspicious occasion. Only one Gṛhyasūtra explicitly deals with all four types; ironically it is *Śāṅkhāyana*, who fails to employ the term *parvaṇa* for the monthly feeding the ancestors, the only *śrāddha* common to all the Gṛhyasūtras I examined. More significantly, two authors don't even use the word *śrāddha* in their description of the ritual. To this I will return in a moment. Finally, there are differences in the organization of the text with respect to *śrāddha*. The first four authors deal with the *śrāddha* as a special case of the *aṣṭakā* rituals, rites performed on the new-moon, but Āpastamba, one of the later authors, identifies the *aṣṭakā* as a special case of the *śrāddha*. The formulation of the *śrāddha* which is so consistent in classical Hindu texts is still under construction in the Gṛhyasūtras, but it seems by the time of Āpastamba *śrāddha* had become the paradigm for ancestor worship.

The development evidenced in these texts is certainly connected to a broader trend in Indian religious expression, which later becomes the highly developed *dāna* tradition. Religious giving has its roots in the Vedic ritual world, probably related to the *dakṣiṇā*, the sacrificial gift of Vedic ritual, and the concept of *śraddhā*, the spirit of hospitality or, later, generosity. My impression at the moment is that *śrāddha* is a neologism based upon the word *śraddhā* and reflects one aspect of the contestation over the rites of ancestor worship that I have just discussed. It was recently suggested to me there may here be a connection to the fixed phrase *saddhādeyya*, found commonly in the Pāli Canon, but I have not been able to dedicate enough time to explore this more fully.

By the time of the Dharmasūtras, in the last centuries before the Common Era, the *śrāddha* is conceived of in a consistent fashion and is firmly entrenched as a key aspect of the

householder's *dharma*. The details of performance described there are not innovative, but new concerns have arisen around the performance of the *śrāddha*. Two stand out as important for this paper. First is the explicit concern over the benefit derived by the performance of the rite. The older ritual literature simply asserts that the ritual is to be performed, but in the Dharmasūtras, the benefits derived by the performance of the *śrāddha* are extolled at length. Second are the discussions of who is qualified to act as recipient of the food offered during a *śrāddha*. Both concerns find a more intense expression in the *Laws of Manu*, a *dharmaśāstra* from the first century CE, indicating that this trend increases with time. In his discussion of to whom an ancestral offering is made, Manu makes clear that any offerings made to one ancestors through any mediator besides a qualified Brahmin are doomed to failure, at best, and to injure one's ancestors at worst. It is clear that Manu senses the competition for the role of religious expert. This is a key aspect of understanding the cultural impact of the *śrāddha*, and I will return to it momentarily. Additionally, the *Arthaśāstra* supports the impression that the *śrāddha* was common part of religious life in ancient India by the beginning of the Common Era. The phrase *daivata-upahāra-śrāddha-prahavaṇa*, offerings to gods, ancestral rites, and festivals, suggests ancestral rites are a part of the author's conception of regular religious activities.

Now let us consider the Buddhist materials on *śrāddha*. In the *Jāṇussoṇisutta* of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* Jāṇussoṇi approaches the Buddha and asks whether offering he makes in the *saddhas* (Pāli for *śrāddha*) actually benefit his ancestors. The Buddha takes the opportunity to expound upon the behavior, good and bad, that leads to the many different realms of rebirth, and concludes that the offerings made in the *saddha*, intended as they are for the deceased relatives, will reach those in the *petti-visaya*. But in addition to his concern about his relatives actually being sustained by his gifts, Jāṇussoṇi expresses concern about what happens to his offerings if

the *petti-visaya* is empty. His concern is that he will not receive the benefits of making such an offering if they are not received. The Buddha informs him that the *petti-visaya* cannot possibly empty, since people keep dying. In the end, Jāṇussoṇi praises the Buddha and the Buddha affirms the efficacy of the *śrāddha* and assures Jāṇussoṇi that his gift will be fruitful for him.

From this clear example of *śrāddha* in a Buddhist context, we turn to a later practice that evidences a cultural memory of *śrāddha*. The *Petavatthu*, literally Ghost Stories, offers many examples of offering made to *petas*, ghosts, often relatives. This collection aims to illustrate the fate of those who fail to make religious gifts during their life.

The example I will use today, “The Ghosts Outside the Walls” (*Pv* 1.5), is, in brief, as follows. A king presents a ritual meal to the Buddha while his deceased ancestors, now ghosts, watch on. To their dismay the king fails to dedicate the meal to them. In grief the ghosts roam about the king’s home wailing and making terrifying noises. The Buddha, through his supernatural insight, understands and explains the situation. The king immediately invites the Buddha to a second meal the next day. That day he dedicates the offerings to his deceased ancestors and gave them to the Buddha, who concluded with these verses.

23 Neither weeping, nor sorrow, nor or any other lamentation benefits the *peta* even though their relatives persist.

24 But this gift, made and firmly planted in the Saṅgha, will serve, with immediate effect, their long term benefit.

25 Now this duty to one’s relatives has been pointed out and the highest honor has been paid to the *petas*; strength has been dedicated to the monks and not trifling the meritorious deed pursued by you. *Pv* 1.5.23–25

The offerings made to the ancestors have immediate and long term benefits for the ancestors as long as they are made through the mediation of the Saṅgha. Details of the gifts made illustrate the parallels between the Brahmanical and Buddhist traditions. The gifts made to the noisy *petas* are food, clothing, and lodging, the same gifts made in the *śrāddha* of the Brahmanical tradition.

The parallel is clear: in the Brahmanical tradition the householder gives food to the learned Brahmin and through him, feeds his ancestors. In the Buddhist narratives, the householder feeds the Buddha, and through him, feeds his ancestors. The ancestral offerings made into the fire in the oldest rituals of ancestor worship are now offered to human intermediaries, the learned Brahmin in the Brahmanical tradition, and the Buddha, or the Saṅgha as his representative, in the Buddhist tradition.

Beyond the structural parallel to *śrāddha* these narratives highlight the Buddhist tradition's efforts to advocate their own religious experts as superior. In "The Ghosts outside the Walls," the king gave rice gruel and hard and soft foods, but the ghosts received heavenly versions of the same and were refreshed (*piṇitindriyā*). He gave clothing and lodging, but the ghosts received heavenly clothing and palaces. The Buddhist author tries to show that the Buddhist mediator is better qualified than his Brahmanical counterpart. This should make clear the cause of the concern over the qualifications of a Brahmin who receives ancestral offerings expressed in the *dharma* literature. The Brahmanical and Buddhist religious experts are in competition for the role of religious expert, specifically the role of the mediator, who enacts the exchange between the householder and the supernatural entities he seeks to propitiate through ritual.

Slightly later evidence has also been read to show a connection between giving and *śrāddha*. Robert DeCaroli has read accounts surrounding the enlightenment of the Buddha to be references to *śrāddha*. He interprets narratives from the *Buddhacarita*, *Lalitavistara*, and *Nidanākathā* revolving around a village woman named Nandabala or Sujātā feeding the Buddha his first meal after attaining enlightenment and finds "funerary overtones" (DeCaroli 2004, 108). Unfortunately, I think that the connections that DeCaroli makes between these narratives and

the *śrāddha* procedures of the *Manusmṛti* are mistaken and are better explained by broader cultural norms. For the sake of time, I will consider only the strongest part of his argument here.

DeCaroli suggests that the manner in which the Buddha accepts and eats the food brought to him by Sujātā reveals a reference to the *śrāddha* rites (DeCaroli 2004, 108). He summarizes the encounter in this way: “In the *Nidanākathā*, the young woman, Sujātā, places the food she intends to feed Śākyamuni in a golden bowl and brings it to him while he is seated under a *nyagrodha* tree” (109). He then tells us that the *Manusmṛti* enjoins making the offerings in “bowls made of precious metals” and be “performed under trees and in secluded places that are sloped to nearby rivers” (109). Manu is very specific—as is the entire later tradition—that the offerings are to be made in silver bowls, not bowls of any precious metal. Further, Manu indicates that the ground upon which offerings are made should be sloped to the south, not toward a river. The association of the ancestors with the south, which is very old, is also consistent through the rituals of ancestor worship.

Additionally, DeCaroli correlates the manner in which the Buddha partakes of the food with the procedure for Brahmins offered *śrāddha* food, specifically his washing before partaking of the offering. While this is an aspect of the *śrāddha*, bathing prior to eating must have been rather common, and likely indicates a cultural norm rather than a funerary custom. Finally, the structure of the encounter does not parallel the *śrāddha* at all. The offerings made to the Buddha are not made on someone else's behalf, or to another through the Buddha, as the *śrāddha* is conceived in the Brahmanical tradition and the *peta*-offerings are in the *Petavatthu*. In short, I believe that DeCaroli is mistaken in seeing “funerary overtones” in this narrative. This seems to be merely a more significant example of the common practice of giving to religious experts.

With the development of *śrāddha* understood a little better, I now turn to the evidence available about Gayā. The first Brahmanical text to mention Gayā does so specifically in connection to the *śrāddha*. *Vasiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* was probably composed sometime in the first century CE. In his section on ancestral offerings, Vasiṣṭha includes, among many *ślokas* culled from a vast cultural reservoir, the following verse:

When someone offers food to his ancestors at Gayā, they rejoice, just as farmers rejoice at fields that have received abundant rain; in him his ancestors are blessed with a true son. *VDhS* 11.42

It is significant that the first mention of Gayā in the Brahmanical sources associates it explicitly with ancestor worship, and conversely, that the first time a specific place is mentioned for performing the *śrāddha* it is Gayā. Significantly, Manu does not mention Gayā or *tīrtha-śrāddha* in his extensive discussion of the *śrāddha*. In the later tradition, however, it is common to praise the performance of *śrāddha* at almost any *tīrthas*, though Gayā is always the best. For example, the *Viṣṇusmṛti*, composed in the third century CE, does just that at the beginning of its section on ancestral offerings. Chapter eighty-five begins: “An ancestral offering at Puṣkara is inexhaustible” (*VS* 85.1). But then follows a list of fifty-three specific places and eleven types of places. The first two, if primacy is significant for this author, are Gayāśīrṣa and Vaṭa, two prominent sites at Gayā in the later tradition. The organization of the list, however, presents many problems for understanding the significance of any one place. Several names later associated with specific locals at Gayā are scattered throughout the list, with no apparent rhyme or reason. Immediately after this list there occur three verses attributed to the Pitṛs themselves, two of which specifically mention Gayā in connection to the *śrāddha*:

Would that an excellent man be born in our family who would diligently make an ancestral offering to us as Gayāśīrṣa or Vaṭa. (*VS* 85.70)

A man should desire many sons, so that at least one may go to Gayā, or offer a horse sacrifice, or release a black bull. (*VS* 85.71)

The first verse reiterates the first two items on the list. The second verse appears throughout the later tradition, and, by the time of the *Mahābhārata*, is commonly quoted in reference to Gayā. The combination of this extensive list and two verses that make it unclear how strong the association of Gayā and *śrāddha* is in Viṣṇu's time, though clearly the seeds of the later tradition have been sown. We do learn, however, that a tradition of *tīrtha-śrāddha*, performing the *śrāddha* at a sacred place, has developed by this time.

Throughout the *Tīrtha-yātra-parvan*, the section of the *Mahābhārata* that describes the pilgrimage sites across India, many *tīrthas* are mentioned as good places to perform the *śrāddha*, continuing the *tīrtha-śrāddha* tradition. But beyond this, the second *śloka* above occurs three times, and other sections of the Epic regularly attest the association between *śrāddha* and Gayā. No other *tīrtha* develops a similar cliché about the efficacy of a *śrāddha* performed there. In other words, by the time of the *Mahābhārata*, Gayā is *the* place to perform *śrāddha*.

Now let us turn to the Buddhist sources. Gayā finds mention in the Sutta literature eleven times, and in the *Vinaya* a handful of times, though in the latter merely as the home of Gayākassapa, the ascetic. The instances from the *suttas* tell us three things about Gayā: 1. It was the abode of Yakkhas, 2. There was some part of or near Gayā known as Gayāsīsa, and 3. It was a sacred place of some stature.

As a Yakkha haunt, Gayā is where Sūciloma and Khara presume to question the Buddha. The only feature of this Gayā is the *ṭaṃkitamañca*, the supposed Stone Bench where the Yakkhas reside. I have seen no plausible explanation for this term, so it offers us little to understand Gayā of this period better. The second conception of Gayā offers a different feature, Gayāsīsa, which many scholars have taken to be an early reference to Gayāsīras or Gayāsīrṣa, a prominent site on the later Gayā pilgrimage. This gives us the earliest bit of information that may connect to the

later tradition and suggests a continuity in the tradition of Gayā that stretches back to the last few centuries BCE, though the exact import of Gayāśirṣa, so clear in the later tradition, is far from clear in the Pāli Canon.

As a sacred place, the *Udāna* and the *Theragathā* describe Gayā as a place where ascetics bath to purify themselves of sins committed in a past life. The descriptions of the baths at each place, however, differ. In the *Udāna*, matted-hair ascetics plunge into and out of the cold water of winter nights or early morning, sacrifice into fire, purifying themselves by these actions. The two occurrences in the *Theragathā* mention *gayāphaggu*, but there is great debate over this word's meaning. It may refer to a festival held during the month of Phagguṇa, or the Nerañjarā river, which is later called the Phalgu, as Cunningham and others have suggested, or something else all together. The second *Theragathā* reference agrees with the *Udāna* that this is a site dedicated to bathing to purify sins. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* the Buddha responds to a question from the Brahmin Sundarika-Bhāradvāja about the benefits of bathing in rivers, presumably sacred rivers. In the verses that he recites, the Buddha mentions four rivers and three places, Gaya is one [note the lack of a long-a] and Prāyaga is another. The inclusion of Prāyaga supports the notion that these three places are *tīrthas*. The Buddha tells the Brahmin that purity comes not from bathing in these rivers or at these *tīrthas*, but through moral behavior, ending with this maxim, “What can you do by going to Gaya, when Gaya is only a well for you?” (*M* 1.39)

In short, the Pāli Canon gives us little information about Gayā. The occasional Yakkha is to be found and converted, as are ascetics of a certain bent, but this hardly justifies the close association with spirits of the dead that DeCaroli wants to suggest. If the authors of the Pāli Canon chose Gayā as the place to narrate the Buddha's conversion of ascetics intent upon washing away their sins in a sacred pool, we can presume that Gayā was a sacred center of some

repute. Further, the people who populate this locale—the Buddha and his monks, two Yakkhas, groups of ascetics—tells us something about the nature of the site. While Sundarika-Bhāradvāja's comments refer to the opinion of many people, *bahujana*, I suspect that Gayā is probably not a pilgrimage site with broad appeal as it is later; this is an ascetic's haunt. I offer this suggestion tentatively, since I wonder if we know enough about pilgrimage at this time to say that such a place is of appeal to only ascetics, or even how common pilgrimage is, or what pilgrimage looks like in this period.

One more point about the Brahmanical and Buddhist conceptions of Gayā needs to be mentioned. Only the Buddhist texts mention Gayā in a context unrelated to the performance of *śrāddha*. From its first mention in the Brahmanical sources, Gayā is associated with *śrāddha*. The Buddhist sources, on the other hand, describe a Gayā with a reputation for purity and removal of sin, but bathing is common to nearly all pilgrimage sites, especially *tīrthas* and rivers.

DeCaroli addresses the area encompassing modern Gayā and Bodhgayā as a whole, arguing that this area more closely matches the conception of the contemporary Buddhist community. I suggest that the authors of the Pāli Canon had just the opposite in mind when they situated the Buddha at Uruvelā. Let us consider Uruvelā's description in the Pāli Canon. Unsurprisingly, of the twenty-three occurrences of Uruvelā in the Pāli Canon, all but two are explicitly in connection to his attainment of enlightenment and those two are in the context of his struggle with Māra. Only one of these occurrences is accompanied by a description which may be useful in getting a picture of Uruvelā. In it the Buddha describes his arrival at Uruvelā prior to his enlightenment. He calls Uruvelā a *senānigama*, a camp-village, and describes the environ in this way.

There I saw a delightful stretch of land and a lovely woodland grove, and a clear flowing river with a delightful ford, and a village for support nearby. *M* 1.167

This pleasant description seems to intentionally contrast with the relative hustle and bustle of Gayā. It is simple environ, unmolested by Yakkhas or ascetic groups, perfect for his intended purpose, as the Buddha says immediately after describing his view. This is not the supernatural hot-spot that DeCaroli describes, it is just the opposite. Despite that the river is said to have a *tīrtha*, it seems that this is merely a river ford, not yet a pilgrimage site proper, and I suggest this contrast is intentional. Were the Buddha to attain enlightenment at Gayā, or any other *tīrtha* for that matter, he would indebted to the traditional associations there. The power to overcome death is not derived from the purity of a *tīrtha* or from traditional rituals; it is by the Buddha's singular achievement that death is conquered. He escapes all attachment to the actions of past lives not at Gayā, which has a tradition of removing sins, but at Uruvelā.

One aspect of the formulaic references to Uruvelā is striking. In nineteen of the twenty-three mentions of Uruvelā—the others, by the way are all from the *Majjhima Nikāya*—the Buddha is said to be at the foot of a tree. There are only four variations in the formula:

*S* 1.103 uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre ajapālanigrodhamūle paṭhamābhisambuddho  
*S* 1.136 uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre ajapālanigrodhamūle paṭhamābhisambuddho  
*U* 1.1 uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre bodhirukkhāmūle paṭhamābhisambuddho  
*U* 2.1 uruvelāyaṃ viharati najjā nerañjarāya tīre mucalindamūle paṭhamābhisambuddho

As Frederick Asher (1988, 87) has pointed out this is a structural similarity between the pilgrimage of Gayā and the Buddha's experience at Bodhgayā, but I believe there is a different answer. I think this is a part of the Buddhist program of appropriating older, indigenous, religious icons, divinities, and venues for its own. The connection between Yakṣis and Yakṣas and trees is commonly known, and I suggest that this is the association that is stressed by the Buddha's repeated presence beneath the tree. However, more needs to be done to more fully understand the relationship of the local cults and Buddhist representations of the Buddha.

In conclusion, I return to the question that began my inquiry: Why did the Buddha choose to go to Bodhgayā to strive for enlightenment? Fred Asher has suggested that “the Buddha came to the outskirts of Gaya specifically because it was the place where pilgrims sought an escape from the fetters of death—albeit on behalf of deceased relatives rather than themselves” (1988, 87). My review of the ancestral rites in the Brahmanical literature suggests that the conception of *śrāddha* was still under construction during the life of the Buddha. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that Gayā was a place of pilgrimage associated with *śrāddha* until the beginning of the Common Era. Gayā finds no mention in the earlier Brahmanical literature, though this may be explained by the dictates of the genres of literature available to us, which, arguably, don’t mention pilgrimage at all. However, the Buddhist sources are clear on the primary practice associated with Gayā: purificatory baths, which are said to remove sin. The single explicit mention of the *śrāddha* in the Pāli Canon and the remnant visible in the offering to the *petas* in the *Petavatthu* are in no way connected to Gayā. In short, it seems there is no evidence to suggest that Gayā had any connection to the *śrāddha* until after the tradition of the Buddha achieving enlightenment at Uruvelā was already established. Is it possible, then, that the increase in popularity of pilgrimage coupled with the Buddha’s defeat of death, and thereby rebirth, motivated the Brahmanical tradition to associate the *śrāddha* with Gayā?

Before I conclude, I ask your indulgence for one last supposition. Asher also hazards a guess about the tradition of trees at both Gayā and Bodhgayā; he says, “I would surmise that Gaya’s Akshayavat served as the model for Bodhgaya’s tree, though there is no evidence to verify that guess.” I have to admit I was intrigued by this suggestion. In fact this thought motivated this paper. But like Gayā and the Gayā-*śrāddha*, the *akṣayaṇa* of Gayā doesn’t occur in the Brahmanical sources until after the Buddhist narrative is already popular. The *akṣayaṇa*

is not mentioned until the *Mahābhārata*, though Viṣṇu does mention *gayāśirṣa* and *vaṭa*, presumably referring to the *akṣayavaṭa*. My thoughts on the trees of Uruvelā mentioned above and my notions about Gayā more generally, incline me to believe that the significance of the tree is borrowed from an older indigenous tradition, which is somehow tied to Uruvelā.

To sum up, my research suggests that instead of the Buddha being drawn to Gayā because of a tradition of *tīrtha-śrāddha*, he was drawn there because of its general sanctity and because it was a place frequented by ascetics. He intentionally left the hub-bub of Gayā, disassociating his achievement from the older tradition, and went to a nearby place fit for striving after enlightenment. At Uruvelā he explicitly appropriated an older tradition connected with the Banyan tree, though the details of this are unclear. After the Buddha's enlightenment narrative was widespread, and pilgrimage in general had become more popular, the Brahmanical tradition—perhaps educated Brahmin authors or perhaps the local religious experts, I cannot say—chose to establish a tradition of *tīrtha-śrāddha* at Gayā, a tradition that eventually grew to pan-indic proportions.

Thank you.